Please find below a collection of articles on the Responsibility to Protect and Darfur, including news articles and opinion pieces. Articles cover the following topics:

- Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group call on the United States to use its Security Council presidency for the month of February to push for a transfer of the African Union mission in Darfur to a United Nations force with a strong mandate to protect civilians;
- UN Secretary General Kofi Annan invokes R2P and calls for a transfer of power from the AU to the UN (as called for by the AU) with a mandate to protect civilians, and a political solution among the leaders;
- Former UK Secretary of State Clare Short on the failure of the government and the international community to protect the civilians in Darfur, and what we can do to change it;
- The opportunity for the Bush Administration to commit the resources to improving the AU and probable UN mission in Darfur;
- The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reports on the dramatic increase in attacks in Darfur and the failure of the current strategy to stop attacks;
- Preparations of the UN to take over the AU force in Darfur;
- UN Envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk reports to the Security Council that the international community’s current strategy in Darfur is failing, and calls for a quickly implemented UN force to be deployed in Darfur;
- British MPs call for the Security Council to impose sanctions on the Government of Sudan, and also call on states to contribute more resources to the current AU mission in Darfur;
- The humanitarian group Christian Aid calls for a robust mandate for the AU mission in Darfur including the ability to protect civilians;
- A new Human Rights Watch report summary on Imperatives for Change in the AU Mission in Darfur;
- Africa Action supports the proposed UN involvement in Darfur but calls for the US to initiate a UN-led intervention;
- Slovenian President Janez Drnovsek discusses his plan to promote peace in Darfur;
- Genocide prevention organization Aegis Trust calls for the UN to enter Darfur with a mandate to protect civilians; and
- Human Rights First calls on U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to appoint a high-level envoy to help negotiate a settlement among the warring factions in Darfur;

U.S.: Push for Strong United Nations Force in Darfur
Civilians at Risk Without Stronger Measures
Human Rights Watch

(New York, February 1, 2006)

The United States should use its Security Council presidency in February to urgently seek a transition of the African Union force in Darfur to a United Nations mission with a strong mandate to protect civilians, said Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group yesterday in letters to U.S. President George W. Bush and members of the U.N. Security Council.

The African Union has played an important role in Darfur, sending a ceasefire-monitoring force, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), which now numbers almost 7,000 personnel and includes protection of civilians among its tasks. It has also taken the lead in mediating between
the Sudanese government and two Darfur rebel groups. While the A.U. troops have done much
to provide security in Darfur they have been unable to protect civilians throughout the region.
The A.U. forces have lacked manpower and resources and the Sudanese government has not
cooperated with their mission.

The African Union troops have acted with great resolve and courage in Darfur, said
Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, who signed the letter with Gareth
Evans, president of the International Crisis Group. ut the deteriorating situation in Darfur
demands a major new international effort to save lives there and the U.S. should use its
Security Council presidency to jumpstart this effort.

Violence against civilians in Darfur has surged in the past three months. According to
the United Nations, 30,000 people have been displaced in the past month. More than two
million people half the population of Darfur remain vulnerable in displaced person camps,
unable to go home for fear of being raped or murdered by the Sudanese governments forces
and its Janjaweed militias. These continue to operate with impunity from prosecution despite
demands from the U.N. Security Council and the A.U. Peace and Security Council that the
Sudanese government disarm these groups.

Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group said that a new U.N. mission
should have a strong and clear mandate to protect civilians by force if necessary under Chapter
VII of the U.N. Charter, and to disarm and disband the government-sponsored Janjaweed
forces that pose a threat to the civilian population. They also urged that the U.N. force be large
and mobile enough to provide security throughout Darfur some 20,000 strong, as
recommended by Jan Pronk, the U.N. Secretary-Generals Special Representative for Sudan.

new U.N. force should be large enough and strong enough to robustly protect civilians
wherever they are in Darfur, said Roth. he U.S. presidency of the Security Council offers an
opportunity for the U.S. to make Darfur a high and visible priority. The U.S. must seize the
opportunity to move full speed ahead on transition to a strong U.N. force in Darfur.

Until a transfer can be completed, the organizations called on the U.S. to work with other
cconcerned governments to bolster the existing African Union force in Darfur, through the
deployment of additional personnel, equipment, logistical support, funding and other resources
from national and multilateral forces (such as NATO and the European Union), including attack
helicopters to enhance its capacity to protect civilians.

