



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN

EU and Sudan to strengthen dialogue and cooperation

Yesterday I concluded a two day visit to Sudan, a country at crossroads between peace and conflict, hope and despair, progress and a challenging economic situation.

Sudan is facing many challenges: trying to rescue a national dialogue process, peace talks with the armed movements and the opposition and address a highly volatile economic situation.

I met with the First Vice President, Sudanese officials in the Ministries of International Cooperation, Foreign Affairs, Interior, as well as with the civil society and human rights defenders, and European Ambassadors. I received a very warm welcome by my hosts and I am very grateful for this hospitality for the European Union.

My visit comes at a time when Europe and Sudan are facing many common challenges, where our strengthened cooperation and dialogue would benefit all of us.

One of these issues is migration. As I was reminded by my Sudanese hosts, this is not a new phenomenon for Sudan. Indeed, Sudan is home to more than 40 million people, and has been accommodating for many years massive waves of migrants and refugees amounting to a reported two million people. Such efforts have to be supported. At the same time, and as was agreed in La Valetta, Europe and Africa need to work together to tackle the root causes of instability and irregular migration in Africa. A High Level Dialogue on Migration was launched between Sudan and the EU during the February 2016 visit of the Sudan Foreign Minister to Brussels. Back then, professor Ghandour expressed his Government's interest in engaging further on tackling irregular migration, combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, and adopting measures to prevent illegal crossings. He also expressed his Government's openness to work with the EU on return and readmission.

I was very pleased to come to Khartoum to announce and discuss a substantive and comprehensive package to address all those issues. First, a Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) for an amount of 15 M€, in order to improve the living conditions of refugees and host communities in East Sudan (Kassala) and Khartoum, and to strengthen the capacity of local authorities. Second, a regional 40 M€ programme on Better Migration Management, which supports the Khartoum process. And third, a development aid package of 100 M€ to tackle the root causes of instability, irregular migration and displacement, which will be implemented in East Sudan, Darfur and the Transitional Areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. It will increase access of vulnerable people, including IDPs, refugees and returnees, to jobs, education and health.

The real challenge in the coming months will be the implementation of this package. I received a firm commitment of the Sudanese authorities to remove all obstacles and

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facilitate access, visas and travel permits to areas where EU projects will be implemented. I am confident that we can achieve results quickly to the benefit of the people of Sudan.

In my discussions with my Sudanese counterparts, I stressed the need for the national dialogue process to be inclusive, with guaranteed fundamental freedoms and more confidence-building measures. The latest initiative by President Mbeki is an important opportunity that should not be neglected. I also discussed the upcoming Darfur administrative referendum next week, as well as the security situation. I expressed clearly our concern about the continued tension and conflict in Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile. The European Union values Sudan's role at the regional level, and I encouraged constructive engagement in particular in Libya and with South Sudan. Continued progress in the foreign policy of Sudan can contribute to peace and to combating terrorism and radicalization.

The EU and Sudan have a unique opportunity to move its sometimes complicated relationship forward. Sudan is now at the forefront to fight irregular migration and human trafficking and smuggling in Sudan and the Horn of Africa. This can only be achieved if peace, reconciliation and protection to human rights are respected and promoted by Sudanese stakeholders. For the children, youth, men and women of the country, Sudan can become a force for unity and not division, a hope for peace and not war, a center for development and not marginalization. The EU will continue to stand firmly with these goals.

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