

Sudan government, Darfur rebels hold talks in Nigeria

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Sudan's government and rebels from Darfur met Tuesday for a second day of talks in Nigeria, with the visiting Dutch prime minister urging all parties to reach a power-sharing deal by the end of the year.

Although the sixth round of peace talks on Darfur was officially launched in mid-September, government and rebel negotiators in Nigeria's capital had not held any direct discussions until this week.

Instead, they attended seminars on peace negotiations and waited as Darfur's main rebel group argued about the makeup of its delegation.

Addressing the parties at the start of talks Tuesday, Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende urged all sides to make an effort to bring peace by the end of the year.

After decades of low-level clashes over land and water that pitted nomads against villagers, rebels from ethnic African tribes launched a large-scale conflict in early 2003, accusing the Arab-dominated central government of neglect.

The central government is accused of responding by unleashing Arab tribal militias known as Janjaweed to murder and rape civilians and lay waste to villages.

More than 180,000 people have died in Darfur and another 2 million people have been displaced in the fighting.

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