The letter sent to President Bush is available at:
http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/31/sudan12578.htm
The letter sent to the U.N. Security Council is available at:
http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/31/sudan12577.htm
http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/31/sudan12582.htm

Situation deteriorating in Darfur

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

January 29, 2006
By: Kofi A. Annan

When I visited Darfur last May, I felt hopeful. Today I am pessimistic, unless a major new international effort is mustered in the coming weeks.

I visited a village whose people had returned after fleeing from violence and were living in relative safety, thanks to the presence of troops from the African Union. True, this was only a beginning. Much of the vast region was prey to sporadic violence, with more than a million people living in camps. But thanks to a massive relief operation led by the United Nations, the number dying from hunger or disease was falling dramatically. A cease-fire, admittedly flawed, was in place. Peace talks between the Sudanese government and the rebel movements, ably mediated by A.U. representatives, were proceeding in Abuja, Nigeria. It was hoped that agreement could be reached by the end of the year.

There were other positive signs. The U.N. Security Council had referred the situation to the International Criminal Court and had decided in principle to apply targeted sanctions to individuals who could be identified as responsible for the atrocities of the past two years.

I wish I could report that all these efforts had borne fruit -- that Darfur was at peace and on the road to recovery. Alas, the opposite is true. People in many parts of Darfur continue to be killed, raped and driven from their homes by the thousands. The number displaced has reached 2 million, while 3 million (half the total population of Darfur) are dependent on international relief for food and other basics. Many parts of Darfur are becoming too dangerous for relief workers to reach. The peace talks are far from reaching a conclusion. And fighting now threatens to spread into neighboring Chad, which has accused Sudan of arming rebels on its territory.

Despite a chronic funding crisis, A.U. troops in Darfur are doing a valiant job. People feel safer when the troops are present. But there are too few of them -- a protection force of only 5,000, with an additional 2,000 police and military observers, to cover a territory the size of Texas. They have neither the equipment nor the broad mandate they would need to protect the people under threat or to enforce a cease-fire routinely broken by the rebels, as well as by the Janjaweed militia and Sudanese government forces.

On Jan. 12, the African Union decided to renew the mission's mandate until March 31, while expressing support, in principle, for a transition to a U.N. operation this year. The timing of this transition is still being discussed, including at this week's A.U. summit in Khartoum. This puts the Security Council on the spot. The U.N. Charter gives the council primary responsibility for international peace and security. And in September, in a historic first, U.N. members unanimously accepted the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity, pledging to take action through the Security Council when national authorities fail.

The transition from the A.U. force to a U.N. peace operation in Darfur is now inevitable. A firm decision by the Security Council is needed, and soon, for an effective transition to take place.

But let no one imagine that this crisis can be solved simply by giving the present A.U. mission a
"U.N. hat." Any new mission will need a strong and clear mandate, allowing it to protect those under threat, by force if necessary, as well as the means to do so. That means it will need to be larger, more mobile and much better equipped than the current A.U. mission. Those countries that have the required military assets must be ready to deploy them.

Such a force would take the United Nations months to deploy. In the meantime, the A.U. mission must be maintained and strengthened. We cannot afford any gaps or any weakening of the force in place. Last May the African Union and the United Nations organized a donor conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to raise money and logistical support for the A.U. force. A follow-up conference is planned for Feb. 20. At the same time, the massive relief operation must continue, so that Darfur's people continue to receive clean water, food and other vital supplies.

Finally, and above all, much stronger pressure must be brought on all parties -- the rebels as well as the government -- to observe the cease-fire and commit themselves to the Abuja peace talks with a sense of urgency. The current delays are inexcusable; they cost lives every day. Those negotiating must be reminded of their personal responsibility.

One thing is clear: Whatever external force is sent to Darfur can provide at best only temporary security to the people there. Only a political agreement among their leaders can secure their future and the return of 2 million of them to their homes. Kofi A. Annan is secretary general of the United Nations.

Darfur is the proof that we are failing Africa

The Independent (London)

January 25, 2006 Wednesday

By: Clare Short

In September 2005 at the UN World Summit, with vociferous support from the UK, it was agreed that the world should recognise that sovereignty entailed a responsibility to protect one's citizens, and that in consequence if any government either could not or would not, that responsibility should transfer to the international community. But at the same time this grand declaration was being agreed, the government of Sudan was failing to protect the people of Darfur, and the international community, including the UK, was also failing to act.

