



# human rights *first*

November 23, 2005

H.E. Kofi A. Annan  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
United Nations Secretariat Building, 38<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

I write to convey our urgent concerns about the need for greater action by the United Nations and its member states in response to the human rights emergency in Darfur. Specifically, we urge you to appoint a prominent public envoy to reenergize the diplomatic process with an aim of ending the conflict there.

As you know, in the last two months the security situation in Darfur has deteriorated dramatically. United Nations personnel have withdrawn from parts of the region because of increased violence, the humanitarian relief work of international nongovernmental organizations has been greatly restricted, and the civilian toll is again climbing. An estimated two million people remain unable to return to their homes because of the ongoing violence. They and others are increasingly subject to attacks by Janjaweed militia, often with support from the Sudanese Government. The upturn in violence has now severed approximately 500,000 people from access to international humanitarian aid. Last month the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees cited the increased violence and killings of peacekeeping troops and termed this “a very serious deterioration” of the situation in Darfur.

We appreciate the United Nations’ current engagement on Darfur, including regular reporting from officials on the ground there to the Security Council, investigation of gross human rights violations, and assistance to the African Union mission in Darfur and to the ongoing talks in Abuja, Nigeria. However, the deteriorating situation in Darfur now demands more in order to avert an even more devastating crisis and further loss of life. In addition to the ongoing need to promote greater security for civilians in Darfur and to foster accountability for those responsible for the gross human rights violations there, the international community needs to register, in a very public way, an enhanced commitment to advancing a just and sustainable peace in the region.

We believe that your appointment of a new high-level envoy would make a difference. He or she would be asked to reach out to all parties to the conflict in Darfur and have a mandate to negotiate its end. This new envoy should have significant stature and international support, to enable him or her to effectively carry out this mission. In addition, the envoy must be viewed as impartial by all sides and should have a mandate to open talks with leaders of all communities in Darfur, as well as the leaders of rebel groups, Janjaweed and other militia, and the Sudanese Government. The envoy should also be

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equipped to undertake these efforts directly, in Darfur and elsewhere in Sudan, and on a sustained basis. We trust that in appointing this new envoy you would engage in close consultation with the United States Government and other member states.

This initiative would not replace the African Union mission on the ground in Darfur, and it would build on the efforts undertaken to date to bring the parties to the negotiating table. It would not interfere or impede the work of the International Criminal Court with respect to Darfur. The appointment of this new envoy would represent an enhanced commitment by the United Nations and its member states; the envoy would have the tools, political backing, and mandate to seek a comprehensive resolution to the conflict.

Continuing instability and conflict in Darfur threaten to undermine fragile peace agreements elsewhere in Sudan, and to spread insecurity throughout the region. I urge you to act now, before the situation worsens further, to enhance and renew the United Nations' commitment to resolve the Darfur conflict.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Michael Posner  
Executive Director

cc: Ms. Louise Arbour, High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General  
Mr. Dmitry Titov, Director, Africa Division, Dept. of Peacekeeping Operations  
Ms. Margareta Wahlström, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs