



Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation regarding its Bilateral Mission to the Republic of Sudan

Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

**Khartoum and El Fasher, Republic of Sudan
January 15 to 17, 2018**

REPORT

BILATERAL MISSION TO SUDAN

The Co-Chairs of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association (“the Association”) conducted a fact-finding mission to the Republic of Sudan from 15–17 January 2018. The delegation was composed of the Honourable Senator Raynell Andreychuk and Robert Oliphant, Member of Parliament. Brian Hermon, Association Advisor, accompanied the delegation.

This was the Association’s first mission to Sudan.¹ The objectives of the delegation’s mission to Sudan were the following:

- to gain an understanding of the present role of parliamentarians in Sudan;
- to gain an update on the current political, economic, and security situation in Sudan;
- to engage with parliamentarians on issues related to human rights, regional security, and the rule of law;
- to meet with members of civil society to better understand the environment for freedom of expression, freedom of association, and political pluralism in Sudan;
- to hear about the status of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA);
- to gain an understanding of security issues facing Sudan, including the threat of terrorism;
- to meet with officials from the United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organizations to learn about the development challenges facing Sudan;
- to learn about Canadian involvement in Sudan, in particular in relation to peace and security, and the promotion of human rights.

In support of its objectives, the delegation met with members of Sudan’s National Assembly and Council of States, including the Speakers of both Houses. It also met with government officials, the leader of an opposition coalition, representatives from the UN, the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as with members of civil society and the diplomatic community. In addition to its meetings in Khartoum, the delegation travelled to El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur.

¹ A delegation of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association travelled to South Sudan in January 2012, shortly after that country became independent in 2011. For information on that bilateral mission, see Canada–Africa Parliamentary Association, [Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation on the Bilateral Visits to the Republic of Kenya and the Republic of South Sudan, 17–20 January 2012](#).

There, it met with state-level officials, including the Governor of North Darfur and the Speaker of the North Darfur Legislative Council. It also visited the Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs), and had a briefing with the Joint Special Representative of UNAMID.

This report provides background on the current situation in Sudan, and summarizes the delegation's meetings in the country. The report concludes by offering the delegation's main observations from its bilateral mission to Sudan.

THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN

Located in north eastern Africa, Sudan is bordered by Egypt to the north; the Red Sea, Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east; South Sudan to the south; Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) to the west; and Libya to the northwest. Its neighbour, South Sudan, was formerly part of Sudan, but the countries divided in July 2011 when South Sudan obtained independence. Sudan has a population of approximately 40 million, and is divided administratively into 18 states.

A. Political History and Recent Developments

Sudan's geographic location has historically made it a place of interaction between people from sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean. The northern part of Sudan was influenced by Islam and the Arabic language, which spread from Egypt in 651, while African languages predominated in the southern region. Sudan was governed by a jointly-controlled Anglo-Egyptian condominium between 1899 and 1956. Nationalist sentiments against this arrangement grew in the aftermath of the Second World War, and the British and Egyptian governments allowed for elections to take place in 1953. The first parliament in Sudan was opened by British Governor-General Sir Robert Howe in Khartoum on 1 January 1954. By the end of 1955, the Sudanese parliament declared independence, forcing the British to withdraw entirely from the country.

Sudan has seen significant civil conflict and political strife since independence. Political, religious and ethnic discord, and tensions over the governance of resources, fuelled a more than two decade-long conflict between the north and the south that ended with the signing of the *Comprehensive Peace Agreement* (CPA) in 2005. The CPA contained protocols on the sharing of power and resources, and stipulated that a referendum would be held in 2011 on the question of the south's independence.

While the CPA ended the civil war between the north and the south, it did not address a separate conflict that had emerged in Sudan's western region of Darfur. In 2003, a conflict ignited among rebel groups in Darfur – who claimed that the region was being economically and political marginalized – and the Government of Sudan and its proxies. The Government of Sudan responded to attacks by rebel groups with a violent counter-insurgency campaign. Between 2003 and 2008, the violence in Darfur resulted in the deaths of an estimated 300,000 people, the displacement of more than 2.5 million

people, and in systematic human rights abuses committed against the civilian population.²

In January 2011, southern Sudanese citizens voted in a referendum on independence. Nearly 99% of voters opted for independence, and, on 9 July 2011, the region officially became the Republic of South Sudan. Although the largely peaceful voting process was accepted by Sudanese President Omar al Bashir, unresolved issues of oil wealth, distribution of the bilateral debt, and a border dispute in the Abyei region remained, which resulted in sustained tensions. South Sudan and the states along the Sudan-South Sudan border, including South Kordofan and Blue Nile, are home to many lucrative oil fields. These areas have remained flashpoints for conflict since the south's independence.

On 27 January 2014, President al-Bashir called for a process of national dialogue among his ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and various opposition groups. During the national dialogue process, Sudanese lawmakers voted to reinstate the position of Prime Minister and to delegate certain executive powers to that office. In March 2017, President al-Bashir appointed Bakri Hassan Saleh, who also serves as one of Sudan's two vice-presidents, as prime minister. In May 2017, as part of the national dialogue's recommendations, President al-Bashir appointed a new cabinet – referred to as the National Consensus Government – which includes members of several political parties.

