

AU Monitor

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Over forty members of African and European Parliaments have today (Friday) expressed surprise and disappointment that the crisis in Darfur is not on the agenda for the EU-Africa Summit that begins in Lisbon this weekend.

As European and African leaders including President Bashir of Sudan - arrive in Lisbon, the legislators released a copy of a letter they sent to the Heads of State attending.

The strongly worded letter said that they were, surprised and disappointed to note that at a two-day summit of the leaders of our two continents, there will be no time allotted to discuss the continuing crisis in Darfur that has claimed over 200,000 lives.

The calls for the Summit to discuss Darfur come following the news last month from UN peacekeeping chief Jean-Marie Guehenno that the Government of Sudan is blocking the deployment of the hybrid peacekeeping force. It also follows a similar demand for a focus on Darfur from European and Africa writers last Tuesday.

The letters from legislators and campaigners argue that the EU and Africa have a shared responsibility to solve the Darfur conflict, which has already claimed over 200,000 lives and displaced millions.

World leaders have to ask themselves what they are in politics for if they ignore the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people. If world leaders are willing to meet and shake hands with those accused of sponsoring mass violence they have a duty to look them in the eye and bring them to task, said Onyango Kakoba, Member of the Ugandan Parliament.

Full text of the MPs letter:

To: Heads of State and Government of the European Union and Africa

Your Excellencies,

On 7th and 8th December you will meet in Lisbon for the first EU-Africa Summit since 2000. Closer cooperation between our two continents is a highly desirable goal, which we as elected representatives strive to support.

However, we firmly believe that any discussion on such cooperation cannot move forward without also addressing the largest and one of the most pressing humanitarian disasters in the region: the ongoing conflict in Darfur and its destabilizing effect on Sudan and its neighbours.

We are therefore surprised and disappointed to note that at a two-day summit of the leaders of our two continents, there will be no time allotted to discuss the continuing crisis in Darfur that has claimed over 200,000 lives and displaced more than two and a half million people, many of whom continue to rely on an enormous humanitarian aid effort. The welfare of our citizens must

be the first order of business whenever our leaders meet, and the devastating impact this ongoing conflict has on the lives of so many people should clearly place it near the top of the agenda for the EU-Africa Summit.

The international community has a collective **responsibility to protect** civilians from armed conflict. In turn, when parliamentarians from across Africa met in May of this year to consider the role of national parliaments in responding to the Darfur crisis, they determined that "Parliaments have a direct responsibility to engage the executive [...] in the field of foreign policy, to protect the lives of the most vulnerabler

We therefore urge you to ensure that in Lisbon there is a specific agenda item on the urgent need to bring a sustainable end to the violence currently threatening the lives of civilians in Darfur. We also urge you to confirm that protecting civilians from conflict, including in Darfur, will be a clear priority of African-EU cooperation.

Full text available at:

<http://www.pambazuka.org/aumonitor/comments/551/>