

The U.N. Security Council on Tuesday strengthened an arms embargo on Sudan's Darfur region to include the government and ordered an asset freeze and travel ban on those who defy peace efforts in the conflict-wracked area.

The U.S.-backed resolution passed 12-0, with Algeria, Russia and China abstaining because of opposition to sanctions.

The resolution widens an embargo on armed groups in Darfur to include the Sudanese government which will now need approval from a new Security Council committee to bring weapons into the vast western region.

It also demands the government abide by an April 2004 ceasefire and stop carrying out offensive military overflights in Darfur. It would impose an asset freeze and a travel ban on those who violate the sanctions or are responsible for the overflights.

"What we're trying to do is apply consistent pressure on Darfur, specifically in a way that will actually curtail the violence," U.S. Deputy Ambassador Stuart Holliday said after the vote

Early on, the council had hoped to deal with all three issues - the sanctions, the peacekeepers and the war criminals - in one resolution. But because agreement could not be reached, the United States decided to split the issues into three resolutions

Tony Baldry [British House of Commons committee chairman] said the world's failure to protect the people of Darfur from the atrocities committed against them was a scandal.

"Crises such as Darfur require the world to respond collectively and effectively. Passing the buck will not do," Baldry said. "After the genocide in Rwanda, the world said 'never again.' President Bush said that genocide would not be allowed to happen 'on his watch.' These words should mean something."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,1280,-4900900,00.html>