The most recent elections in Sudan were held in April 2015. In the presidential election, President al-Bashir won with 94% of the vote. In the parliamentary elections, the NCP won a majority in the National Assembly. Major opposition parties boycotted the elections.³

Over the past year, the Government of Sudan has declared and extended unilateral ceasefires with rebel groups across Sudan in an attempt to create an environment conducive for peace talks brokered by the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP). In March 2018, the Government of Sudan extended its unilateral ceasefire with rebel groups in Darfur – as well as with rebels in South Kordofan and Blue Nile – until the end of June 2018.⁴ The AUHIP-led process is seeking a “holistic peace” to the conflicts in Darfur and the “Two Areas” (South Kordofan and Blue Nile). In 2016, a roadmap peace agreement was signed by the Government of Sudan and the parties to the conflicts. The roadmap aims to accelerate progress toward ending the conflicts in Darfur and the Two Areas by resuming negotiations on a permanent ceasefire agreement and enabling humanitarian assistance. The implementation of the agreement, however, has stalled as a result of several factors, including divisions within the rebel groups and disagreements over humanitarian access to the Two Areas.⁵

B. Socio-Economic Situation

² United States [U.S.] Department of State, “[U.S. Relations with Sudan](#),” Fact sheet, 31 March 2017.

³ African Union Commission, [African Union Election Observation Mission to the April 2015 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Sudan, Final Report](#), July 2015.

⁴ “[Sudan extends ceasefire with rebels to June: state news](#),” Reuters, 28 March 2018.

⁵ Louisa Brooke-Holland, [Sudan: December 2017 update](#), Briefing Paper No. 08180, United Kingdom House of Commons Library, 15 December 2017.

Sudan is considered to be a country with “low human development” by the UN. It ranks 165th out of 188 countries on the United Nations Development Programme’s 2016 *Human Development Index*.⁶ Approximately 46.5% of the population is estimated to live below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day.⁷ Food insecurity has been a persistent issue in Sudan since the mid 1970s, and one that has been exacerbated by civil war and drought. In 2017, an estimated 4.8 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, and 3.5 million were food insecure.⁸

The humanitarian situation in Sudan is one of the world’s most complex. Sudan is a country of origin, destination, and transit for migrants, and hosts millions of IDPs and refugees. It is estimated that approximately 3.3 million people are internally displaced in Sudan. This includes about 2.1 million people who are internally displaced in Darfur.⁹ In addition, Sudan hosts over 1 million refugees from neighbouring countries, primarily from South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea and Ethiopia. The number of IDPs in Sudan is in addition to the hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees living outside the country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that Chad alone was home to approximately 319,000 Darfuri refugees as of July 2017.¹⁰

Sudan’s economy has slowed since South Sudan’s independence. Sudan is estimated to have lost approximately three quarters of its oil revenue when the south became independent. In recent years, Sudan has taken steps to diversify its economy by investing in its agricultural and mining sectors. Gold, in particular, has become an increasingly important export; Sudan is the third largest gold producing country in Africa.¹¹ However, it remains a highly indebted country and has been in arrears with the World Bank and other international financial institutions for many years. Sudan also struggles with double-digit inflation, especially in terms of the cost of food. In January 2018, protests erupted in reaction to the rising cost of bread and the government’s decision to devalue the Sudanese Pound against the United States (U.S.) dollar.

C. International Engagement with Sudan

The revocation of U.S. sanctions against Sudan in October 2017 was the result of a two year process of engagement with the Government of Sudan that began under President Barack Obama and continued under President Donald Trump. In 2015, the U.S. and Sudan engaged in a series of bilateral talks below the Head of State level to see whether they could agree on a roadmap toward the repeal of U.S. sanctions. In June 2016, it was agreed that the decision on whether or not to lift U.S. sanctions would be based on Sudan’s progress along the following five tracks:

⁶ The Human Development Index is a composite measurement of education, health and income indicators. United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], [Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone](#).

⁷ CIA, “[Sudan](#),” The World Factbook.

⁸ World Food Programme, [Sudan](#).

⁹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], [Sudan: Darfur Humanitarian Overview](#), 1 October 2017.

¹⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], “[Over 4,000 Chadian refugees set to return home from Darfur](#),” News release, 21 December 2017.

¹¹ Orca Gold, [About Sudan](#).

1. cooperation with U.S. intelligence agencies on counter-terrorism;
2. a cessation of hostilities in Darfur and Sudan's "Two Areas";
3. improved humanitarian access to Sudan's conflict areas;
4. an end to support for factions seeking to undermine South Sudan's stability; and
5. support for regional security, including multilateral efforts to counter the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).¹²

In January 2017, citing "sustained progress by the Sudanese government on several fronts," President Obama issued Executive Order [13761](#), which provided a pathway for the repeal of sanctions. That Executive Order, however, deferred the decision on permanently lifting U.S. economic sanctions against Sudan for six months – until 12 July 2017 – in order to allow the incoming Trump administration with time to assess the progress by the Sudanese government along the five tracks. Following an additional three month extension, in October 2017, the U.S. decided to revoke most of the economic sanctions on Sudan.

While the administration of President Trump lifted most U.S. economic sanctions against Sudan, it affirmed that several other coercive tools would remain in place. The U.S. continues to maintain its Darfur-related measures established under Executive Order [13400](#) (2006), which sanctions individuals and entities associated with the violence in Darfur. Sudan is also only one of four countries designated by the U.S. as a state sponsor of terrorism. This designation bans the export of U.S. military equipment and the re export of dual use items to Sudan.¹³

In addition to U.S. measures, a number of other barriers stand in the way of fully normalized relations between Sudan and many western countries. Most notably, Sudan continues to face UN Security Council sanctions, and President al-Bashir remains the subject of two arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Sudan has also been widely criticized for incidents of human rights abuse, including suppression of civil and political liberties, and the use of excessive force to suppress dissent.

Canada-Sudan relations are limited at the political and economic levels. At this time, Canada's Head of Mission in Sudan is not accredited as an Ambassador, but holds the rank of Chargé d'Affaires. Canada implements UN Security Council's sanctions through its [United Nations Sudan Regulations](#), which prohibit the export of arms and related material to Sudan and the provision of technical assistance related to arms. Canada also imposes an assets freeze and travel ban against those persons designated by the

¹² The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is a rebel group that became active in the northern and eastern regions of Uganda in the late 1980s. Led by self-styled prophet Joseph Kony, the LRA committed acts of extreme brutality during those years, including killing thousands of people and abducting children to serve as soldiers. In addition to Uganda, the LRA also established bases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. However, over the past decade, the strength of the LRA has diminished significantly following sustained regional military pressure.