There was, of course, plenty of rhetoric. The US government announced that the killing amounted to genocide - a word that all had avoided in the case of Rwanda because it was assumed the word would trigger the responsibilities of the Genocide Convention and thus a duty
to intervene. Many UK ministers visited Sudan and Darfur, including the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Development Secretaries and various junior ministers. They expressed concern, and increased humanitarian aid was pledged because displaced people have to be fed, but no effective action was taken to provide protection.

The Security Council held many discussions, and the US and UK in particular claimed to be very concerned. But they were not willing to mandate a UN force with peace enforcement powers, because they did not care enough about the people of Darfur and because they were distracted and weakened by events in Iraq. Instead, the African Union agreed to provide the troops, but they lacked planes, helicopters and other equipment. The EU and others helped with finance, but the money kept running out. Although those who were deployed performed admirably, with inadequate numbers and logistics the killing and raping continued and the ethnic cleansing has been "successfully" completed. Two million people are living in vulnerable camps, dependent on handouts with little prospect of getting back to their lands.

It is now proposed - at last - that the African Union mission should be incorporated into a UN mission, and argued that it should have a stronger mandate. If this is agreed, money will cease to be a problem. But the mission will not be effective unless countries with strong logistics are willing to join the force. Africa can supply soldiers but needs funding and logistics if African Union efforts are to succeed.

The Government has talked a lot about Africa and promised a lot to Africa. On Darfur, it has failed Africa. And this is an example of a wider problem. No amount of aid and/or debt relief will bring development to Africa unless conflicts are ended and state structures capable of providing order and development put in place. This is the problem in Sudan, Congo, Angola, Cte d'Ivoire and many other places.

It is already too late to prevent the ethnic cleansing of 2 million people in Darfur. In the next few months, we shall learn whether the political will exists even to begin to reverse this process.

The writer served as Secretary of State for International Development between 1997 and 2003

http://comment.independent.co.uk/commentators/article340788.ece

An Opportunity for Darfur

The Washington Post

January 29, 2006
The Bush administration has an opportunity next month to lead the world out of its paralysis on Darfur. The brave but undermanned African Union force that has tried to stabilize the territory is facing the end of its mandate: Western donors may keep it going for a few more months, but they're not going to go beyond that. The donors want a United Nations peacekeeping force to take its place; the African Union, which used to insist that it could do the job alone, now appears to have dropped its objections to a U.N. takeover. The question is how big the new U.N. force will be and whether it will get contributions of mobile troops from militarily advanced countries. The administration should use the presidency of the U.N. Security Council, which it holds in February, to push for the sort of peacekeeping force that could actually make peace possible.

The news from the region leaves no doubt that an expanded force is necessary.

The Bush administration, which has championed the African Union deployment because it wants Africa to develop the ability to fix its own problems, is part of the new consensus favoring a shift to a U.N. force.

But it's not clear how hard the administration will push to make this shift more than just a budgetary maneuver. Having described Darfur's crisis as a genocide, the United States should surely aim for an expanded force. Jan Pronk, U.N. special envoy to Sudan, recently suggested a tripling of the African Union deployment to 20,000. It should also want a jump in logistical capacity: To be effective in an area the size of Texas, the U.N. troops will need plenty of aircraft, including helicopters. To secure serious troop commitments from U.N. member states, the Bush administration may have to spend political capital. The coming month will show whether President Bush's team believes that Darfur is worth that.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/28/AR2006012801079.html

U.N. Says Attacks Unabated in Darfur

Associated Press Online

January 28, 2006

By Michelle Faul

Killings, rapes and indiscriminate attacks on civilians continue in Darfur, the United Nations said Friday, accusing Sudanese soldiers of apparently coordinating with armed militia in terrorizing the troubled region.

The report from the High Commissioner for Human Rights chastised the government of Omar el-Bashir, saying promises to end centuries of discrimination of black African minorities were marked by "token gestures" while murder and torture go unpunished.

There has been growing pressure for stronger sanctions to be imposed by the U.N. Security
Council, to be chaired from February by the United States, which accuses Sudan's government of genocide.

