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BACKGROUND BRIEFING

What is it?

Mandate Darfur is a Darfurian-led initiative that will provide a means for representatives from across civil society to become active players in the peace process. The initiative will bring together over 300 Darfurian delegates from across the region and the Diaspora for a conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Conference Centre, to be held from 12-16 May 2009.

Mandate Darfur will bring together civil society representatives of every community in the region to discuss and build a positive and sustainable vision of peace for Darfur in order to provide new legitimacy to the peace process. The conference will bring together the broadest coalition of Darfurian stakeholders ever assembled.

The vision that emerges from the conference is intended to form the cornerstone of ongoing peace negotiations as the comprehensive articulation of the aspirations of all Darfurian people. The vision will reflect the desire of Darfurians for a future based on principles of peace, security, justice and development.

The Mandate will only have authority, legitimacy and impact if it satisfies three conditions. Firstly, that it truly represents the voice of the Darfurian people. Secondly, that the process behind the Mandate is inclusive, transparent and fair. Thirdly, that it is managed in a way that meets the governance requirements of all the international institutions, governments, civil society organisations and public figures who are stakeholders in the ongoing peace process.

The initiative is also a direct response to the United Nations Security Council resolution 1828 (2008) which "underlines...the need for engagement of civil society, including women and women-led organisations, community groups and tribal leaders".

Why now?

This initiative comes at a key time for Sudan. As the biggest country in Africa, neighbour to nine states and located at the crossroads of Africa and the Arab world, Sudan's fate is of considerable importance to the region, the continent of Africa and the world. The conflict in Sudan has already spilled over its borders as the humanitarian crisis spreads and those affected by the conflict have sought refuge in neighboring states.

Two imminent political events could undermine the unity of the country and worsen the crisis: potential national elections in 2010 and the referendum on self-determination of the South in 2011. If the situation in Darfur further deteriorates, peace throughout the region (from the Horn of Africa

as far as Nigeria to the west) will be at risk. The scale of the humanitarian crisis will be beyond the capacity of the international community to manage. Any solution to these issues must begin with a resolution of the conflict in Darfur.

Who will be attending?

Mandate Darfur has formed a steering committee of Darfurian civil society leaders who have been active in other Darfurian civil society initiatives who have built upon these previous and ongoing efforts. They have invited a broad range of Darfurians and ensured that all political parties, all of the main Darfurian tribes, and all geographic areas of Darfur – the North, the South and the West (Shamal, Gharb, and Janub Darfur) and the Diaspora – are represented.

Mandate Darfur also has the support of a broad range of African leaders and members of the international and NGO community.

The initiative has received endorsement and support from across the NGO community. A number of NGOs are expected to attend as observers.

A significant number of international leaders from across Africa and the international community have demonstrated their support and intention to attend the conference. A number of key Governments are also expected to send observer delegations.

To date, the following international leaders have confirmed their attendance:

- Joaquim Alberto Chissano, Former President of Mozambique
- Festus Mogae, Former President of Botswana
- Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Managing Director of the World Bank
- Aicha Bah Diallo, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- Mo Ibrahim, Founder and Chairman of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation
- Mary Robinson, Former President of the Republic of Ireland
- Salim Ahmed Salim, Former Secretary-General of the OAU

Who is facilitating Mandate Darfur?

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation was initially approached by members of Darfurian civil society for its support in amplifying the role of civil society in the peace process. Building on civil society gatherings in Amistown, Dar-es-Salaam and Heidelberg, among others, and in liaison with other Darfurian civil society initiatives, the conviction grew that a civil society mandate must first be produced in a process owned, managed and facilitated by civil society actors. The Mandate will then be delivered to the Sudanese Government, rebel groups and others involved in the peace process for realisation.

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation is facilitating this initiative because of a conviction in the vitality of civil society involvement in the peace process in Darfur. To date the people of Darfur have been largely absent from the peace process. The Foundation is an advocate for civil society involvement in all aspects of governance and none can be as essential as the resolution of conflict in Darfur.

What will happen at the conference?

The conference will begin with an opening session with international community presence followed by two general plenary sessions. The first session will provide a background to the situation and will

include input from UNAMID and the second session will be looking forward, in terms of reconstruction and development.

The following three days will be for the Darfurian delegates to meet in closed workshops to discuss the key issues facing Darfurian civil society: building comprehensive peace; wealth sharing; power sharing; post conflict reconstruction and development; land issues; IDPs and refugees (repatriation, resettlement, reintegration); and transitional justice.

The final day of the conference will include a closing plenary session and signing ceremony where the delegates will endorse their Mandate and issue it to their leaders in Sudan and to the international community to build new momentum for the peace process.

Who is supporting Mandate Darfur?

The conference has been endorsed by a broad range of stakeholders including international bodies such as the United Nations, the African Union, and the Arab League. The Government of Sudan and Armed Movements are being consulted on the initiative. We anticipate that key representatives will attend.

The Mandate Darfur initiative has been endorsed by:

- Djibrill Bassolé, Joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator for Darfur
- Ambassador Torben Brylle, EU special representative for Sudan
- J. Scott Gration, US Presidential Special Envoy to Sudan
- Lord Mark Malloch Brown, Minister of State for Africa, Asia and the United Nations
- Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary UN Economic Commission for Africa
- Alain Le Roy, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations
- Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid
- Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States
- All members of the Africa Forum for former African Heads of State and Government and other African Leaders. These include:
 - Joaquim Chissano
 - Abdou Diouf
 - Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali
 - Kenneth Kaunda
 - John Kufour
 - Sir Quett Masire
 - Festus Mogae
 - Thabo Mbeki
 - Salim Ahmed Salim
- All members of the advisory board of the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa:
 - H.E. Mr. Festus Mogae (Botswana), former President of Botswana – Chairperson
 - Dr. Cheick Modibo Diarra (Mali), Chairman, Microsoft Africa
 - Dr Frene Ginwala (South Africa), Former Speaker of the South African Parliament
 - Mr Martin Khor (Malaysia), Director, Third World Network
 - The Rt Honourable Paul Martin (Canada), Former Prime Minister of Canada
 - Professor Wangari Maathai (Kenya), Founder of the Green Belt Movement and Nobel Peace Laureate
 - Mr Ismail Serageldin (Egypt), Director, Bibliotheca Alexandrina