¹³ The other three countries designated by the U.S. as [state sponsors of terrorism](#) are the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Iran, and Syria.

UN Sudan Sanctions Committee. The two-way trading relationship between Canada and Sudan totalled \$44.1 million in 2016, of which \$43.8 million constituted Canadian exports to Sudan. In terms of international assistance, Canada provided approximately \$16 million in humanitarian assistance to Sudan in 2016 through the UN and civil society partners.

MEETINGS IN SUDAN

1. Briefing by Chargé d’Affaires Salah-Eddine Bendaoud ¹⁴

The delegation’s first meeting in Khartoum was with Canada’s Head of Mission in Sudan, Salah-Eddine Bendaoud, who provided a briefing on the current political, economic and security situation in the country. The delegation was informed that President al-Bashir launched a national dialogue in 2014, aimed at addressing issues related to governance, political inclusiveness and resource sharing. Despite the fact that many opposition groups chose not to participate in the process, it was noted that the Government of Sudan is moving ahead with the implementation of the national dialogue recommendations. The delegation heard that one of the main tasks of the government will be the promulgation of a new constitution.

Chargé d’Affaires Bendaoud discussed the African Union-brokered roadmap led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, which aims to end the conflicts in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan. While the Government of Sudan and the parties to the conflict signed a roadmap agreement in 2016, delegates heard that the implementation of the agreement has stalled. Factors responsible for the stalled process include divisions within the rebel groups and a failure to finalize a permanent ceasefire agreement.

Chargé d’Affaires Bendaoud provided an update on the current economic situation in Sudan. He noted that the Government of Sudan recently devalued the Sudanese Pound and eliminated subsidies on wheat, which resulted in a doubling of the price of bread. He also explained that Sudan remains a highly indebted country and that it is seeking debt relief from the international community under the Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. It was noted that the Government of Sudan wants to develop its extractive sector, and gold mining in particular, and to encourage foreign direct investment.

2. Meeting with the Honourable Ibrahim Ahmed Omer, Speaker of the National Assembly of Sudan

Delegates met the Honourable Ibrahim Ahmed Omer for a discussion about the situation in Sudan and the structure of the National Assembly. Speaker Omer thanked the Co-Chairs for visiting Sudan, and expressed hope that the mission would lead to stronger bilateral relations between Canada and Sudan. Specifically, he said that Sudan would welcome Canadian commercial investment, as well as bilateral development support.

¹⁴ Canada’s Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan, is also accredited to Chad and Eritrea. Salah-Eddine Bendaoud is accredited as Canada’s Chargé d’Affaires to Sudan, and Canada’s Ambassador to Chad and Eritrea.

Speaker Omer stated that the National Assembly is composed of 500 seats, 30% of which are held by women. He said that the NPC won a majority of seats in the 2015 elections, but that several political parties and independent parliamentarians also have seats in the assembly. According to Speaker Omer, 12 political parties are represented in the National Consensus Government. He also indicated that opposition parties have representation in state-level governments and legislatures.

During the discussion, the Co-Chairs posed questions to Speaker Omer about youth unemployment and empowerment, and Sudan's relations with the international community. Speaker Omer explained that youth unemployment in Sudan is high and the country's youth would benefit from better vocational and technological training. On the subject of Sudan's foreign relations, he noted that the lifting of U.S. economic sanctions was a positive development, and expressed hope that it would lead to more robust economic growth. Finally, Speaker Omer spoke about Sudan's desire to play a stronger role in regional organizations, including in the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament.

3. Meeting with the Honourable Omer Suleiman Adam, Speaker of the Council of States

The Honourable Omer Suleiman Adam briefed the delegation on the role and responsibilities of Sudan's Council of States. He described how the Council of States is composed of 72 members and has the legislative lead in areas under the jurisdiction of the 18 states, including the right to amend draft laws that affect the interests of the states. Speaker Adam indicated that members are elected to the Council of States by the state legislatures and serve five-year terms.

Speaker Adam explained that a constituent assembly is in the process of revising Sudan's constitution, which could result in changes to the country's model of federalism. He also spoke about Sudan's relations with South Sudan. According to Speaker Adam, Sudan is trying to foster reconciliation and better cooperation with South Sudan. He further noted that Sudan would like to establish stronger trade and investment ties with Canada.

4. Meeting with Members of the National Assembly

The Co-Chairs held a roundtable meeting with nine members of Sudan's National Assembly, including Dr. Mazahir Mohamed Ahmed Osman, Chair of the Subcommittee on North American and Canadian Affairs of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Other participants included the Chair of the North American Parliamentary Friendship Group and the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights.

Dr. Ahmed Osman thanked Canada for supporting the process that resulted in the 2005 *Comprehensive Peace Agreement*. She underlined in particular the work of Senator Mobina Jaffer, Canada's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan from 2002 to 2006. She noted that Canada provided financial and logistical support for the 2011 referendum on the independence of South Sudan. Dr. Ahmed Osman said that Sudan would welcome

deeper cooperation with Canada, including in the areas of education and peace building.

Several members of the National Assembly remarked that the situation in Sudan is very different than what is reported in the international media. They suggested that the political and security situation in Sudan has improved over the past several years. They also expressed hope that the lifting of U.S. economic sanctions would help to rejuvenate Sudan's economy. To that end, the Canadian delegates were told that Canadian companies should consider investing in Sudan's extractive and agricultural sectors.

