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EU Council press release

**EU - SUDAN POLITICAL DIALOGUE
Khartoum, 18 December 2003**

Joint Communiqué

An EU Troika, led by the Italian Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Alfredo Mantica, representing the EU Presidency, met with representatives of the Government of the Sudan, led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, in the framework of the EU – Sudan political dialogue, initiated in November 1999.

The two parties welcomed the considerable progress made in the peace process and in particular the agreement on security and military arrangements. Both parties underlined that the perspective of a peace agreement offered the people of the Sudan new hope of development and prosperity. In this context, both parties expressed their desire to see the peace negotiations reach a successful conclusion as soon as possible. The Government of the Sudan stressed its strong commitment to achieving this goal.

The EU welcomes the substantial progress in the normalisation of relations of the Sudan with its neighbours, and will encourage all IGAD Member States to continue to contribute to peace and stability in the whole region.

The two parties reviewed progress in 2003 on the agreed benchmarks in the EU – Sudan Political Dialogue on the peace process, democratisation, the rule of law and human rights and noted the progress made within these areas of concern. The Government of the Sudan reiterated its full commitment to make further progress and expressed its willingness to implement a number of concrete steps in this regard.

Internet: <http://ue.eu.int/>
E-mail: press.office@consilium.eu.int

The EU expressed its full readiness to support the implementation of a comprehensive peace agreement in the Sudan. When a peace agreement is signed, the EU will fully normalise relations with the Sudan and resume development cooperation, including resettlement, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development for the whole of the Sudan. In parallel to resumption of development cooperation, the political dialogue would continue under article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, incorporating the elements and commitments under the EU – Sudan Political Dialogue covered hitherto. The parties agreed to immediately start the technical preparations of the programmes to be financed once development cooperation is resumed.

The two parties acknowledged that a peace agreement would facilitate further progress in the areas of democratisation, the rule of law and human rights, and the EU would undertake to work proactively with the Government and People of Sudan to consolidate peace and accelerate sustainable development as well as progress in these areas of concern.

The EU expressed deep concern with regard to the developments in Darfur, in particular the humanitarian situation there. The EU calls upon all parties to fully cooperate in the implementation of the Tripartite Agreement, signed in Abeche, the Republic of Chad, on 3 September 2003. The EU urges the parties to cooperate with the initiative of the Chadian Government, and continue negotiations for arriving at a peaceful settlement. Furthermore, the EU urges all the parties to ensure protection of civilian population, and to allow for unhindered humanitarian access for the population in need.

The EU expressed its appreciation for the continued commitment of the Government of the Sudan to fight international terrorism in all its forms and supported efforts to further strengthen this fight.

The two parties stressed the utility of the dialogue and agreed to continue it under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement.
