

A CLIMATE CULPRIT IN DARFUR

By UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
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On 16 June 2007, The Washington Post published Climate Culprit in Darfur, an opinion article written by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. In the article, the Secretary-General attributes the Darfur crisis to global climate change. The Secretary-Generals controversial statements prompted several people to write responses in disagreement. The following is the Secretary-Generals article.

Just over a week ago, leaders of the world's industrialized nations met in Heiligendamm, Germany, for their annual summit. Our modest goal: to win a breakthrough on climate change. And we got it -- an agreement to cut greenhouse gases by 50 percent before 2050.

()This week, the global focus shifted. Tough but patient diplomacy produced another win, as yet modest in scope but large in humanitarian potential. Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir accepted a plan to deploy, at long last, a joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur.

()Clearly, uncertainties remain. This deal, like others before it, could yet come undone. It could be several months before the first new troops arrive and longer before the full 23,000-member contingent is in place. Meanwhile, the fighting will probably go on, even if less intensely and despite our many calls for a cease-fire. Still, in a conflict that has claimed more than 200,000 lives during four years of diplomatic inertia, this is significant progress, especially considering that it has come in only five months.

It would be natural to view these as distinct developments. In fact, they are linked. Almost invariably, we discuss Darfur in a convenient military and political shorthand -- an ethnic conflict pitting Arab militias against black rebels and farmers. Look to its roots, though, and you discover a more complex dynamic. Amid the diverse social and political causes, the Darfur conflict began as an ecological crisis, arising at least in part from climate change.

()A U.N. peacekeeping force will help moderate the violence and keep humanitarian aid flowing, saving many lives. Yet that is only a first step, as I emphasized to my colleagues at the summit in Germany. Any peace in Darfur must be built on solutions that go to the root causes of the conflict. We can hope for the return of more than 2 million refugees. We can safeguard villages and help rebuild homes. But what to do about the essential dilemma -- the fact that there's no longer enough good land to go around?

()There are many other parts of the world where such problems will arise, for which any solutions we find in Darfur will be relevant. We have made slow but steady progress in recent weeks. The people of Darfur have suffered too much, for too long. Now the real work begins.

Full text is available at:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/15/AR2007061501857_pf.html