



## One Step Forward for the People of Darfur: Continued U.S. Leadership Needed

May 17, 2006

**WHY THIS ISSUE IS IMPORTANT:** After the Sudanese government and the main Darfur rebel group signed a peace agreement on May 1, Bishop Wenski, Chairman of the Committee on International Policy, urged the sustained engagement of the international community to take full advantage of this historic opportunity. In an editorial just published in *America* magazine he wrote, "This peace accord will open the way for the United States to hold the Sudanese government to its promise of allowing the African Union peacekeeping force (AMIS) to be transformed into **a more robust and mobile UN mission** with a strong mandate. It is essential to strengthen significantly the presence and responsiveness of peacekeeping forces in Darfur, both to guarantee implementation of the peace agreement and to win the confidence of the people."

Yesterday's unanimous approval by the UN Security Council of a resolution introduced by the United States will accelerate the transition to the full-fledged UN peacekeeping force. Like a child's first steps, these moves toward peace remain tentative but offer the best hope yet to the long-suffering people of Darfur. Since the bishops joined the leaders of other faith communities and other people of good will at the **Save Darfur Rally** on April 30, real progress has been made. Our leaders clearly received the message that our nation cannot remain silent in the face of killings, rape and wanton destruction.

The urgent appeal to President Bush and our elected representatives to bring a definitive end to the **intolerable moral and humanitarian crisis in Darfur** was heard. The President met with rally organizers just prior to the event; Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick traveled to Africa to help broker the peace agreement; and Secretary of State Rice went to the UN to urge Security Council action. The difficult work of implementing the UN Security Council Resolution with its vigorous enforcement mechanisms now begins.

Until then, humanitarian resources remain inadequate and security both for the people and those trying to assist them is deteriorating. A strong UN mission can help aid the 2.5 million people driven from their homes and the 3.5 million at risk of starvation. With the proper security, previously hampered efforts may resume delivering vitally needed humanitarian assistance so that the people of Darfur can prepare to return home and rebuild their lives.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Despite the encouraging news today, our work is not finished. Only a few thousand postcards separate the **Million Voices for Darfur Campaign** from its goal of collecting one-million postcards encouraging the President in his call for a stronger multinational force to protect the people of Darfur. Let the President know that the present **high-level engagement of the United States must be sustained** until our commitment to the people of Darfur is fulfilled.

If you haven't already done so, now is the moment to make your voice heard. In answer to the Gospel's call to protect human life and dignity, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has joined the Save Darfur Coalition, an alliance of over 150 faith-based, humanitarian and human rights organizations that organized the *Million Voices for Darfur Campaign*. **Send your postcard now.** They are available both in paper (by telephone at 202-478-6311) and electronically ([www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org)).

**TAKE ACTION NOW!** Make sure that your elected officials know that you want **continued high-level U.S. leadership** to end the crisis in Darfur. Please **tell the President and Congress** today that the United States must make maintain its resolve and pursue recent hopeful diplomatic developments. In the interim, all possible logistical and material support to strengthen AMIS should be provided without delay to improve security, while humanitarian assistance is stepped up. As Cardinal McCarrick told those assembled for the Save Darfur Rally only a few short weeks ago, "What happens to the people of Darfur happens to us." Keep that in mind as the journey begins on the long road to peace.

**For more information, contact:**

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