



For Immediate Release

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22 April 2009

Stage set for biggest gathering of Darfur civil society ever assembled

Conference to agree a people's mandate as the basis for future peace negotiations

Mandate Darfur, an initiative to give voice to the Darfurian people, today announces the launch of a conference of Darfurian civil society to take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 12-16 May, 2009. The conference will for the first time bring together representatives from all sectors of Darfurian civil society in order to build a mandate for peace. With up to 300 delegates expected to attend, the event will be the largest gathering of Darfurian civil society representatives ever assembled.

During the course of the conference, delegates from across tribal, ethnic, geographic and religious communities will debate the numerous political, economic and developmental issues in order to build a more sustainable peace in the region. The discussions will lead to an agreed mandate that will provide the building block for future peace negotiations.

Mandate Darfur is a Darfurian-owned process being facilitated by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, an organisation established to support great leadership in Africa. The Foundation has worked with civil society leaders on the ground and in the Darfurian diaspora to build support for the initiative. 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."

Following the conference, Mandate Darfur will work to deliver the agreed 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.

Commenting on the launch of the initiative, Mo Ibrahim, founder and Chairman of the Foundation, said, "2009 is a pivotal year in the peace process for the people of Darfur. This conference will, for the first time, put the keys to peace in the hands of Darfur's own people. Only when the Darfurian peoples' voices are heard will the stakeholders in the peace process be able to find a sustainable and just peace based upon a constructive vision for the future."

Endorsing Mandate Darfur, Djibrill Bassolé, the African Union / United Nations Joint Chief Mediator, said, "I am happy to endorse the initiative and look forward to seeing the results of their consultations and recommendations. I do believe that the inclusive process which you are supporting can be of great assistance to the mediation and the peace process overall in Darfur."

Ends



Notes for editors

1. Media are welcome to cover the opening and closing sessions of the Mandate Darfur conference in Addis Ababa.
2. All media representatives will be required to present valid media/press card at registration.
3. 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)
4. Further details of media arrangements and facilities will be posted on the website shortly.
5. 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)