

# Reflections on making peace

*In an interview in Khartoum, Dr Taj es-Sir Mahjoub, co-leader of the Government of Sudan's Core Team during the peace negotiations and former State Minister at the Ministry of Labour and Administrative Reform, spoke about the JAM with Dr Christoph T Jaeger, recruited by UNDP to lead JAM's Cluster 2 (Governance and the Rule of Law).*

**Christoph Jaeger:** *Compared to previous JAM exercises in Liberia or Iraq, the Sudan JAM lasted a long time. Could the process have been shortened?*

**Taj es-Sir:** We insisted JAM should start before the finalisation of the peace negotiations, because we were sure that we would successfully conclude the peace negotiations and needed time to produce a thorough piece of work to which the international community would respond positively.

**Christoph Jaeger:** *Cluster 2 was the only one without a World Bank Co-Leader. Much of what would normally be considered as governance subjects – especially decentralisation issues – was instead dealt with by the World Bank-oriented Cluster 1. Was this separation of issues into two quite different Clusters a good idea?*

**Taj es-Sir:** We considered Cluster 2 as the supporting pillar for all Clusters and a critical cross-cutting issue. That is why we gave it more attention. I was happy with the separation of the two clusters but I hoped for more coordination because you can hardly have good governance without dealing also with issues such as legal and constitutional affairs or decentralised government.

**Christoph Jaeger:** *For three years you were part of the government negotiation team during the Machakos/Naivasha peace process. Was working with the SPLM in the JAM process different from the previous negotiations?*

**Taj es-Sir:** The engagement of both parties in the JAM process greatly contributed to the successful conclusion of the peace agreement. In the peace negotiations, emotions were

high, which sometimes adversely affected rational thinking, whereas the JAM engagements were very objective in jointly dealing with common issues. I personally enjoyed the JAM exercise because it provided me with an opportunity to create rapport with the SPLM participants and our international partners. It also provided us with an opportunity to analyse our common denominators, to air our points of difference and manage them effectively and professionally. JAM provided us with opportunities to identify the needs of the whole of Sudan by working together and this is one very important step towards eventually achieving national unity.

**Christoph Jaeger:** *How has JAM affected the prospects of future collaboration and cohabitation of the two parties within the national government to be formed in mid-July 2005?*

**Taj es-Sir:** I think the JAM process will have a positive influence on the future collaboration and cohabitation of the two parties because it provides a thorough strategic plan for the six years of the Interim Period. This will make it easier for the two parties to work together in the prospective national government. It started out with the joint presentation of the outcome in Oslo and also in the joint visits to some countries as an indication that we see eye-to-eye on our requirements for recovery and reconstruction.

**Christoph Jaeger:** *According to the Machakos Protocol, the peace process after the conclusion of the CPA should be inclusive of all political forces and civil society. Do you feel that civil society was sufficiently involved, that all Sudanese have a sense of ownership of the JAM report and that they know the results of the Oslo Conference?*

**Taj es-Sir:** Civil society was involved. We conducted a number of sessions for civil society organisations and political parties, which did create ownership of the JAM exercise. We even went further by including several civil society representatives in the national teams and in some of the joint workshops. We launched a number of programmes in the form of open fora to disseminate the results of the Oslo conference and to inform the public about it via the media. In addition the conference itself was attended by civil society members and the press people who did publicise the outcome of the Oslo conference. I think one unique aspect of the Sudan JAM, which makes it different from all the other JAMs, is the inclusion of the civil society organisations in all the activities from the preparatory phase up to the conference itself. Two days prior to the Oslo conference two workshops were convened in Oslo, one for civil society organisations and one for women. We definitely need to publicise JAM and Oslo more and are in the process of doing so – including via the pages of FMR.

**Christoph Jaeger:** *The topics related to Cluster 2 were politically sensitive. Human rights, the functioning of the judiciary and the legal administration, the role of law enforcement agencies and the independence of the press are issues on which the international community has disagreed with the government. The language used by many of the original drafters was often considered unacceptable to the government but a watered down presentation may have failed to provide the impact needed for the Oslo Donors Conference. Are you satisfied with the result and the edited version of the cluster report?*

**Taj es-Sir:** We do not agree with those observers who thought that Cluster 2 issues were sensitive. The themes in Cluster 2 – the role of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies etc – are topics that we ourselves are concerned with. The language was watered down not because the government considered it unacceptable but in order to make it culturally acceptable – something which people often find difficult to

understand. I think the final report submitted did describe correctly and sufficiently the issues mentioned above. If you look at the monitoring matrix you will see that all these issues are very sufficiently addressed. The peace agreement talks about these same issues and people are now in the process of putting them into the proper Sudanese context.

**Christoph Jaeger:** *A key issue which must be addressed to make peace sustainable is reintegration and return of IDPs and refugees. Clusters 2 and 7 (Livelihood and Social Protection) primarily addressed this issue. Do you think that the fact that the international teams of the two Clusters had practically no contacts and relations with each other have had a negative impact? Have IDP and refugee issues received sufficient attention?*

**Taj es-Sir:** The issue of IDPs and refugees has been extensively covered particularly in Cluster 7 and most of the issues concerning the IDPs and the return of the refugees have been

given due consideration. In the infrastructure cluster we emphasised the urgent needs for priority attention to improving rail and river transport to ensure the smooth return of IDPs.

**Christoph Jaeger:** *In Oslo donors pledged some \$4.5bn. Did this amount surprise you? Do you expect pledges to be honoured? Does Sudan, particularly the South, have the absorptive capacity to utilise these funds in an effective and efficient manner?*

**Taj es-Sir:** I was not surprised with the result of the pledges because we had done our homework and presented a convincing report. We feel that the international community is genuinely committed to ending the longest running war in Africa. I think we have a reasonably good absorptive capacity. Capacity building was the task of one of the JAM Clusters. We were encouraged by the fact that the World Bank approved support from the LICUS (Low Income Country Under Stress) fund even before the conclusion of the peace agreement

in order to ensure timely building of capacity.

**Christoph Jaeger:** *The Sudanese people and the international community are expecting reforms, especially in the areas dealt with under Cluster 2, in order to give Sudan a chance to stay united during the forthcoming Interim Period. Will these reforms be implemented?*

**Taj es-Sir:** I assure you that there is sufficient political will to face the monumental tasks ahead of us. Necessary reforms needed, which are included in the monitoring matrix of the Oslo document, will be implemented because we are interested in achieving sustainable peace and creating the necessary groundwork for the future development of the country. We will convince our international partners that we are up to the challenge.

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