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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Society Studies Centre (MADA ssc), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 August 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The Challenges of 2015 General Elections in Sudan

The Society Studies Centre (SSC) kept giving much concern to the issues of democracy and peaceful devolution of power in Sudan believing that it is the most appropriate method for power transfer. According to the Elections Act 2008, Sudan will enter its second election session in 2015 having its first round in April 2010. The upcoming round represents a good opportunity for peaceful conveyance of power. No doubt, a free fair and regular election is a crucial matter and it is an important feature of democratic systems since it is the sole means for achieving periodic devolution of power every set number of years giving voters their chance to hold accountable the elected party or party coalition that came to power through the previous elections.

In view of the above, the SSC within the context of its project on consolidating the culture of elections, peaceful devolution of power and public consultation on the upcoming permanent constitution, held a number of workshops and symposia to evaluate the experience of the 2010 elections, discuss the challenges and entitlements of the upcoming elections and the roles of civil society and woman therein in order to prepare the political arena for the coming elections as an appropriate and constitutional means for power devolution and democratic practice in general. This comes in line with viewing the Constitution as the major reference and guarantor of the election process since it specifies the political, electoral and judicial systems and stipulates the principles of federalism, human rights and other important issues. Agreement and consensus on these issues manifested in the Constitution guarantees establishing a democratic political system and a peaceful devolution of power through free and fair elections as a mechanism for avoiding the hazards of armed conflict and preventing treatment of contentious issues through violence and mutiny.

The SSC had participated in all phases of the April 2010 elections in Sudan including training election observers and monitoring all phases of the electoral process. By the end of the first round and the start of the second in the coming April, SSC expresses its deep appreciation for the steps taken towards enhancing democracy and peace building by the government of Sudan through launching the initiative for national dialogue with recommendations and a national strategic plan deemed to lead to achieving a genuine democracy, rule of law and consolidation of peace in Sudan with the participation of all political parties forces. This trend was enhanced further by amending the Election Act to guarantee wider participation and representation in addition to re-forming the Election Commission with the consent of other political forces to promote the Commission's impartiality and independence and to enable it undertake its crucial role in enhancing democracy, good governance and peace in Sudan. In this regard, we commend the early preparations and arrangements made by the Commission in setting a time schedule for the upcoming elections which give a positive and encouraging indication to the political parties and forces for early engagement in the electoral process.

Despite the fact that Sudan had run a successful electoral process in 2010 by virtue of the Election Act 2008 and the formation of an independent election commission and a council for conducting the affairs of political parties, and in spite of partisan competition and international monitoring of the elections, the armed movements in South Kordofan and Darfur still pose the most serious threat to the elections and political transformation in the country by forming alliances for a forced and violent change. This approach has grave repercussions on the Sudanese nation and society. The said movements could work for improving and perfecting the electoral process which is the most appropriate means for power devolution and is the most prominent feature of practicing democracy. They can resort to the results of the elections conducted on periodic bases in accordance with the law and the Constitution at the three levels of government "local, parliamentary and presidential". Elections enable the party that obtains the greater number of seats to access power in the country through objective and rational method and avoid the risks of conflicts and disputes.

The SSC, in observing and watching the general elections and the democratic development in Sudan, would like to highlight some of the substantial challenges that face democracy and peaceful transfer of power. These could be summed up in the negative role of the armed movements in Darfur and South Kordofan following their armed approach and obstructing thereby the opportunities of achieving peace and stability which all the people of Sudan aspire for. In this regard, we would like to stipulate the following:

First: Call upon your esteemed Council to give support to the steps taken towards achieving peaceful transfer of power through free and fair elections and on the other hand exert pressure on the armed movements to abandon violence, join the peace process and acknowledge that election is the most appropriate means for accessing power.

Second: Call upon the Government of Sudan to prepare the environment before, during and after the electoral process and to work for completing the project and strategy of the national dialogue it had recently launched.

Third: Call upon the Election Commission to make use of the last election experience conducted in April 2010 in conducting the upcoming process and make every necessary arrangement to avoid repeating the previous shortcomings and guarantee holding a free, fair and transparent elections.

Fourth: Call upon all political parties to enhance the democratic practice and join the coming elections to guarantee the aspired political stability for our country.