Sudanese interlocutors expressed a desire to build parliamentary links with Canada. The Co-Chairs were told that Sudanese members of the National Assembly and the Council of States would be interested in learning from Canada's parliamentary system and model of federalism. It was suggested that Sudan's North American Parliamentary Friendship Group could be a vehicle for building deeper bilateral relations. A number of Sudanese members of the National Assembly also stated that they hoped to visit Canada in the future.

5. Meeting with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus

The Co-Chairs met 12 members of Sudan's Women's Parliamentary Caucus. The caucus was established in 2007 and is composed of women from the National Assembly and Council of States. The mission of the caucus is to represent the interests of Sudanese female parliamentarians and to campaign for policies that contribute to positive social change. The women assembled for the meeting represented several regions across Sudan and came from a variety of different professional backgrounds, including law and academia.

The Chair of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, the Honourable Wafa Maki Elaayser, explained the role of the caucus and discussed its recent efforts to promote social reforms. She noted, for example, that the caucus has been campaigning against female genital mutilation/cutting, which remains highly prevalent in Sudan. The caucus has also been working to combat child marriage and to counter sexual- and gender-based violence and discrimination.

Members of the caucus said that they are striving beyond the 30% minimum threshold for women's representation in the National Assembly. Moreover, they underscored that it is not only the number of female representatives in parliament that is important, but also how meaningful that representation is. It was stated emphatically that female members of the National Assembly should hold more positions of influence, and be included at the table in peace negotiations.

In this regard, the Co-Chairs were informed that Sudan recently adopted a national action plan on women, peace and security. This national action plan embodies Sudan's strategy for implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security. According to the members of the women's

caucus, Canada's national action plan on women, peace and security was used as a model for Sudan.¹⁵

6. Meeting with the Speaker of the North Darfur Legislative Council

The Co-Chairs travelled to El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, where they met with the Honourable Issa Mohamed Abdalla, Speaker of the North Darfur Legislative Council. Mr. Abdalla began by providing an overview of the situation in North Darfur and in the Legislative Council. He explained that North Darfur is one of five states in the Darfur region and accounts for about 57% of Darfur's total population. He highlighted that six parties and two independent members are represented in the Legislative Council, and that women hold 25% of the seats in the assembly. He noted that the Legislative Council is independent from the executive branch of the state government and that it recently passed a law on the rights of people with disabilities.

Mr. Abdalla referred to the security situation in North Darfur as stable. He discussed the Government of Sudan's ongoing arms collection campaign across the region, which is aimed at collecting illegal weapons and unregulated vehicles. He also spoke about the situation facing displaced persons in the region, and said that the Government of North Darfur is working with the UN to facilitate the voluntary return of IDPs and refugees to their places of origin.

During the discussion, the Co-Chairs posed questions relating to the security situation in Darfur and the relationship between the North Darfur Legislative Council and the central government of Sudan. Mr. Abdalla explained that UNAMID has begun to scale down its troop presence in Darfur and to close team sites that have hosted temporary UN bases and personnel. He also indicated that the North Darfur Legislative Council provided input into the constitutional drafting process that is underway at the national level. Mr. Abdalla further stated that he hoped for closer relations with both the Canadian Parliament and Canada's Embassy in Sudan. In particular, he explained that members of the North Darfur Legislative Council would benefit from Canadian support for legislative capacity building training.

7. Visit to the Abu Shouk Camp for Internally Displaced People

The Co-Chairs visited the Abu Shouk IDP camp, which is located 11 kilometres north-east of El Fasher. There, they met with the managers of the camp, representatives from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Oxfam, along with camp elders and residents.

The meeting began with a briefing by the camp manager. He informed the delegation that Abu Shouk is one of five IDP camps in North Darfur. It was established in April 2004 in response to the escalation of violence between the Government of Sudan and its proxies and armed rebel groups. Approximately 55,000 people live in the camp. The delegates were told that five main services are provided at the camp: police security, education, water provision, health care, and food aid.

¹⁵ For more information on Canada's national action plan, see: [Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security](#).

The camp manager said that the security situation in the camp is stable and noted that many IDPs would like to return to their places of origin. However, he indicated that the IDP population is worried that they will lack the means to provide for their families if they leave the camp and return home. He said that national and international organizations and foreign governments should assist Sudan by facilitating the voluntary return of IDPs to their home communities, and by making those communities more appealing for a safe return. In this respect, he urged Canada and other donor countries to shift their support from a state of humanitarian relief to a state of development cooperation.

The representative from OCHA indicated that the security situation in Darfur is calm, which allows for the delivery of humanitarian goods across the region. He specified that 14 UN agencies, 13 international NGOs, and more than 35 national NGOs are present in North Darfur. He explained that UNAMID operates eight team sites in North Darfur, and that it intends to close four of these sites over the coming year as part of an overall downsizing of the mission. According to OCHA, North Darfur is home to approximately 500,000 IDPs, most of whom live outside of formal camps. Delegates were told that in addition to the large number of IDPs currently living in the state, North Darfur is beginning to see an influx of IDP or refugee returnees from other parts of Darfur or from outside the country, including the Central African Republic.

The Co-Chairs heard from Oxfam about two projects that it operates in Darfur with support from Canada. The projects are broadly focused on providing water, sanitation, and hygiene services to IDPs living in North and South Darfur. Oxfam also supports income generating activities for women, farmers, and pastoralists in Darfur. It was noted that the last rainy season in Darfur was poor, which has strained the water supply. The Oxfam representative mentioned that water scarcity, coupled with a rise in the cost of food, was leading to increasing food insecurity in the region. Finally, the delegates heard from two IDPs living in the Abu Shouk camp, both of whom expressed a desire to return home in the future.

