CAIRO, Jan 17 (AFP) -- The Sudanese government and National Democratic Alliance (NDA) signed a political agreement that should see the exiled opposition umbrella group reintegrated into Sudan's political life, diplomats said Monday.

National Democratic Alliance delegation from the left Abdulrahman Saeed and Hatim Alsir during the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the SPLA and the Sudan Government in Kenya's capital Nairobi, Januray 9, 2005. (Sudan Tribune).

"The two parties have reached an agreement on all political, constitutional and legislative questions defining the steps towards democratic change in Sudan," said Sudan's charge d'affaires in Cairo, Mohammed Abdallah, quoted by Egypt's news agency MENA.

A final accord between the government and Cairo-based group is to be signed on February 12 in the Egyptian capital, said NDA vice president Adel Rahman Saeed.

The agreement struck late Sunday envisages lifting the state of emergency in place since 1989 and setting up a joint commission to look at how to reintegrate the NDA into Sudan's political life, a statement said.

The two sides also intend to set up a commission to reintegrate armed rebels from the east of Sudan on the border with Eritrea back into regular Sudanese forces. However the statement did not offer any timetable for these measures.

"All the sides must unite to rebuild Sudan to carry out development in all areas and I hope that this accord will help to reestablish peace and security in the country," Abdallah said.

The agreement puts an end to 15 years of friction between the Khartoum government and the opposition group headed by Mohamed Osman al-Marghani.

The signing of the accord also marks another key step in efforts to bring peace to all of Africa's largest country after the southern SPLM/A earlier this month signed a historic deal to end the longest running civil war in the continent.

However the goal of peace throughout Sudan is still far off.

Conflict between the government and rebels continues to rage in the western Darfur province, claiming the lives of 70,000 people and displacing 1.5 million others.

The talks leading up to the agreement in Cairo with the country's largest exiled political bloc were held under the auspices of Egypt, whose intelligence chief Omar Suleiman took part in the signing ceremony.

The NDA is a coalition of northern organisations which also includes the southern SPLM/A.

It is seen as a rival to the Al-Umma party of Sadek al-Mahdi -- Sudan's legal opposition -- and the outlawed Popular Congress of jailed Islamist Hassan al-Turabi.

The final phase of talks with the government negotiating team -- led by powerful Vice President Ali Osman Taha -- started last June and then resumed in September with an agenda focused on the constitution and legal rights.