



The Darfur Consortium

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To: Ministries for Foreign Affairs/Permanent Missions Geneva

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Your Excellency,

The Darfur Consortium is a group of Africa focused and Africa based non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics, independent legal experts and parliamentarians dedicated to finding a peaceful and sustainable solution to the crisis in Darfur, Sudan.

We are deeply concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation on the ground in Darfur, and are writing to seek your leadership during discussions at the current session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

As you will be aware in December of this year the UN Human Rights Council (the Council) mandated a mission of "highly qualified persons" to Sudan to "assess the human rights situation in Darfur and the needs of the Sudan". The High Level Mission (HLM) which was subsequently appointed has just presented its report and recommendations to the Council in Geneva. As you will also be aware, due to objections raised to the composition of the mission, the HLM team was unable to travel to Sudan. The HLM's report was therefore compiled on the basis of extensive consultations in Geneva, in Addis Ababa and in Eastern Chad.

Your Excellency,

The suggestion has been made that as the HLM was unable to access the territory of Sudan that its conclusions on the situation in Darfur should be considered null and void. We respectfully disagree. The HLM had at its disposal a wealth of information based on expert consultations conducted with United Nations, African Union, non-governmental and other inter-governmental experts (the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan herself was a member of the HLM). On the ground in Chad the team met with hundreds of victims of forced displacement in Darfur.

It is difficult to refute the reality that the overwhelming evidence available on the current situation in Darfur indicates the persistence of a major human rights and humanitarian crisis in the region. Hundreds of thousands of Darfurians have died in the conflict. Over two and a half million men, women and children remain displaced both inside and outside Sudan. The violence has now also definitively spilled over into Chad and the Central African Republic, where deadly civilian attacks occur daily and tens of thousands have been forced from their homes. Vital

humanitarian tasks have being so disrupted by the lack of protection for both Darfurians and aid workers alike that last January 14 leading humanitarian aid agencies came together in an unprecedented plea to the international community that they would shortly no longer be able “to hold the line” against massive suffering in Darfur.

Your Excellency,

As the Nobel Peace Prize-winner Jody Williams urged last week when introducing the report of the HLM, further fact finding is not what is needed in Darfur – what the people of Darfur now deserve is decisive action by the Council.

We believe it would be unconscionable if the report of the HLM was not taken into consideration by the Council - particularly if it were rejected on grounds which simply serve to reinforce the policy of obstructionism which has been displayed towards the HLM by the Government of Sudan.

We would note in particular that the findings of the HLM echo the central thrust of the conclusions and recommendations of the reports of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission on the experience of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the decisions which the AU Peace and Security Council has taken in response. On 20th September last for example the AU Peace and Security Council noted its “deep concern that the situation remains volatile and continues to deteriorate even further in some parts of Darfur, consequently worsening the humanitarian and human rights situation and that the current build up of forces by all the parties further risks and challenges the peace efforts”. The same decision urged a halt to “hostile military flights over Darfur”, reiterated an intention to impose targeted sanctions and called on the the Government of the Sudan to “take steps to remove all the bureaucratic and other related obstacles that are hampering AMIS operations.” A subsequent Council decision endorsed the deployment of a hybrid AU-UN operation to Darfur and “decided” that the size of that force shall be “determined by the African Union and the United Nations”.

Your Excellency,

African States have been clear on international responsibility to protect the people of Darfur when meeting together in New York, Addis Ababa and Abuja. We urge that over the next week in Geneva they remain consistent and united to ensure that the Council acts to fulfill its responsibilities towards the people of Darfur.

We respectfully request therefore that you advocate that the Council adopts the report and core recommendations of the HLM and establishes a mechanism for continued monitoring of this egregious situation.

We are grateful for you kind consideration of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

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