The report details numerous cases of rape of African women some told "so you will have Arab blood," others because they were "slaves" and said victims who tried to get justice were instead abused


UN prepares to send peace-keeping force to Darfur: African mission 'has failed to curb violence': Annan calls for large force with mandate to intervene

The Guardian (London)

January 27, 2006

Ewen MacAskill, Diplomatic editor

The UN is preparing to intervene in the Darfur crisis in Sudan after admitting that an African Union mission has failed to curb the violence that has seen two million people displaced and thousands killed.

With violence increasing over the past few months, Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, said the replacing of the AU force with a UN one was "now inevitable". The UN plans to put in a bigger, better-financed force with a mandate not just to monitor events as the AU had been doing but to fire back at and hunt down those responsible for the ethnic cleansing.

Mr Annan said he wished efforts to resolve the crisis had borne fruit. "Alas, the opposite is true. People in many parts of Darfur continue to be killed, raped and driven from their homes by the thousand. The number displaced has now reached two million, while three million (half the total population of Darfur) are dependent on international relief for food and other basics. Many parts of Darfur are becoming too dangerous for relief workers to reach."

() Transition from an AU mission to a UN one will take about nine months. The UN security council is expected to meet in the next month or two to give its approval, and a further six months or so will be needed for logistical arrangements.

In spite of threats from the international community, the Sudanese government has failed to rein in the Janjaweed or even stop its air force bombing villages.
Mr Annan said: "Any new mission will need a strong and clear mandate, allowing it to protect those under threat by force if necessary, as well as the means to do so. That means it will need to be larger, more mobile and much better equipped than the AMIS (African mission)."

The UN said it wanted the US and European countries to help form a tough mobile force. But this has met with resistance so far in Washington and Europe and the preference is for a largely African force.

The AU, at its summit in Khartoum last week, exasperated western diplomats by failing to discuss in any detail the Darfur crisis. But it did agree a resolution supporting the take-over of the force by the UN. The AU said it was struggling to find the 10m a month needed to maintain it.

MPs on the Commons international development committee yesterday called for "credible sanctions" against Sudan.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/sudan/story/0,14658,1695920,00.html?gusrc=rss

UN calls for fast moving peacekeeping force for Sudan.

Asia Pulse Pty Ltd

PTI - The Press Trust of India Ltd.

Bluntly telling the Security Council that its peace strategy in Sudan's Darfur region has failed, United Nations top envoy for the country called for a well-armed, quick-moving UN peacekeeping force to disarm the marauding militia and provide security to the area to allow over two million refugees to return home.

Jan Pronk, who briefed the Security Council later talking to reporters yesterday, conceded that the ethnic cleansing campaign by Arab Janjaweed militias in 2003 and 2004 has been successful and said a mobile, well-armed force was required to counter attacks by militia groups of 500 to 1000 people on horseback and camels.

Troubles in the area began when the Sudanese government sought help from Arab Janjaweed militia to suppress a rebellion by ethnic Africans protesting discrimination against them, a charge that Sudan denies.

Militia have killed some 180,000 people systematically raped women and burnt dozens of villages and crops to ensure that villagers do not return and they continue their attacks despite the sanctions imposed by the Council.

"Looking back at three years of killings and cleansing in Darfur we must admit that our peace strategy so far has failed," he told the Council.
Currently, the African Union has a peacekeeping force but it is plagued by lack of funds, personnel and equipment. Voluntary contributions fund the force and the African Union says it would be forced to shut down its mission after March, when its funds would run out.

Link to full article unavailable

MPs Demand Sanctions on Sudanese Government

Press Association Newsfile

January 26, 2006

By: Joe Churcher, PA Political Correspondent

The United Nations must impose "credible sanctions" on the Sudanese government until it stops blocking peacekeeping operations in Darfur, MPs said today.

And they called for the struggling African Union force to be given a full UN mandate - including massive extra resources to help end the bloodshed.

The international development committee said it backed the "African solution to an African problem" approach but criticised a lack of political will to make it a success.

Yesterday, Tony Blair admitted that the international community was "failing" the people of the war-torn region.

But he told MPs the UK was pressing for the peacekeeping force to be brought up to full strength and was at the forefront of efforts to end the suffering.

()``

"If the UK government and the international community are determined on an African solution to an African problem then they have an obligation to give practical help to make the AU mission work.

