

US Fed News
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The U.S. Department of State issued the following transcript of remarks by the U.S. Secretary of State:

SECRETARY RICE: Mr. Secretary General, Mr. President, fellow Ministers, members of the Security Council, I would like to thank all of you for responding to the call for this meeting and convening a special session of this body on such short notice. The Darfur Peace Agreement, signed just days ago in Abuja, represents an historic opportunity for the people of Darfur to secure real peace and lasting justice. The United Nations has a vital role to play at this hopeful moment and the United States urges the Security Council to quickly pass the resolution that we circulated yesterday.

I have visited Darfur. I have seen the unspeakable suffering. The United States has characterized this wanton campaign of violence as genocide and yesterday President Bush reaffirmed that judgment.

With the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement, we are now - we really have an opportunity to help end the long nightmare that has befallen the people of Darfur. The source of the conflict in Darfur is a political problem, as old as Sudan itself. Historically, the Government of Khartoum has not been able to rule all of its citizens justly.

In this way, the Darfur agreement is a worthy complement to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The Darfur Peace Agreement is the foundation on which to begin building a future of freedom, security and opportunity for the people of Darfur. Each of the parties has pledged to cooperate in meeting its unique and important obligations, from disarming and demobilizing militias, to building an inclusive political process, to sharing wealth and generation development in Darfur.

Most importantly, the agreement sets out a path that can return the people of Darfur to their homes. It is now vital for all of Sudan's neighbors to support this peace agreement as well. In addition, the international community must insist that all parties remain accountable and that the agreement is completely and verifiably implemented. It is now more important than ever to have a strong United Nations effort to ensure that the agreement's detailed timelines are monitored and enforced. The accord clearly states that neutral peacekeepers have an essential role to play in this process.

This is an extremely difficult job and the AU troops have performed admirably. Recognizing this, the African Union expressed its desire on March 10th to transition its mission in Sudan to a larger UN-led force that can do more to protect the people of Darfur.

Just as UN peacekeepers play a central role in helping to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between North and South, we now need a UN peacekeeping force to help implement the Darfur peace agreement ()

Today, I call upon all nations to do their part to help the World Food Program feed and care for the people of Darfur

This is a time of testing for the international community, especially for the United Nations. The plight of the people of Darfur stirs the conscience of all human beings. This is a challenge for the entire community of nations and it is one that cannot be taken lightly.

If the idea of an international community is to mean anything, if the founding principles of the United Nations are to be more than just dreams, and if the notion of our **responsibility to protect** the weakest and the most powerless among us is ever to be more than just an empty promise, then the Security Council must act

Thank you very much, Mr. President.
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