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David Triesman  
The Lord Triesman of Tottenham  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

13 March 2007

Dear David,

I wrote to you twice last year on behalf of the UN Association of the UK about the appalling, and still deteriorating, situation in the Darfur region of Sudan. Since then, far from any improvement, reports continue to emerge of flagrant breaches of international humanitarian law; and there has been little, if any, progress towards the deployment of a strengthened, hybrid AU/UN peacekeeping force to the region, or towards preventive deployment of UN peacekeepers to Chad and the Central African Republic. I know that the British government is as frustrated as our UNA-UK members are at this failure so far to exercise the international community's clear responsibility to protect the people of Darfur from further atrocities. I hope you will agree that the time has now come for a further major effort to remedy a situation which should not any longer be tolerated.

The top priority must surely be to find effective means to bring these abuses of human rights in Darfur to an end. The current session of the UN's Human Rights Council, which began yesterday, will provide an opportunity to bring out into the open the true state of the human rights situation in Darfur, and to refute claims by the Sudanese government that the situation is being exaggerated. But further condemnation of the Sudanese government or of its failure to prevent human rights abuses, justified though that is, will not be enough. What is needed is action to reinforce the AU/UN forces on the ground and to give them a mandate which will enable them to offer genuine protection to the civilian population. Is it not time now to bring this matter back to the UN Security Council and to try to persuade those members who were previously hesitant to do so, to send a clear signal to the government in Khartoum that further prevarication will not be tolerated?

The decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to take legal action against both a Sudanese government minister and a Janjaweed commander sends a strong message that all of those responsible for the atrocities in Darfur will be held accountable. The ICC's approach should be supported.

It is also vital that the international community steps up efforts to bring all parties to the conflict together in a continuous, open-ended peace process aimed at achieving a negotiated settlement, and during which all parties would observe a ceasefire.

The situation in Darfur is not only an appalling one in its own right. It is also becoming a critical test of two of the major reforms introduced at the September 2005 UN World Summit – the international community's commitment to the responsibility to protect, and the establishment of the Human Rights Council. Continued failure to apply these reforms in an effective manner in Darfur will cause damage to the UN as a whole and to the cause of international peace and security far beyond the geographical confines of that conflict. That is why UNA-UK urgently requests the government to spare no effort in achieving progress in the weeks ahead.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick  
Chair, UNA-UK