"This is an area where political will is paramount. Until there is a change of heart...the Responsibility to Protect will remain just as aspiration."

Titled Darfur: The Killing Continues, the report also warned against celebrating figures showing a reduction of attacks on people in their own homes and aerial bombardments.

It suggested the reason was that the a programme of ethnic cleansing had succeeded in driving
the targets from their homes into camps.

Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrat who chairs the committee, said: "The Government of Sudan has a history of not meeting the commitments it has made in respect of Darfur.

"It is now time for the UK Government to propose in the UN Security Council sanctions which are credible and which will force the Government of Sudan at long last to fulfil its commitments".

Time was "fast running out" for the AU mission, he warned.

"The UK Government has long said that the issue is one of finding the capacity within the international community to create an effective peacekeeping operation which would provide proper civilian protection.

"Now is the time for the UN to mobilise resources for the AU Mission's work and reinforce its role with a UN mandate.

http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/articles/PA_NEWA29041561138197356A0?source=PA%20Feed

'Immaterial' peacekeeping debate rages as Darfur war continues
27 Jan 2006
Christian Aid - UK

As the international community debates who should protect displaced people in the Darfur region of Sudan, attacks on the camps where many seek refuge - some run by Christian Aid partners - continue unabated. Civilians in Darfur continue to face daily assault from bandits and Sudanese government-backed militias. Each day women are raped and families are intimidated and robbed.

According to the UN, fighting is continuing in the region, where rebels are trying to take Golo, a government-held town in western Darfur. The fighting has forced around 100 aid workers to flee, the BBC has reported. There are also clashes in south Darfur, near Shearia. Aid agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to help the more than two million people who have fled their homes in the face of this violence.

The new head of the African Union, Congo's Denis Sassou Nguesso, has insisted that the AU should retain control of the peacekeeping operation in Darfur. But many commentators believe that African Union (AU) troops are unable to perform their role of protecting the people of Darfur.

Christian Aid argues that there are too few AU troops with insufficient resources, supported by a mandate that leaves the Sudanese government responsible for the security and safety of its population.

Yet the reality is, it is argued, that most of these attacks are taking place with the blessing of the Sudanese government - an accusation denied by Khartoum.
However, there have recently been attacks by the government-backed militia, the Janajaweed in the Mershing camp in south Darfur. The peacekeeping troops of the African Union had promised to protect these camps last autumn. Armed Sudanese police are also located in the area. But neither these troops nor the police were able to stop these latest attacks. Around 90% of the people from Mershing’s eight camps, which hold 35,000 people, have fled and are understood to be sleeping in the open without water nor security.

Christian Aid's partner, the Sudan Social Development Organisation (SUDO), has a clinic in Mershing; all employees have been forced to leave the camp. As the situation deteriorates, debates are taking place as to whether the operation in Darfur should become a United Nations mission or remain under an AU mandate.

'This discussion is immaterial', said Stephanie Brigden, of Christian Aid's Africa policy team. 'The question ought not be who will protect the people of Darfur, but how? We need a proper mandate that gives greater emphasis on protecting civilians - not a mandate that concentrates on documenting breeches of a fast-failing ceasefire. 'The mission must also be better resourced, logistically, financially and with more troops, to implement a proper protection mandate'

http://www.christianaid.org.uk/news

Sudan: Imperatives for Immediate Change The African Union Mission in Sudan

Human Rights Watch Report

January 20, 2006

I. Summary
The conflict in Sudans Darfur region is far from over. Since it began in February 2003, two million people have been expelled from their homes by the Sudanese governments campaign of crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing conducted in the name of counterinsurgency, and are trapped in refugee camps in neighboring Chad or in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps inside Darfur. Small-scale attacks by government forces and government-backed militias continue against civilians, while the actions of rebel groups and opportunistic bandits further subject Darfurs civilian population to abuse and insecurity. Ethnic cleansing threatens to become consolidated, as civilians remain confined in camps exposed to violence and human rights abuse that prevent them from returning to their homes and claiming back their land.

