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## **FASID BBL Seminar Summary**

In this Brown Bag Lunch Seminar, Professor Abdalla Ahmed Abdalla, Deputy Chairman of the National Elections Commission of Sudan, gave us a comprehensive explanation about the general elections in Sudan scheduled to be held in April 2010. The following is the summary of his presentation.

### **Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)**

The CPA, endorsed on January 2005 between the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), brought the end to the war between Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan. The main characteristics of the CPA are the following:

- Power-and-wealth-sharing arrangements between Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan.
- Emphasis on the need for restoration of peace, justice, reconciliation between Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan.
- 6 years of interim period starting from 2005.
- Promotion of decentralization in the system of government.
- Self-determination for the people in Southern Sudan.

The above two parties have agreed to open peaceful democratic exercises of public power in the CPA through political pluralism including approval of opposition parties other than the two main parties even though the CPA was concluded by those two parties. To sum up, the CPA is a historic agreement because it ended the war, arranges durable, sustainable peace, and opens up opportunities for other political parties to participate in politics through free, fair and transparent elections.

### **National Elections Commission (NEC):**

Election process presently ongoing in Sudan is governed by three basic legal documents, which are CPA documents, Transitional National Constitution of 2005, and National Elections Act of 2008. These provide for the legal framework for the elections. National Elections Act provides for the establishment of national Elections Commission composed of 9 members including Chairman, Deputy Chairman and other 7 commissioners (2 women, 5 men). They are appointed by the Presidency, and NEC is independent from the Government. The main task of the Commission is to organize and conduct general elections with freedom and justice.

### **Complexity of Elections:**

6 level elections will be held in Sudan. The details are as follows:

- Elections of the President of the Republic of Sudan.
- Elections of the President of the Southern Sudan.
- Elections of Governors of each of the 25 States.
- Elections of National Legislative Assembly for the whole Sudan.
- Elections of Legislative Assembly of Southern Sudan composed of 10 States.
- Elections of Legislative Assembly for each of the 25 States.

These 3 Legislative Elections (National Assembly, Legislative Assembly of Southern Sudan, and Legislative Assembly for each of the 25 States) and 3 executive elections (the President of the Republic of Sudan, the President of the Southern Sudan, and Governors of each of the 25 States) will be held at the same time, which will make elections complex. Furthermore, the detail of elections is different

from each other. For example, for the President of the Sudan's election, 50% plus 1 of all votes cast are required for its election. Otherwise, a second round will be made between two top candidates. However, in case of Governor's elections, those who get the highest votes will win. Another example is National Legislative Assembly. There will be 450 seats altogether which should be allocated as follows; 60% (270 seats) based on geographical constituencies, 25% (112 seats) for women, and 15% (68 seats) for political parties. This rule applies to the other Legislative Assembly election too. Therefore, election operation will be extremely complex. There will be 12 boxes in Southern Sudan, while these are 8 boxes in Northern Sudan. NEC has been working on how to solve these complexities. NEC has embarked on some training and educational programs to tackle these complexities. NEC has had several workshops for the staff as well as Sudanese people. NEC has also conducted training for 400 young journalists on how to cover the elections. These training programs were extremely important since last time Sudan had elections was in 1986. People under 46 years old have not experienced any elections in Sudan. NEC also has close contacts and cooperation with foreign donors such as the European Commission, USAID, Japan as well as UN systems. Particularly, NEC is very grateful to Japan for its contribution of US\$ 10.3 million both for technical and material supports for our elections through UNDP's scheme.

### **Timeframe of Elections:**

Right after appointment of NEC at the beginning of this year, they immediately embarked on designing a framework of elections because elections are series of technical operations based on election laws. The first timeframe for the elections that NEC designed was to have polling by February, 2010. However, because the delay of population census, the census results, NEC had to extend the timeframe to April, 2010. Soon after the result of population census was approved by the Presidency, NEC started working on the demarcation of the geographical constituencies, calculated the number of seats for the women and the political parties lists. This was followed by the registration process. The registration cast will be published around mid December. This is followed by the nomination stage. NEC distributes seats of National Legislative Assembly as well as Legislative Assembly for Southern Sudan, and Legislative Assembly for each State based on the result of population census. After these series of operations, the political parties and candidates will embark on their electoral campaign, supervised by NEC, which continues for 60days. In the process of electoral campaign,

NEC will not only monitor fair and free electoral campaign, but also provides each candidate media exposure on equitable basis. After electoral campaign, comes the time for polling. NEC with the help of international donors monitors the process of polling so that no corruption, no cheating, and no violations of compliances should be allowed.

### **Political Aspect of Election:**

After the end of elections, there are losers and winners. There might be some disagreements with the results of elections, which might cause conflicts as has happened in the neighboring countries. However, as long as the elections are free, fair and credible, the Sudanese people have to take these results for granted. This requires a lot of civic education as well as awareness, understanding, and wisdom of the two major political parties and others, and NEC.

I personally have to admit that Sudan, a country just coming out of conflict, will not have perfect elections, though we will do our best to make elections as perfect as possible. These coming elections should not be looked at as bringing democracy to Sudan immediately. Rather, they should be looked at as a step to democracy. We all should note that transition to democracy takes time. Elections will become more and more perfect as they are repeated. Finally, I would like to finish my presentation by saying that we will do our best to make these elections fair and free, so that they can bring democracy and political stability to Sudan, which leads to economic stability as well as increased welfare for the Sudanese people.