8. Meeting with the Governor of North Darfur

The Co-Chairs met the Honourable Abdul Wahid Yousif Ibrahim, Governor of North Darfur, who provided an overview of the situation in his state. Governor Ibrahim said that his government's priority is to promote reconciliation and reconstruction. He voiced that there is a need to increase inter-communal dialogue and to address the underlying causes of the conflict, including under-development. Broadly speaking, Governor Ibrahim shared that North Darfur is home to two different groups of IDPs: one group that arrived between 2003 and 2008 from more remote areas of Darfur, and a second group that arrived after 2011 from around El Fasher. He told the Co-Chairs that he expects many of the earlier arrivals to stay in El Fasher, as it has become their home over the past decade. Conversely, Governor Ibrahim indicated that he expects many of those that arrived more recently to return to their places of origin.

The Co-Chairs posed questions on issues related to federalism and peace and reconciliation. Governor Ibrahim explained that the central government in Khartoum is responsible for providing services such as highway infrastructure, higher education, and electrification. The state government has responsibility and jurisdiction over the

provision of services such as primary education. Governor Ibrahim said that the Government of North Darfur, in collaboration with the central government, is proceeding with the weapons collection campaign. In August 2017, the Government of Sudan launched a campaign to collect illegal weapons and unregulated vehicles throughout Sudan. He believes that the security situation in North Darfur has improved considerably over the past few years, and pointed to the downsizing of UNAMID as evidence of this.

9. Meeting with the Joint Special Representative of UNAMID

The delegation's final meeting in North Darfur was with Jeremiah Mamabolo, Joint Special Representative of UNAMID, and a large number of senior UNAMID officials. Mr. Mamabolo indicated that the security situation in Darfur had stabilized. At the same time, he explained that some of the violence in the region has shifted to neighbouring countries, including Libya and South Sudan, where Darfuri rebel groups are present and engaged in banditry and other criminal activities. He also noted that the security situation in the central Darfur area of Jebel Marra remains unpredictable. Mr. Mamabolo said that UNAMID is encouraging all armed actors in Darfur to sign a permanent cessation of hostilities agreement.

The Co-Chairs were told that UNAMID is undergoing a period of restructuring and downsizing as a result of the changing security environment in Darfur. Mr. Mamabolo explained that the authorized strength of UNAMID is being substantially reduced. In June 2017, the UN voted to draw down the mission's troop and police strength by 44% in two six-month phases. Resolution 2363 (2017) decided that by 1 January 2018 – the end of phase one – the authorized number of troops and police would be 11,395 and 2,888 respectively (down from 15,845 troops and 3,403 police). By 30 June 2018 – the end of phase two – UNAMID would have an authorized troop and police ceiling of 8,735 and 2,500, respectively. According to Mr. Mamabolo, UNAMID had closed 11 team sites over the past six months and future sites would be closed going forward.

Mr. Mamabolo stated that UNAMID's mandate was evolving in response to the changing security environment in Darfur. He noted that UNAMID is involved in supporting the training of prosecutors and helping to build the justice system. He also clarified that UNAMID is supporting community policing in Darfur and working with local authorities to address inter-communal violence, and the underlying causes of the conflict. More broadly, Mr. Mamabolo explained that UNAMID is involved in implementing the African Union-brokered roadmap led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki.

During the discussion, Mr. Mamabolo responded to questions regarding the potential unintended consequences of the Government of Sudan's arms collection campaign in Darfur. He suggested that the campaign was beginning to yield results, and that disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration would be essential to long-term peace in Darfur. At the same time, he acknowledged that some people remain sceptical of giving up their arms to a government or to security forces that they do not trust. In this respect, Mr. Mamabolo emphasized that more work needed to be done to address the trust deficit that exists between various stakeholders in Darfur.

10. Meeting with Members of Civil Society

The Co-Chairs met several Sudanese civil society activists for a discussion about the political, economic, and human rights situation in Sudan. Much of the discussion focused on the protests that were ongoing at the time of the mission over the rising price of bread. Delegates were told that several peaceful protesters had been arrested or violently dispersed by police. It was also noted that the National Intelligence and Security Service had confiscated entire print runs of newspapers that were critical of the government's economic policies and intimidated journalists who had been reporting on the protests.

The Co-Chairs heard that a political solution to Sudan's internal conflicts remains missing. According to some of the participants, the ongoing disarmament campaign was leading to increased tensions in Darfur and was a tool for the government to assert its control. Delegates also heard that Sudan is both a transit country and a country of origin for migrants. While it was noted that Sudan is working with the European Union (EU) on addressing the flow of migrants to Europe, participants said that not enough has been done to address the political and economic reasons that lead young people to leave Sudan.

Finally, a discussion ensued on the subject of Sudan's regional and geopolitical relations. The Co-Chairs heard that Sudan-Egypt relations were strained as a result of several factors. These factors include a border dispute related to the Hala'ib Triangle, which is located on the African coast of the Red Sea, and the building of a hydroelectric dam in Ethiopia that Egypt fears will affect its Nile water supply. It was explained that Sudan has made strengthening its relations with Turkey and Qatar a priority. It is also building relations with Saudi Arabia, and is a member of the Saudi-led coalition that is fighting the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

11. Meeting with United Nations Agencies

The delegation participated in a roundtable discussion about the development situation in Sudan with representatives of the following UN agencies: the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA).

The presentations by the UN agencies provided an overview of the major development challenges facing Sudan. The Co-Chairs heard from the WHO representative that more than 4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Sudan. The humanitarian challenges in Sudan were echoed by the participant from UNICEF who explained that Sudan has some of the lowest development indicators in the world, including those related to maternal mortality, access to clean water, and the number of children out of school. The UNDP representative said that Sudan did not achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. Other major development challenges identified by the interlocutors included poor access to infrastructure, a lack of reliable electricity, and growing income inequality. Climate change and desertification were also identified as significant concerns in Sudan.