This report examines the evolving role in the Darfur conflict of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) from its inception as a ceasefire monitoring body in June 2004 to its current incarnation, AMIS II-Enhanced (AMIS II-E). The report identifies ways AMIS II-E can be immediately strengthened to improve protection for civilians. It also looks at factors that must be taken into account in any further transformation of AMIS II-E, one possible direction being incorporation into a United Nations mission (an option that is reportedly to be considered at the January 2006 African Union summit meeting). The report is based on an expert technical
military assessment of the African Union Mission in Sudan as well as on Human Rights Watchs extensive research and reporting on the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Darfur.1

At present, the only available option for civilian protection in Darfur is aggressive patrolling by AMIS troops properly equipped with armored personnel carriers (APCs), attack helicopters and other necessary equipment with clearly defined and understood rules of engagement among all troops that permit them to use deadly force to protect civilians. AMISs mandate and mission tasks already provide for the protection of civilians under imminent threat, but AMIS forces need to apply their rules of engagement more proactively. The rules of engagement must be clarified or modified so that deadly force is explicitly permitted to protect civilians, including humanitarian operations under imminent threat. This change also requires that the decision to use deadly force be delegated from the force commander to the sector commanders in the field where decisions to escalate are most imperative and must be made on a timely basis. As well, AMIS should deploy in each sector, fully equipped (with artillery) quick reaction forces to respond immediately to civilians and humanitarian operations under imminent threat with rules of engagement that provide for the use of deadly force. To further strengthen civilian protection, AMIS civilian police (CivPol) tasks should be augmented and reformulated to provide CivPols with the power to arrest persons engaged in criminal activity.

These are steps that would bolster the existing AMIS II-E. Debate is ongoing as to whether AMIS could and should be further transformed including through integration into a non-A.U. institution. The possibility of placing the AMIS operation under U.N. authority is one option under serious consideration, primarily for financial reasons, and at this writing it is reported to be on the agenda of African Union summit meeting in Khartoum, Sudan, on January 23-24, 2006. Over and above the objective of fiscal stability, reasons of logistical enhancement and the well-established and tested command and control structure needed for such a large mission may well recommend that AMIS be lue-hatted or folded into the U.N. peace support mission running parallel to AMIS in the rest of Sudan. This merger would be desirable only so long as it would not reduce the mandate, mission tasks, rules of engagement or equipment AMIS has or plans to acquire. As African Union leaders and A.U. and U.N. planners consider this option, they will need to ensure that any attempt to integrate or acquire AMIS operations does not diminish in any way the response capability of the mission in protecting civilians. Even if a decision were made to lue hat AMIS, it is clear that any transfer would take many months. In the short term, AMIS can take immediate measures to improve civilian protection and resources and political pressure must be applied to ensure that it has the capacity, will and support to protect civilians in Darfur.

This report was researched and written by staff and consultants in the Africa Division of Human Rights Watch. Primary research sources were the reports of the AMIS military planners, and interviews with African Union, United Nations, European Union, NATO and Canadian government personnel and military plannersand diplomats.

For the full report, please visit: http://hrw.org/reports/2006/sudan0106/
Sudan; Africa Action Welcomes Momentum Towards UN Action on Darfur

Africa News

January 19, 2006

Africa Action

Africa Action today welcomed the recent momentum towards a United Nations (UN) intervention to stop the ongoing genocide in Darfur, Sudan. But the organization emphasized the need for the international community to move beyond rhetoric to action, and urged the U.S. to introduce a new UN Security Council resolution that would accomplish such an intervention in Darfur.

Recent remarks by senior U.S. and UN officials, as well as by representatives of the African Union (AU) indicate a growing consensus on the need for a UN intervention to stop the violence in Darfur. On Monday, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that the U.S. supports a UN mission in Darfur. Last week, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted the need for an expanded force to be deployed to the region to stop the bloodshed. Also last week, in the face of increasing financial constraints, the African Union expressed willingness to hand its mission in Darfur over to the UN. This option will be further discussed at the African Union Summit in Khartoum next week.

Ann-Louise Colgan, Director of Policy Analysis & Communications at Africa Action, said today, "Momentum is building for new UN action to address the deteriorating situation in Darfur. A UN intervention can provide critical support to the African Union, and can ensure protection for civilians and humanitarian operations in Darfur. Precedents in Liberia and Sierra Leone show how a UN peacekeeping mission can successfully reinforce the efforts of African regional bodies, which intervened as 'first responders', and this is what the Security Council should pursue in Darfur as a matter of the greatest urgency."

