



H.E. Mr. Bernard Kouchner,
Minister for Foreign and European Affairs
Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
37, quai d'Orsay
75007 Paris, France

Geneva, 22.06.2007

Subject: Enlarged International Contact Group on Darfur, Paris, 25th June 2007

Your Excellency,

We, the representatives of the undersigned civil society organisations from Darfur, are honoured to address your government on the occasion of the convening of the enlarged International Contact Group on Darfur to be held in Paris on June 25, 2007. In this regard we also wish to thank the government of France for its efforts to maintain peace and stability in some volatile spots in Africa in particular for its support to the beleaguered people of Darfur during this difficult time in their history. We have been moved by France's initiative to open humanitarian corridors in order to provide life-saving relief material and protection to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside Darfur and to the refugees from Darfur in Eastern Chad and the Central African Republic. This timely intervention of France is among the bold actions embarked upon by a state member of the United Nations to help end the suffering of the victims of the conflict in Darfur.

Your Excellency,

As you are fully aware, the situation in Darfur is so acute and so urgent that it requires a swift and robust response from the international community. In their recently concluded Summit held in Heiligendamm (Germany) on 6th – 8th June, 2007, leaders of the G8 declared that: "We are deeply concerned about the tragic security and humanitarian situation in Darfur." We are also pleased to note that the G8 Final Declaration stated that: "Those violating the human rights of civilians in Darfur must be held responsible, and we will support efforts to bring the perpetrators of atrocities to justice." It added that: "If the government of Sudan or the rebel movements continue to fail to meet their obligations, we will support appropriate action in the Security Council." We fully support this strong warning message sent by the G8 to all parties to the conflict in Darfur. We firmly believe that it is time for the international community to follow up word with deed.

Our organisations continue to receive worrisome reports about the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in Darfur. There is a sharp rise in the mortality and morbidity rates in the region with an estimated 3 million war-affected persons including civilians in inaccessible rural areas. Military operations, Janjaweed attacks and forceful displacement have even reached

hitherto peaceful areas in East and South Darfur. Insecurity, threats and aggressions against humanitarian relief organisations and aid workers as well as aggressive administrative measures imposed by the government to obstruct smooth inflow of the much needed relief material into Darfur have forced many relief organisations to reduce their presence in Darfur to the minimum level. As of recently we observed that a growing number of humanitarian relief groups are being forced to abandon large areas of Darfur especially in the countryside. The latest group to leave Darfur was Oxfam who decided on 17th June 2007 to permanently close down its humanitarian operations in the Gereida area in South Darfur. They cited reluctance of the government authorities to improve the security situation and stop attacks on aid workers as the reasons why they are leaving the area. According to our estimates at least one million individual in West, South and North Darfur are now stranded in rural areas without access to the external world. They were left alone at the mercy of the Janjaweed militiamen and the government army with limited international presence. The world knows very little about the fate of these people. They need immediate assistance and protection.

On 31st August 2006, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1706 (2006) which authorized the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in Darfur. Implementation of this Resolution faced many difficulties as the government of Sudan used all tactics to render it unworkable. We are very much concerned that many innocent lives were lost because of Sudan's refusal to protect its own citizens in Darfur and the world's inability to affect a timely intervention. The world's policy of diplomatic engagement with an unwilling partner proved to be very costly in terms of the loss of human lives in Darfur but also in terms of regional peace and stability. Under the circumstances the victims of atrocities in Darfur expect the immediate deployment of a robust and resourceful peacekeeping force to protect them without delay. The government of Sudan continues to send conflicting signals about its readiness to cooperate with the international community in this respect and to facilitate their work in protecting individuals in need in Darfur. In light of the catastrophic nature of the crisis in Darfur the government of Sudan should not be allowed to impede or delay the effective deployment of the AU/UN hybrid peacekeeping force in Darfur under any pretext.

Your Excellency,

The armed conflict in Darfur is essentially a political conflict and, therefore, it cannot be resolved unless the concerned parties engage into a negotiated political settlement. The political process had started by the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur that ended with the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in Abuja on 5th May 2006. Alas events on the ground in Darfur proved that the DPA has failed to deliver peace and security to the victims of the conflict in the region. It is our belief that the process that led to the signing of the DPA was flawed, disingenuous and manipulated to the disadvantage of the victims of the conflict in Darfur. The DPA was reached under unhealthy conditions with dramatic increase in violence and insecurity in Darfur. This is because the DPA was negotiated and signed in the absence of a meaningful ceasefire arrangement respected by all the parties to the conflict. The DPA was in fact imposed on one of the rebel factions who signed it under threat, intimidation and blackmailing.

Now it is time for the peace partners in Darfur to look at the process that led to the DPA to draw lessons from its strong and weak points, take stock of the results achieved and decide on the best future course of action. Preparations for the new round of political negotiations should be prudent and inclusive. We believe that any meaningful future negotiations for a political settlement in Darfur should sincerely address the root causes underneath the armed conflict in the region. Such negotiations should treat the major obstacles to peace in Darfur and Sudan and work out genuine

and acceptable solutions for them. Forcing the holdout Darfur insurgent groups to sign the DPA as it stands at present and without sincere efforts for a suitable formula to accommodate their concerns and the concerns of the victims of the conflict would further jeopardize the prospect for peace in Darfur. It would generate unpredictable reaction from the IDPs and the war-affected communities and could put the lives of external observers in the region in danger.

Your Excellency,

Once again we commend the efforts of the government of France for taking its initiatives to open humanitarian corridors in eastern Chad and Darfur and also for convening the enlarged International Contact Group on Darfur. It is our firm belief that France has rightly set the example that other nations ought to follow suit. The people of Darfur will ever remember this kind helping hand, which was extended to them at a time of growing fears and skepticism. We wish to avail ourselves of this opportunity to renew our appreciation and thanks to the government of French who stood firm against the atrocities being perpetrated in Darfur. We need not mention that our organisations and the entire community of the victims of atrocities in Darfur will stand ready to extend to you any support and assistance that you may require in this regard.

While thanking you once again for all your excellent endeavours, please accept, Your Excellency, the assurance of our highest respect and consideration.

Signed by:

1. Darfur Call – The Hague, Netherlands,
Ahmed M. Mohamadain, Managing Director
2. Darfur Centre for Human Rights and Development – London, UK
Abdelatif Ismael, President
3. Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre – Geneva, Switzerland
Abdelbagi Jibril, Executive Director
4. Darfur Peace and Justice – Brussels, Belgium
Mohamadain M. Ishag, President
5. Darfur Peace and Development – USA
Suliman Giddo, President

N.B. We shall be grateful if you could make convenient to make copies of this letter available to the participants at the meeting of the enlarged International Contact Group on Darfur on 25th June 2007.