

Darfur Consortium Welcomes Presidential Statement on Justice in Darfur

(NEW YORK, June 17, 2008) The Darfur Consortium today welcomed the adoption by the Security Council yesterday of a Presidential Statement in support of the International Criminal Court's (ICC) investigation in Darfur.

The Statement was adopted in response to the presentation made by the Prosecutor of the ICC, Luis Moreno Ocampo on June 5 on the progress of his investigation. The Prosecutor's message was clear, that the government of Sudan had failed to cooperate with the Court and was in violation of Security Council Resolution 1593.

The Presidential Statement noted the efforts undertaken by the International Criminal Court, in particular the transmission on June 16, 2007 of arrest warrants for Ahmed Harun and Ali Kushyab to the government of Sudan. It called on the government of Sudan and all other parties to the conflict in Darfur to "cooperate fully" with the International Criminal Court as required by that Resolution 1593.

"The Presidential Statement is a victory for the people of Darfur, who have for two long looked on with frustration as the government of Sudan has brazenly flouted the will of the Council," said Dismas Nkunda, Co-Chair of the Darfur Consortium. "As a statement of the unanimous sentiment of the Council, the Presidential Statement sends a powerful message to Khartoum indicating that its defiance will no longer pass unchallenged."

The Darfur Consortium also expressed its appreciation of the leadership displayed by the government of Costa Rica in pressing for the statement and, in particular, for the passionate call to action which Foreign Minister Bruno Stagno Ugarte delivered to the Security Council on June 5. In the words of the Foreign Minister, this declaration "breaks the silence maintained by the Security Council with respect to the situation in Darfur."

At the same time as the Security Council was breaking its silence, the Council of the European Union was also speaking out in support of the ICC. The Council "deeply deplore[d] the continued failure of the GoS to cooperate with the ICC and underline[d] that the GoS has an obligation, and the capacity, to cooperate," noting that "[a]ny arrest warrant issued by the ICC should be respected." The Council went on to express its willingness to consider additional measures against those preventing cooperation with the Court.

"The Sudanese government has been put on warning," Nkunda reflected, "but states must be willing to back this strong rhetoric with strong action in the event that Sudan continues to defy the Court."