The economic situation in Sudan was also highlighted as a growing challenge. The WFP representative described how the cost of food has doubled – and even tripled – in some parts of the country, leading to growing food insecurity. The Co-Chairs heard that many people in Sudan had expected the economic situation would improve immediately with the lifting of U.S. sanctions. It was explained, however, that most analysts believe it will take time for Sudan to recover from its international isolation. The country's high debt load was also underlined as a challenge. The Co-Chairs were told that the Government of Sudan is frustrated that the international community, including Canada, has not followed through on commitments to provide debt relief to Sudan, which were made following the signing of the 2005 CPA.

Positive developments were reported with respect to access for humanitarian assistance. The Co-Chairs were told by the UNHCR representative that humanitarian access to refugees and IDP camps, and other populations in need, has improved over the past year. Notwithstanding this positive development, it was reiterated that Sudan's humanitarian profile is especially complex: it is home to millions of IDPs; it is a transit country and country of origin for migrants; it is a host country for refugees; and it is seeing an influx of refugee returnees from neighbouring countries. According to the UNHCR representative, the instability in South Sudan has led more than 800,000 refugees to flee to Sudan since 2013.

Finally, the Co-Chairs heard about some of the political issues confronting Sudan. Despite its relative political stability, it was pointed out that Sudan faces significant challenges with respect to governance, human rights, political inclusion, and constitutional reform. While the UN is working with the Government of Sudan to address these challenges, the Co-Chairs were informed that more needs to be done to encourage a truly inclusive national dialogue between the government, opposition parties and armed groups, in order to foster a sustainable peace.

12. Meeting with the State Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Co-Chairs met H.E. Atta Al Mannan Bakheit, Sudan's State Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Bakheit said that the security situation in Darfur and the Two Areas has improved over the past year. He also discussed the economic situation in Sudan and indicated that there are many opportunities for international investment. Ambassador Bakheit noted that China is heavily invested in Sudan and he encouraged support for Canadian companies to look for opportunities to engage commercially.

The Co-Chairs engaged in a discussion with Ambassador Bakheit on the subject of human rights and civil liberties. They also discussed the development situation in the country. Ambassador Bakheit highlighted that Sudan has a multi-year humanitarian strategy aimed at addressing the long-term needs of the country. In addition, he said that spending on the security sector remained a priority of the Government of Sudan's 2018 budget.

Finally, Ambassador Bakheit spoke about the challenges facing the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation¹⁶ (OIC), where he previously served as special assistant to the Secretary-General. He stated that the OIC has faced challenges over the past several years as a result of numerous issues, including regional rivalries between Iran and Saudi Arabia and divisions over how to resolve the situation in Syria. Ambassador Bakheit also discussed the leadership of the OIC and outlined that he hopes the next Secretary-General of the organization will come from an African country.

13. Meeting with Representatives of the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

The Co-Chairs met Ambassador Mahmoud Kane, Head of the AU Liaison Office in Sudan, and Lissane Yohannes, Special Envoy of IGAD in Sudan. The discussion focused on efforts to implement the roadmap agreement, a process led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki aimed at supporting and facilitating the various processes for ending conflict and promoting democratic transformation in Sudan. It was explained that, while the security situation in Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and Darfur has improved, low-level violence, including inter-tribal conflict and banditry continue to be a concern. Meanwhile, the delegates heard that the roadmap agreement that was signed in 2016 has not been fully implemented, including its provisions on establishing a permanent cessation of hostilities in Darfur and the Two Areas. Mr. Kane and Mr. Yohannes indicated that signatories to the roadmap agreement were expected to resume negotiations in February 2018.

The AU and IGAD representatives spoke about recent regional issues of concern in East and North Africa. They explained, for example, that Sudan had recently shut its Eastern border with Eritrea and deployed an undisclosed number of security forces to the border region. According to the Government of Sudan, the border closure was intended to stop the illegal flow of arms between the two countries. Recent strains in relations between Sudan and Egypt over land and resource issues were also highlighted as being a concern.

14. Meeting with the Reform Now Movement

The Co-Chairs met with Dr. Ghazi Salaheldin Atabani, Leader of the Reform Now Movement (RNM). The Reform Now Movement was established by dissidents of the ruling NCP in December 2013 after Mr. Atabani and other NCP members were ousted from that party for objecting to the government's crackdown on demonstrators who were protesting austerity measures. Mr. Atabani – now the Chairman of the RNM – was formerly a cabinet minister in the government of President al-Bashir and Secretary-General of the NCP.

Mr. Atabani discussed the current political situation in Sudan and the country's system of government. According to Mr. Atabani, Sudan's mixed parliamentary/presidential

¹⁶ The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an inter-governmental organization composed of 57 members that “endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.” Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, [History](#).

system is stable, but not very democratic. He stated that too much authority is held by the President. He also noted that, in his opinion, the National Assembly lacks appropriate oversight powers, and that there is insufficient scrutiny of the country's security services.

15. Meeting with the National Commission for Countering Terrorism

The Co-Chairs met Dr. Mohamed Jamal Eldin Ahmed, Director General of Sudan's National Commission for Countering Terrorism (SNCCT). The SNCTT was established in 2003 and is responsible for implementing the resolutions of the UN Security Council and other international bodies on countering violent extremism. Dr. Ahmed said that the commission is engaged in developing a national strategy to counter violent extremism; to prevent the cross-border movement of extremists; and to stem the flow of foreign fighters from Sudan to conflict zones. He noted that the SNCCT works with Imams, as well as with officials at Islamic universities, to promote moderate Islam. He further explained that the SNCCT is involved in countering extremism online, including on social media, as well as in the Sudanese prison system.