Ahead of next month's U.S. presidency of the UN Security Council, Africa Action is calling on the U.S. to introduce a resolution that would (1) "re-hat" the African Union (AU) mission in Darfur as a UN operation, granting it a strong civilian protection mandate from the international community, and (2) authorize an international force to be deployed to the region as soon as possible. Africa Action notes that an international intervention in Darfur is critical not only to protect civilians and humanitarian operations, but also to create the conditions for the successful conclusion of a peace agreement between the government of Sudan and rebel groups in Darfur.

Africa Action's statement on "How the UN Can Stop Genocide in Darfur" is available at http://www.africaaction.org/newsroom/docs/DarfurStatement1205.pdf

Slovenian president promotes Darfur peace initiative
Slovenian President Janez Drnovsek came to the United Nations Wednesday to promote his peace initiative for Sudan's troubled Darfur region, proposing an international peace conference and urging citizens to pressure their governments to take action.

He called on the U.N. Security Council to step up its involvement in the region, where an estimated 180,000 people have died and about 2 million have been displaced since conflict erupted between ethnic African tribes and government-supported Arab militias in 2003.

Drnovsek singled out China and the United States as countries he thinks could be key players in ending what many countries have labeled genocide in Darfur.

China, which has a large economic presence in Sudan, "should use their leverage there and join in this effort in the right way," he said.

Drnovsek spoke to reporters after meeting U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan who has made frequent calls for a "durable political peace" and a permanent cease-fire in Sudan.

Drnovsek recently suggested that his country establish a camp in Sudan for 10,000 refugees, and said Slovenia had also offered to set up a field hospital and send land-mine clearing experts to the region.

http://www.sudantribune.com/article.php3?id_article=13616

Commenting on the funding shortfall, Dr. James Smith, the Executive Director of the Aegis Trust stated: "From the outset the International Community has focused attention on the stalled peace talks for Darfur, but left the protection of civilians as the lowest priority. This has already led to
detrimental consequences. Not only do civilians continue to die, and several million live in fear and terror; it is this insecurity and neglect by international players that causes grief among the rebel groups. In turn this undermines the efforts to promote a political settlement in Abuja [where the peace talks are held between the Government of Sudan and rebel groups], in which the international community places so much store."

On Friday the Security Council may decide that the security operation in Darfur could transfer to the UN if the AU wishes. This would improve the funding stream for the protection mission but a transfer to the UN will take the best part of 2006 to implement. So even if the AU hands over to the UN, it remains imperative that the AU is urgently given sufficient funding and logistical support to strengthen its operations.

Security is paramount more than ever before. Lack of protection will prevent farmers planting their crops for the fourth consecutive year; already over 3 million people are dependent on food aid in Darfur. If neighbouring states become involved in the conflict because we let it simmer on, cross-border conflict will precipitate a famine on top of the crimes against humanity. It will be almost impossible to retrieve the situation.

"Allowing a security void in Darfur this year will be nothing short of negligent of the Security Council Members. Security must be bolstered as a matter of urgency" said Dr Smith.

http://allafrica.com/stories/200601130367.html

Sudan; Rights Group Says Top UN Envoy Needed On Darfur

Africa News

January 12, 2006

Inter Press Service

With the security situation in Darfur deteriorating, a major U.S. human rights group Thursday called on U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to appoint a high-level envoy to help negotiate a settlement to the nearly three-year-old violence in western Sudan that Washington has labeled "genocide".

New York-based Human Rights First (HRF) said such an envoy should be empowered to negotiate with all parties involved in the conflict, including tribal leaders and the government-backed Janjaweed militias, as well as the non-Arab rebel groups and the regime that have been engaged in so far fruitless peace talks under the auspices of the African Union (AU) in Abuja, Nigeria.
HRF, which has worked closely with local human rights organisations active in Darfur and the rest of Sudan, said the proposal had been well received by senior U.N. and U.S. officials and is being considered by the U.N. Security Council as part of a package of measures designed to put an end to the violence that has displaced more than two million people and resulted in the deaths of between 180,000 and 400,000 people.

"A high-level envoy would greatly strengthen the diplomatic process and refocus public attention on efforts to end the killing in Darfur," said Maureen Byrnes, HRF's executive director. "Such an appointment would be a visible symbol of renewed and heightened political and diplomatic will to resolve the Darfur crisis."

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