

Mr. President

I have the honor to make the following statement on behalf of the African Group.

The African Group thanks the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Sudan on the presentation of her report, and expresses its hope that this session of the Council will mark the continuation of the cooperative spirit which has reigned so far in the Council on Sudan. In this regard, we are keen to build on the constructive approach which in the resumed sixth session led to the adoption of two important resolutions by consensus.

Mr. President

The African Group is pleased that the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Sudan has visited Sudan for twelve days during which she held several meetings with concerned officials from the Government, the Parliament, and civil society, in addition to traveling to different parts of the country. We believe this is a reflection of the openness of the Government of Sudan and its commitment to cooperate with this Council for the promotion and protection of human rights.

The African Group notes that the report of the Special Rapporteur, which covers developments in the period from September to December 2007, contains a mere listing of a selective number of individual events which took place during that period in the various parts of Sudan. We would have expected from a Special Rapporteur having held this post since 2005, an objective and analytical evaluation of the overall situation in the Sudan and of the general direction it is taking, instead of giving us a picture which is at best partial and incomplete. We also express our surprise at the silence of the Special Rapporteur on positive developments she herself documented in her report.

The African Group believes that instead of focusing solely on some individual occurrences here and there, it would have been more helpful if the Special Rapporteur had presented us with her evaluation of the overall picture in Sudan, and of the efforts undertaken by its Government to build its national human rights institutions, and to institute the necessary national investigative and redress mechanisms to address violations of human rights and to guard against impunity.

Having said that, we believe that any country in the situation of Sudan cannot be expected to fully realize its human rights objectives overnight. This is an evolutionary and continuous process, which is affected by the level of development of the country and the different resources available to it, and requires the participation of all segments of its diverse society, and international assistance is of vital importance.

The African Group would like to hear from the Special Rapporteur what she has specifically done to help the Government of Sudan in this regard, and her view on the contributions provided by the international community and relevant UN bodies and agencies, and the degree to which they all provided a value added to the national efforts.

Mr. President

The African Group reaffirms its commitment to strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights in the Sudan. We realize the complex nature of such an undertaking in view of the diverse challenges Sudan faces simultaneously on several fronts. The African Group expresses its appreciation to the Government of Sudan for the efforts undertaken thus far in the implementation of the peace agreements in the South, the East and in the three States of Darfur. The African Group also calls upon the Government of Sudan to continue and strengthen its efforts to address the various challenges which remain.

We are cognizant that the required actions on the various fronts do represent a heavy burden on the implementation capacity and resources of Sudan. Nevertheless, we believe that the Government of Sudan has shown the necessary commitment to move forward and to step up its cooperation with the United Nations in general and with this Council in particular, in order to realize a return to normalcy and to strengthen the situation of human rights for all its citizens. The African Group calls on the Sudanese Government to continue and intensify its efforts to achieve national reconciliation and overcome the challenges still facing it.

The African Group takes note with particular satisfaction of the beginning of operation of the AU/UN Hybrid force in Darfur composed of 20 thousand soldiers and of the facilities given to it by the Government of Sudan. We call upon the international community on its side to follow through on its expressed commitment to providing the necessary logistical, human and technical support to that force so that it can help achieve the desired level of stability and security in the three States of Darfur, and enable the protection of the innocent civilians from the attacks perpetrated against them and against the humanitarian assistance provided to them by the international community.

The African Group also welcomes the expressed commitment by the Government of Sudan to implement the agreed set of recommendations by the Group of Expert on Darfur. Some steps were made towards the implementation of short term recommendations and others remain to be done with regard to the implementation of the medium term recommendations.

The African Group acknowledges that the efforts of the Government of Sudan to bring an end to all acts of violence perpetrated against civilians in Darfur should be continued, including bringing perpetrators to justice in order to ensure a due process that will guard against impunity. The African Group also urges the international community to exert pressures on all

parties in Darfur to join the negotiating table and contribute to the ongoing regional and international comprehensive peace agreement in that province. The African Group also reiterates its request to the members of the international community to provide adequate assistance to ensure a smooth transition from relief to reconstruction and development in the Sudan. We hope the Darfur Peace Consultations with regional and international partners and organized jointly by the African Union and the United Nations today and tomorrow in Geneva will represent a positive step in the right direction in this regard. We also hope that the peace agreement signed last week between Sudan and Tchad on the margins of the OIC Summit in Dakar under the auspices of H.E. the President of Senegal and with the presence of the Secretary General of the United Nations is a step in the right direction and an additional source of hope.

I thank you.