



For Immediate Release

www.mandatedarfur.org

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African leaders embrace Darfurian civil society initiative

Mandate Darfur today welcomed the support from leaders across Africa who pledged to stand in solidarity with the civilians of Darfur as they meet in Addis Ababa to construct a mandate for their future. They do so knowing that only Darfurian civil society can give new momentum and legitimacy to ongoing attempts at peace in the region.

Joining the voices of support for this important Darfurian-owned initiative, the Africa Forum for former Heads of State and Government, The Elders and the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA) all welcomed the initiative. These organisations join the many Governments, international and regional organisations and NGOs in endorsing Mandate Darfur.

Speaking on behalf of the Africa Forum, a group of former African heads of state and government, H.E. Mr Joaquim Alberto Chissano, former president of Mozambique and Chairperson of Africa Forum said, "Darfur's problems will only be solved when the people of Darfur have their voices heard in the peace process. I look forward to standing with the people of Darfur when they take this important step into the future."

The Elders welcomed Mandate Darfur and noted that "It is crucial that Darfuris themselves take the lead in seeking a resolution to the devastating conflict that has caused so much suffering and loss of life in Darfur and that the views and aspirations of civil society are properly taken into account in future peace negotiations."

Welcoming the support of African leaders on behalf of Mandate Darfur, Mo Ibrahim, founder and Chairman of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, said, "We are pleased that leaders from across Africa are standing with our brothers and sisters in Darfur as we aim to make their voices heard in Sudan and around the world. Through Mandate Darfur, Darfurians will articulate a positive vision for a just and sustainable peace."

During the course of the conference, Darfurian delegates from across tribal, ethnic, geographic and religious communities will debate the numerous political, economic and developmental issues at stake in order to build a sustainable peace in the region. Their discussion is anticipated to lead to an agreed mandate that will provide the civil society perspective on future peace negotiations.

Following the conference, Mandate Darfur will work to deliver the Mandate around the world to ensure that leaders within Sudan, Africa and the wider world pursue the interests of the Darfurian people to find a lasting peace in the region.

Ends



Notes for editors

1. Mandate Darfur is being facilitated by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation after it was approached by Darfurians seeking support to amplify the role of civil society in the peace process.
2. The Africa Forum, <http://www.africaforum.org/>, constitutes an informal network of former African Heads of State and Government and other African leaders designed to support the implementation of the broad objectives of the African Union (AU) and its initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), at national, sub-regional and regional levels.
3. The Elders, www.theelders.org, are a group convened by Nelson Mandela, Graça Machel and Desmond Tutu to contribute their wisdom, independent leadership and integrity to tackling some of the world's toughest problems.
4. CoDA is a joint venture of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) that operates as an independent forum for free discussion on Africa's emerging and pressing challenges. It has the full support of the African Union Commission (AUC).
5. Media are welcome to cover the opening and closing sessions of the Mandate Darfur conference in Addis Ababa.
6. All media representatives will be required to present valid media/press card at registration.
7. For media accreditation please send your name, media organisation and contact details to Risha Chande: (Chande.R@MolbrahimFoundation.org or +44 (0)20 7535 5063)
8. For more information about Mandate Darfur, please contact Jon Steinberg: (Steinberg.J@MolbrahimFoundation.org or +44 (0)20 7535 5060 / +44 (0)7534 993 279)