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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE TO OPENING SESSION OF THE DARFUR PEACE TALKS

Sirte, 27 October 2007

Delivered by Mr. Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy for Darfur

President, Ministers
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to congratulate all of you who have gathered in Sirte for these important final negotiations. Your presence demonstrates your commitment to the search for durable peace in Darfur. I wish I could have been among you today. However, unavoidable commitments have kept me at United Nations Headquarters in New York. I nevertheless wish to assure you that I will join you at the earliest opportunity.

I am grateful to the Leader of the Revolution and to the Libyan people for hosting these peace talks, and for the hospitality they have extended to the participants. I would also like to thank Chairperson Konaré of the African Union for the remarkable collaboration we have developed between our two organizations. Finally, I would also commend our two Special Envoys for Darfur, Mr. Jan Eliasson and Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, for their relentless efforts to re-energize the political process.

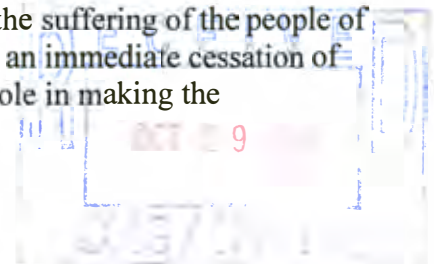
Today is a critical day for the people of Darfur. It has been almost a year and a half since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement. That year and a half has proved a long and difficult period for the people of Darfur, not least because the security and humanitarian situation on the ground has continued to deteriorate, fighting remains the daily reality for the population, and the displaced people of Darfur are still languishing in camps.

There is now an opportunity for peace through the political negotiations for which you have all gathered in Sirte today. The eyes of the world are on you, and hopes of the people of Darfur rest with you. Your responsibility and your obligation is to deliver on these expectations.

The deployment of a robust AU-UN peacekeeping force will make a difference and help improve the security conditions on the ground. However, it is only through political dialogue and inclusive consultations that the parties will be able to reach a viable, sustainable, and comprehensive solution to the crisis in Darfur.

As a demonstration of your genuine commitment to ending the suffering of the people of Darfur and to finding a lasting peace, I urge all parties to commit to an immediate cessation of hostilities here and now. I am also urging all those who can play a role in making the

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negotiations a success to seize this unique opportunity and to do their utmost to support this process in earnest.

I would like to pay particular tribute to our four regional partners, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, and Libya, for their important support, together with our other international partners, in bringing the parties to the negotiating table. I would also like to commend the parties themselves, the Government of Sudan, the non-signatory movements, and the population of Darfur at large, who have made the choice of dialogue over war.

I am disappointed that some movement leaders have chosen to stay away from Sirte today. To them, I wish to say that the door remains open, but that if they continue to stay away, there is much they stand to lose. The UN and AU believe that all Darfurians should be represented, and hope that they will be. After all, it is the people and movements of Darfur that have asked for these negotiations, so they must begin. Peace is a process, and any problems or issues should be discussed in Sirte, not elsewhere. We, the international community, will stay the course.

There can be no military solution to the conflict in Darfur. It is now critical that all concerned work hard and remain meaningfully engaged to find a political solution. This will neither be easy nor will it be necessarily quick. Painful compromises will need to be made by all sides. However, violence has continued for far too long, and further delays would be dangerous. The situation could rapidly worsen and become even more intractable.

On behalf of the United Nations, let me thank you all for coming all the way to Sirte, and let me wish you success in your efforts. I assure you that the United Nations and the African Union will provide all necessary support to ensure the success of your consultations and negotiations.



Joshua Lincoln/NY/UNO

26/10/2007 04:20 PM

To Anne Le More/United Nations@UNHQ-DPKO,
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Subject SG Statement to the Opening Session

Anne,

Thanks for the Update. Please find attached the statement to be read out on behalf of the SG tomorrow.



071026 Darfur Sirte message - Final.doc

Messrs Nambiar and Kim reviewed the statement, and the SG (just now) agreed to the additional paragraph with three changes. He wanted to express more clearly 1) his sense of disappointment with AW etc for staying away, 2) his view that by continuing to stay away, they stood to lose their stature and role as leaders, and 3) his determination that the UN and intl community would stay the course. These are now reflected in that para.

Mr. Nambiar asked me to convey to Mr Eliasson that he fully understands the fluidity of the situation, and that as the man on the spot, Mr. Eliasson should make what last minute adjustments he feels are necessary. If time permits, and Mr. Eliasson wishes to consult, he should call Mr. Kim, Mr. Nambiar, or the SG directly.

Best of luck.

Josh