Also present at the meeting was Dr. Selva Ramachandran, UNDP Sudan Country Director. Mr. Ramachandran explained that UNDP and the SNCCT recently signed a collaboration agreement, aimed at building capacities to prevent and address violent extremism in Sudan. Dr. Ramachandran said that UNDP and the SNCTT newly launched the first evidence-based study on violent extremism in Sudan. The study, which was funded in partnership with the Canadian and Japanese embassies in Khartoum, is designed to address the root causes, enablers, and drivers of violent extremism in Sudan. It is based on interviews with community leaders and local authorities, as well as with former members of Daesh and former Guantanamo Bay prisoners. The study resulted in several notable findings, including that the trend toward violent extremism in Sudan is rising, particularly among youth. According to the study, approximately 94% of people of Sudanese origin who join violent extremist groups are aged between 16-34 years old.¹⁷

16. International Criminal Court

Throughout the delegation's visit, the outstanding issue of the ICC and its arrest warrants against President al-Bashir was raised, or inferentially alluded to. Concerns were conveyed that the present peace plan, economic situation and the constitutional process leading to 2020 might be affected by the outstanding warrants. In discussions about the way forward, considerations were raised regarding the implications of withdrawing the warrants, continuing to pursue the warrants, or searching for a third option, yet to be defined.

17. Meeting with Members of the Diplomatic Community in Sudan

¹⁷ For more information on Canada's contribution to the study, see: Government of Canada, [Preventing Violent Extremism in Sudan](#).

The delegation's final meeting in Sudan was with Ambassadors and officials from several diplomatic missions based in Khartoum. The meeting underlined the geopolitical significance of Sudan's geographic positioning. Several Ambassadors explained that Sudan is strategically located at the crossroads between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, in close proximity to the Middle East and Gulf. It also borders several countries – South Sudan, Libya, Chad, and the Central African Republic – that have witnessed significant political and social instability in recent years. The Co-Chairs heard that engaging with Sudan is critical, not just to support positive change within the country, but also to encourage regional stability.

The meeting provided an opportunity for the delegates to gain an international assessment of the political situation in Sudan. The Co-Chairs heard perspectives on the political future of President al-Bashir, who is mandated by the constitution to step down in 2020. It was remarked that some members of the NCP have suggested that the constitution should be amended to allow President al Bashir to run again in 2020, despite the fact that he will reach his two-term limit at that time. Discussions on the subject of Sudan's development and economic situation, including its significant debt burden, also took place.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Association's fact-finding mission to Sudan was the first official Canadian visit to the country since 2004 when then-Prime Minister Paul Martin travelled to Khartoum to discuss the crisis in Darfur. The Association was invited to Sudan by the Honourable Ibrahim Ahmed Omer, Speaker of the National Assembly. It was also encouraged to visit Sudan by Global Affairs Canada and Canada's Embassy in Khartoum. The Association accepted the invitation to Sudan, seeing it as a valuable opportunity to obtain up-to-date information on the political, economic, development, and security situation in the country. It also saw the mission as a chance to engage directly with Sudanese parliamentarians and other stakeholders on issues related to human rights, regional security, and the rule of law.

The Association's mission to Sudan was timely. Over the past two years, the Government of Sudan has made some modest and incremental progress in addressing peace and security challenges, and improving humanitarian access to conflict zones. This limited progress resulted in the revocation of most U.S. economic sanctions in October 2017, and in an increase in high-level visits to Sudan. Several regional organizations and governments have also taken some steps in the direction of engagement with Sudan, including the EU which has established a High-Level Dialogue on Migration with Sudan.

It is in this context of renewed, yet cautious, international engagement that the mission was conducted. During the mission, the Co-Chairs heard reasons to be both optimistic and sceptical about the present situation in Sudan. The security situation is a prime illustration of this. The Co-Chairs were told by a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including government officials, parliamentarians, diplomatic representatives, and the Joint Special Representative of UNAMID, that the security situation in Sudan has improved in recent years, particularly in Darfur. This assessment is substantiated by the

most recent report of the UN Secretary-General and the African Union Commission, which stated that no major confrontations between the Government of Sudan and Darfur rebel groups took place between July and December 2017.¹⁸

At the same time, several interlocutors explained that the security situation in the country remains precarious. In large part, this is due to the absence of a permanent ceasefire agreement in Darfur and the Two Areas, and the lack of progress in the implementation of the African Union-led roadmap. The Co-Chairs believe that the roadmap process represents the best mechanism for resolving the conflicts in Darfur and the Two Areas and urge all parties to implement it. Addressing the trust deficit that exists between the Government of Sudan and the various stakeholders in Darfur is also critical. The Co-Chairs encourage all parties to the conflict to redouble their efforts to conclude a permanent cessation of hostilities agreement, and to ensure that all affected populations have access to humanitarian assistance. Moreover, **the Co-Chairs urge all stakeholders to work together to address the underlying causes of these conflicts by fostering economic and political inclusion.**

The Co-Chairs firmly believe that women's participation in peace processes – including throughout the negotiation stage – increases the durability of the peace that is achieved. The Co-Chairs note that Canada's national action plan on women, peace, and security was used as a model for Sudan in developing their own plan. The Co-Chairs were impressed with the involvement of women in the peace process. Sudan's recently-adopted national action plan on women, peace, and security is an important mechanism for facilitating the role of Sudanese women in the peace process. The Co-Chairs commend all of those stakeholders, including Sudan's Women's Parliamentary Caucus, who played a role in developing the national action plan.

The humanitarian situation in Sudan was another issue addressed during the delegation's mission. The Co-Chairs found reasons for both hope and concern. The humanitarian situation in Sudan is one of the world's most complex. As previously noted, Sudan is home to millions of IDPs and refugees, and is a country of origin, transit and reception for migrants. The fact that humanitarian access to populations in need in Sudan has improved over the past year is a positive development. **Sudan also deserves recognition for hosting refugees from across the region, including hundreds of thousands from South Sudan who have fled the violence in that country since 2013, including in recent months.**

Notwithstanding the positive developments related to access, the humanitarian situation in Sudan remains extremely challenging. Malnutrition and food insecurity are growing concerns, and millions depend on humanitarian assistance from the international community. Food insecurity could be exacerbated by the fact that the last rainy season in Sudan was poor, and by the recent increases in the cost of bread. While Canada is already a large donor to the World Food Programme, the Co-Chairs request that the Government of Canada immediately evaluate and monitor the food security situation in

¹⁸ For the most recent report on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Mission in Darfur, see: [Assessment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary General of phase one of the reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur](#), United Nations Security Council, S/2018/12, 4 January 2018.

