



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr SULIEMAN MOHAMED MUSTAFA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN
TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 17 December 2009*

Your Excellency,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican today and to receive the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Sudan to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings you have expressed on behalf of His Excellency Omar al-Bashir, President of the Republic, and I ask you kindly to convey my good wishes to all your beloved fellow citizens.

The Holy See willingly establishes diplomatic relations with different countries as a vehicle for fostering dialogue and cooperation worldwide. This dialogue can assist greatly in overcoming tensions, misrepresentations and misunderstandings, especially when these endanger the cause of peace and development. In the case of Sudan, the Holy See was profoundly gratified at the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement four years ago which ended a tragic period of immense suffering, loss of life and destruction. The expectations generated by this agreement, contracted by important parties within the country and with the support of the international community, must be kept alive. The positive results, based on a genuine search for just solutions to tensions and on multi-party cooperation, should inspire further improvements in the process of implementation. Likewise in this delicate period, the good work being undertaken by international peacekeepers in sensitive areas and by humanitarian agencies deserves the support and due assistance of all national and regional authorities.

Mr Ambassador, the country you represent has the resources and the population to become an

important actor on the African Continent. It will prosper when the nation's citizens live in a land where harmony and goodwill prevail, on the basis of the just resolution of existing conflicts acceptable to all parties. Violence "puts the brake on authentic development and impedes the evolution of people towards greater socio-economic and spiritual well-being" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 29); peace and development, two essential elements for the well-being of any nation, cannot exist without the safeguarding of human rights for all citizens without exception.

In this context, it must be noted that the people of Darfur continue to suffer greatly. Negotiated agreements between armed groups have been slow and faltering and are in urgent need of support from all sides. Respect for civilian populations and their basic human rights, and responsibilities in relation to national and regional stability clearly require renewed attempts to seek lasting agreements. It is my heartfelt hope that all parties may pursue every opportunity for settlement through dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This is the only way that will lead to stability - underpinned by truth, justice and reconciliation - for the Darfur region and for the rest of the country.

Mr Ambassador, the Catholic Church in your country is committed to the spiritual and human well-being of her members and indeed of all the citizens of the nation, especially through education, healthcare and development projects and by fostering a spirit of tolerance, peace and respect for others through dialogue and cooperation. Catholics seek only that freedom, recognition and respect proper to the Church's identity and mission. Sudan, like many countries is faced with the challenge of seeking a true and just balance between conserving cultural values that mark the identity of the majority of the population while respecting the rights and freedom of minorities. Public authorities need to ensure that the fundamental human right of religious freedom be truly enjoyed by people of all faiths. Likewise, families of a religious minority living where schools have educational programmes suitable for the religious majority, rightly look for the recognition of their parental rights to determine the education of their children without hindrance from the law. Both Muslim and Christian parents share the same affection and concern for their children and their welfare, especially regarding their religious upbringing.

Your Excellency, I invite you to avail yourself of the willing cooperation of the Departments of the Roman Curia as I wish you every success in your mission to further the cordial relations existing between the Sudan and the Holy See. May the Almighty bestow his blessings upon Your Excellency, your family and the nation you represent.

**Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI, V, 2 p.735-737.*

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