

**Remarks on the General Elections in Sudan**  
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With regard to the work of the Japanese Election Observation Team for the general elections in Sudan, the voting for which was conducted from 11 to 15 April 2010, I wish to present the following observations in my capacity as the Head of the Team upon the closure of the voting.

1. The Team was dispatched at the invitation of the National Election Commission of Sudan (NEC) and was composed of sixteen members, including government officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Embassy of Japan in Sudan, among others, university professors and representatives of academic and non-governmental organizations. The Team conducted observation activities in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan; Juba, the capital of the South; and El Fashir, the provincial capital of the Northern Darfur State; and visited more than 150 polling centers. I was aware that there were pros and cons as to the advisability of conducting observation activities in the troubled Darfur region. In the meantime, many international observers, with the exception of the European Union, in fact carried out monitoring activities in Darfur. Even the international mass media including the Japanese media conducted active broadcasting from the region. Considering these facts, I wish to affirm that it was an appropriate judgment and meaningful experience for the Japanese Team to have implemented its own observation work in the region.

2. The general elections, which were held based on the North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005, were extremely broad in scope and complicated. Six elections, namely, those for the President of Sudan, the President of the Government of Southern Sudan and the Governors of the twenty-five States throughout the country, as well as for the members of the National Assembly, the Southern Sudan Assembly and the State Assemblies, were conducted simultaneously. In addition, the systems employing proportional representation of political parties and reserving a quarter of the seats for women were introduced for the first time in the legislative elections. The international community, for its part, was paying close attention to the elections, as they were considered an important benchmark in the implementation of the CPA. Approximately fifteen international observation missions were dispatched all over Sudan, from individual countries such as Japan, China, Russia and Brazil; from organizations such as the European Union, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Intergovernmental Agency for Development (IGAD); and from European and American non-governmental organizations such as the Carter Center, among others. More than eight hundred international observers participated in monitoring activities, together with about twenty thousand local observers. Engagement in such a massive observation undertaking conducted by the international community was in itself a valuable

experience for the Japanese Team. Furthermore, beyond Japan's budgetary contribution to the elections through UNDP amounting to approximately ten million US dollars (one billion Japanese yen), the dispatch of an observation team was important, in that it supplemented the financial assistance from the standpoint of a personnel contribution.

3. In addition to their wide scope and complexity, the elections were the first example of nation-wide elections in Sudan, the largest country in Africa. They were also the first multi-party elections in twenty-four years, the last having been held in 1986. Furthermore, the literacy rate among adults in Sudan is only approximately sixty percent. Considering these challenges, conducting the elections was extremely difficult in terms of logistics. For various reasons, the elections were delayed several times beyond the original schedule stipulated in the CPA and were finally set to be held in April this year, although remained the possibility of further postponement until the last moment before the elections. Despite these difficulties, the polling was launched on 11 April as scheduled. Various technical and operational problems emerged on the first day of the voting, causing much confusion in many places. The Team also confirmed the occurrence of such troubles in its observation activities. Many technical difficulties were partially eased owing to the actions of the NEC and other efforts, and the voting proceeded relatively smoothly from the second day. Certain problems, however, were not corrected, and there were several constituencies where the elections themselves were postponed. Due to the delays resulting from these setbacks, the NEC decided to extend the polling period for two days, which in my view was unavoidable. Many of the issues encountered were to some degree foreseeable, given the circumstances surrounding the elections. It is, however, not clear to what extent these problems may have affected the election results. It is still possible that further problems may appear at the phase of the announcement of the results and that opposition parties might reject them, and therefore the post-election situation is not predictable.

4. In the meantime, despite the long voting period of five days, no serious security incident related to the elections occurred, and the polling was conducted in a generally peaceful manner. In light of the concerns over security prior to the elections, this is something that we must wholeheartedly celebrate, and the efforts of the NEC and other relevant authorities in this regard deserve high praise. In addition, it was impressive that NEC staff members at each polling station, particularly the younger ones, were making devoted efforts for the implementation of their tasks, despite their relatively short period of training, lack of experience and severe working conditions. It must be noted as well that, as a side benefit of the elections, the massive operation for the implementation of the elections had a positive impact on human resource development for the NEC and its subsidiary bodies, which should contribute to the future democratization of Sudan. Moreover, the conduct of the majority of the voters, who awaited their turn to vote patiently and in an orderly fashion, was also praiseworthy, as it too contributed to the smooth implementation of the elections. It was moving for me, personally, to witness the seriousness of the many people in the South casting ballots for the first time in their lives.

5. The elections were a process to advance the promotion of democratization in Sudan,

which is one of the fundamental aims of the CPA. Taking this into account, it was important for these elections to be conducted in a free and fair manner, and that the voters would judge the elections as such. From this point of view, the Team had meetings with representatives of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) of the South, as well as other major opposition parties, and sought their views on the elections. All parties except for the NCP made complaints that the ruling NCP had committed misconduct in multiple electoral processes, including the population census, voter registration, delimitation of constituencies and election campaigning. Furthermore, they also questioned the impartiality of the NEC and argued that the elections could not be regarded as free and fair. While the Team, which carried out only short-term observation work as its main objective, is not in a position to make a conclusive judgment on such claims, it is of the view that the boycotting of and the announcement of withdrawal from the elections by some major opposition parties for the aforementioned reasons may have damaged the credibility of the elections to some extent. In addition, the elections were not implemented throughout the country in a complete manner, as evidenced by the case of the postponement of the governor and state assembly elections in the Southern Kordofan State as a result of a dispute among political parties over the outcome of the population census. At the same time, according to an announcement of the NEC, the voter turnout for the elections was more than sixty percent, which means that one out of four members of the entire population in Sudan, that is, more than ten million voters, out of approximately forty million people, cast ballots in the polling. It can therefore be said that the elections reflected the people's will to a significant extent.

6. As the Team included academic experts on Sudan, it was unique in that it could make comprehensive observation and assessment not only through its monitoring activities at polling stations but also by utilizing these specialists' insights on the entire electoral process. From this point of view, I am certain that the reports to be submitted by individual members of the Team at a later date will contribute significantly to the analysis of the situation in Sudan and the examination of Japan's future diplomatic policies regarding the country, and thus hope that they will be made use of in a wise manner. In addition, the activities and report of the Team, which were the joint work of government officials and researchers, will be a good reference for similar operations in the future.

7. Finally, in my capacity as the Head of the Team, I wish to pay respect and tribute to the active and sincere efforts of the Team members in conducting the observation work under the severe conditions presented by the natural environment, such as daily temperatures in excess of forty degrees centigrade, as well as the psychological pressures brought to bear by the security concerns. I am relieved that they have safely concluded their assignment as members of the Team. In this regard, I wish to express my appreciation to the Embassy of Japan in Sudan, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) for their generous assistance. In conclusion, I also wish to add that, at the polling centers that the Team visited for observation, both voters and NEC staff received us warmly, simply because we were the Team from Japan.