Informal Joint Event of the ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission on "Promoting Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Sudan and South Sudan" (New York, 13 June 2011)

Informal Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission

I. Introduction

The Joint Informal Event of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was held in New York on 13 June 2011. The overall theme of the meeting was "Promoting Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Sudan and South Sudan". The objectives of the meeting were to draw international attention to the development and state-building priorities of the new country of South Sudan and to promote coordinated, coherent and integrated support by the United Nations system and other stakeholders in line with its needs and to highlight the importance of regional cooperation and strengthened bilateral relations between Sudan and South Sudan for sustainable development and peace consolidation.

The meeting featured opening addresses by the President of the ECOSOC and the Chair of the PBC as well as statements by the President of the 65th session of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Sudan to the United Nations and the Vice President of Southern Sudan. Following the opening session, the meeting was organized around two consecutive informal panel discussions on the following themes: (a) "Development and state-building priorities in South Sudan" and (b) "Promoting durable peace and sustainable development in Sudan and South Sudan: A regional perspective".

II. Opening session

Opening statements highlighted the challenges and opportunities associated with Southern Sudan's formal transition to statehood on 9 July 2011. Speakers stressed the need for "peace with development", as well as sustained African and international support for the process. It was emphasized that promoting national capacity and 'ownership' of the development process in both Sudan and South Sudan is critical and should start as early as possible.

The United Nations reaffirmed its commitment to support both countries going forward. The view was expressed that an integrated approach by intergovernmental bodies, the UN system and other donors and actors will create the conditions for a more effective response and will deliver peace dividends and faster developmental results. It was noted that developing a State's capacity to deter, contain and resolve conflict, provide basic services and to cater to the broader needs of its population was a long-term pursuit.

Experience has shown that post-conflict countries that support economic development, education and political opportunities for their people, in particular women and girls, become more resilient in warding off any relapse into instability of conflict.

A solution on Abyei and popular consultations in the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states were seen to be vital for the development of peaceful North-South relations. While the United Nations would stand ready to support the implementation of these critical aspects of the peace process, it was noted that the main responsibility rested with the leaders of the Sudan and Southern Sudan, who are responsible to protect civilian populations. Leaders of both sides were urged to demonstrate the political will and the flexibility necessary to find solutions to these issues and agree on mechanisms for their implementation.

The representative of the Sudan noted that the shared destiny of history, geography and culture uniting the two states outweigh their differences, while declaring that the Sudan had fulfilled all its obligations under current peace agreements. Sudan also called for increased international assistance, including the lifting of trade sanctions, to support its development goals.

The representative of Southern Sudan presented the key elements of the Southern Sudan Development Plan, along with various governance challenges. Neighborly cooperation (in areas such as Nile river basin usage) would be essential to promote both peace and development, as will international recognition and support of Southern Sudan through innovative approaches to assistance that build on past experiences. The country's new development plan, it was further mentioned, rests on four pillars: (i) governance, (ii) economic growth, (iii) social and human development, and (iv) conflict prevention.

III. Development and state-building priorities in South Sudan

The first interactive panel discussion featured Ms. Hilde Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF as moderator and presentations by H. E. Mr. David Deng Athorbei, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning of Southern Sudan, Ms. Raja Jandhyala, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Africa, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Mr. Tegegnework Gettu, Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP.

The following issues emerged from the discussion:

- The development and state-building needs of South Sudan will be enormous and hence the volume of assistance should be commensurate with the scale of the challenges. Major capacity gaps will need to be filled urgently. In this context of support for core governance functions, South Sudan should be a "test case" for implementing the recommendations of the Civilian Capacity Report.

- It is crucial to support the peacebuilding process, in particular by bringing together its political, security and development aspects.

- National ownership should be encouraged and developed so that that the Government of South Sudan can coordinate development assistance in alignment with its own priorities.

- State building in South Sudan will require system-wide coherence, predictable funding and capacity building for state institutions.

- There should be a rethinking of traditional approaches to aid and donor coordination, building upon recent best practices and innovations.

- Donors are encouraged to take a sector-based approach to funding activities using pooled funding in the areas of 1) basic services, 2) conditional transfers, 3) infrastructure and 4) education and training of the civil service. A High-Level partnership forum will coordinate the donor activities.

- After its independence, South Sudan could be considered as a beneficiary of the Peacebuilding Fund in order to continue benefiting from the current PBF in Sudan and Southern Sudan.

- In order to generate employment and prosperity to support peace and development, the economy of new state of South Sudan must be diversified. The private sector must be strengthened and agriculture should receive particular attention. The strategy for economic growth must be inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

- In order to ensure national ownership of the state building process, human capital must be developed at both the center and the periphery. Capacity building of the state should focus on public administration, technical and enforcement functions, to ensure that basic services are provided, security is maintained and the rule of law is enforced. The decision-making process must be transparent in order to ensure accountability.

- With respect to capacity building for the civil service, South Sudan should benefit from lessons learned from experiences of other countries in strengthening civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict.

- It will be important to prioritize among several issues as well as to manage the expectations of the public in order to avoid frustration and social tensions

IV. Promoting durable peace and sustainable development in the Sudan and South Sudan: A regional perspective

The second interactive panel discussion featured Mr. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations as moderator and presentations by Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, H.E. Mr.

David Deng Athorbei, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning of Southern Sudan, and a representative of the Republic of the Sudan.

The following issues emerged from the discussion:

- The challenges of implementing the peace agreement and ensuring two economically viable States must not be underestimated.

- The sharing of natural resources will be vital for durable peace and sustainable development in both countries. Cooperation should be promoted between the two countries in the areas of agriculture, water and oil. Water is a valuable resource that can benefit both countries and promote peace. The Nile can be used as a means of communication and to promote trade. Joint ventures in the development of hydroelectric power in the new state of South Sudan will promote peace between the countries through cooperation. Hydroelectric power is also vital for electrification. The building of a pipeline through Sudan to transport the oil reserves located in Southern Sudan could be explored as a mutually beneficial project.

- Sustainable development may be stalled in both countries by the burden of foreign debt, rising food prices and climate change. Urgent action is required to mitigate the impact of the recent price increases for basic food commodities in both the Sudan and Southern Sudan, making them increasingly reliant on food aid. The effects of future climate change on agriculture are threatening food security. If the countries cannot feed themselves in the long term, maintaining peace and sustainable development will be difficult.

- The UN will play a vital role in the transition from relief to sustainable development, which will increase cooperation between the two countries. The new UN mission in South Sudan proposed by the Secretary-General will help move development forward. Commitment from international donors in the long term is also vital for continued peace, security and development. International aid is crucial for capacity building to promote growth in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

- Strong regional cooperation is vital to peace and sustainable development in the region. International donors should commit to both Sudan and the new country of South Sudan, in order to promote the continuation of peace and development in both countries. It is crucial that peaceful, open and strong relationships are maintained with all surrounding countries. The events that take place in Sudan and Southern Sudan have an impact on the entire continent.

V. Closing Session

In his closing remarks, the President of ECOSOC underscored that the international community, led by the United Nations, has a central role to play in ensuring the peaceful transition of Southern Sudan to full-fledged statehood and will remain fully engaged. He stressed that successful development in both Southern Sudan and the Sudan will require: (i) national ownership of development initiatives, (ii) adequate, predictable and coordinated foreign aid, (iii) mutual resolve to settle post-CPA disputes non-violently, particularly in the equitable distribution of shared natural resources, (iv) regional cooperation and (v) strengthened institutions and accountability.