Sudan. **The Co-Chairs also encourage the Government of Canada to consider how it can support the people of Sudan from both a humanitarian and a development perspective.** This could include support for livelihood and economic development projects, and assistance to IDPs and refugees that have returned to their home communities.

The Co-Chairs recognize that engaging in Sudan presents unique challenges for the Canadian government. Indeed, the delegation heard throughout the mission about a number of barriers that stand in the way of normalized relations with Sudan. The human rights situation represents a significant challenge to Canadian engagement in Sudan. During the mission, the Co-Chairs were informed about the ongoing suppression of civil and political rights in Sudan, as well as the use of excessive force by security officials. The excessive use of force was highlighted in particular with respect to the peaceful demonstrations that began in January 2018 over the rising price of bread. **If meaningful re-engagement with the broader international community is to occur, the Government of Sudan must ensure that the Sudanese people can peacefully exercise their rights to freedom expression and association, including freedom of the press.**

The issue of the ICC warrants against President al-Bashir needs to be resolved. While a third option could be developed for Sudan, the Co-Chairs are not supportive of a position that would ignore the warrants. Canada was a leader in developing and implementing the Rome Statute of the ICC and therefore a weakening of Canada's resolve would be a signal to all who would be violators that the ICC is no longer a serious impediment to their breaches. Therefore, the Co-Chairs believe that any third option for Sudan must include a resolution of the ICC warrants within the spirit and observance of the ICC. The Co-Chairs note that it is for the independent International Criminal Court to determine the way forward and Canada should support the ICC's ultimate actions.

Despite the challenges, **the Co-Chairs believe that the international community cannot ignore Sudan and that it should look for avenues to engage strategically in the country.** In this regard, the Co-Chairs believe that Canada's engagement in Sudan should extend beyond the governmental level. This could mean deepening its support for Sudanese civil society organizations that are working to promote women's political and economic empowerment, to address gender- and sexual-based violence, and to promote respect for human rights. It could also mean supporting parliamentarians at both the federal and state levels through capacity-building and training programs. Such an approach would allow Canada to engage with Sudan on issues related to governance from a legislative angle.

The Association's fact-finding mission underscored that engaging in Sudan is critical for geo-strategic and regional security reasons. Sudan is situated in a particularly challenging region. It borders seven countries, several of which have seen recent conflict, or continue to witness political and social instability. Many of these conflicts have assumed regional dimensions, as Sudan and its neighbours have a history of interfering in each other's countries. Porous borders and various transnational threats also complicate the security situation in the region. Arms smuggling, human trafficking,

and the threat of violent extremism are just some of the security challenges that the region faces.

Sudan is an important entry point to addressing many of these regional challenges. In recent years, it has emerged as a strategic international partner in northeast Africa. As part of the five-track process that resulted in the lifting of U.S. economic sanctions, Sudan increased its cooperation with the United States on counter-terrorism. It is also engaged with the EU on tackling the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, and on disrupting the network of human traffickers and smugglers. In addition, Sudan's National Commission for Countering Terrorism has partnered with UNDP on a project aimed at building capacities to prevent and address violent extremism in Sudan and the region. The Co-Chairs were pleased to hear that Canada's Embassy in Khartoum provided financial support for this project. **The Co-Chairs encourage the Government of Canada to continue to support mechanisms that are aimed at addressing transnational threats and other security challenges in the region.**

Finally, the Co-Chairs encourage the Government of Canada to build on the delegation's fact-finding mission to Sudan – the first official Canadian visit to Sudan in 14 years – with other high-level exchanges and more robust diplomatic engagement. **The Co-Chairs recommend that the Minister of Foreign Affairs immediately take a full review of Canada's foreign policy position vis-à-vis Sudan. The Co-Chairs also recommend that the Government of Canada consider changing the representation of Canada's Head of Mission in Sudan from Chargé d'Affaires to full Ambassador to allow Canadian participation at a higher-level in Sudan.**

As noted above, Sudan provides a rationale for deeper Canadian engagement for several reasons, including from a humanitarian and a regional security perspective. It is also a country that is situated at the forefront of several issues with global implications, including migration and climate change, where Canadian expertise and support would be welcome. The Co-Chairs urge Canada to augment its bilateral involvement in Sudan and to consider ways in which it can better support the Sudanese people in building a more secure, inclusive, and prosperous country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Co-Chairs thank Canada's Head of Mission in Sudan, Salah-Eddine Bendaoud, for welcoming the delegation to Sudan and for all of his efforts in facilitating a successful mission. We also extend our gratitude to Michael Vonk, First Secretary (Political), Edward Cashman, Counsellor and Consul, the drivers and security personnel, as well as the entire staff at Canada's Embassy in Khartoum for all of their support in advance of and during the visit.

The Co-Chairs also thank all of those interlocutors in Khartoum and El Fasher who took the time to meet with our delegation and for sharing their valuable perspectives.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Honourable Raynell Andreychuk,
Senator

Mr. Robert Oliphant, M.P.
Co-Chair

Co-Chair
Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Mission to the Republic of Sudan
DESTINATION	Khartoum and El Fasher, Republic of Sudan
DATES	January 15 to 17, 2018
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator, Co-Chair
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Robert Oliphant, M.P., Co-Chair
STAFF	Mr. Brian Hermon, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 18,840.79
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1,499.88
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 870.25
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 422.54
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 244.32
TOTAL	\$ 21,877.78