



# Integrated UN DDR Unit Photo Release

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## Noted BBC Presenter Zeinab Badawi Meets Women Balladeers As They Sing for Peace and DDR in Sudan

**Khartoum, 1 April 2010** – Well-known BBC presenter of Sudanese origin, Ms. Zeinab Badawi, spent time with the *Hakama* women singing group and watched them perform at the Tayeba displaced persons camp in Khartoum North. The *Hakamas* had traveled from Southern Kordofan State to perform for Ms. Badawi, who is in the country to learn about the role of cultural symbols and the folk and traditional forms of communication in peace-building.

The *Hakamas* are a part of the UNDP and the North Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Commission (NSDDRC)-implemented project that seeks to train these traditional singers in peace education, human rights, HIV awareness and DDR. The *Hakamas* have since traveled all around their region and to Khartoum, spreading messages of peace and reconciliation.

*Hakamas* are traditional women singers indigenous to Southern Kordofan, Northern Kordofan and Southern Darfur States. During the long conflict in Sudan, *Hakamas*, a word that roughly translates as 'the wise ones', sang songs about bravery and cowardice to encourage men on the frontlines. Explaining the role of the *Hakamas* to Ms. Badawi, Maha Freigoun of the NSDDRC said, "*Hakamas* used to sing to encourage men to fight. Now they exhort their community to strive for peace, progress and development. The *Hakamas* are a human way of spreading messages of peace instead of a book, newspaper or television."

The leader of the *Hakamas* group, Huaida Nimir, who has been working with UNDP and the NSDDRC since 2006 described the transformation she, her colleagues and her community has experienced since the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. She said, "There is nothing like peace. Peace is our future and I am optimistic."

After witnessing the *Hakamas* perform and talking to them individually, Ms. Badawi reflected, "Can a song bring peace? Well certainly, listening to and watching the *Hakamas* from Southern Kordofan is testimony to the fact that a song for peace does have the power to influence the community. The women believe in the power of what they are doing to consolidate peace. Their vigour, vibrancy and enthusiasm is very moving as you know the words in praise of peace are heartfelt coming from these women who have lived through so much suffering."

UNDP and the NSDDRC supported the *Hakamas'* training and performances since 2006 through the Sudan DDR Programme, which is helping 180,000 former fighters from North and South to reintegrate into civilian life. The *Hakamas* are promoting peace and reconciliation in war-affected communities through their songs.

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Ms. Zeinab Badawi standing with the Hakamas (photo: Monique De Groot, UNDP)



The Hakamas sing for the crowd in Tayeba IDP camp (photo: Justyna Pietralik, UNDP)