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**Written statement\* submitted by the Association of World Citizens, a non-governmental organization on the Roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 December 2006]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **Darfur: Human Rights and Peace-Building**

The Association of World Citizens has been active with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Association of World Education in raising the issue of Darfur since early 2004. Thus we welcome this Special Session.

We will not repeat the massive evidence of destruction, of displaced persons, of systematic rape of women and young girls, and the targeted obstruction of humanitarian aid. The representatives of United Nations relief agencies, the Special Rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights and the field workers of international relief agencies have given lengthy and moving reports. There have also been useful press reports such as those of Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times and scholars such as Eric Reeves of Smith College in Massachusetts, USA. A good background analysis is Julie Flint and Alex de Waal *Darfur: A Short History of A Long War* (London: Zed Books, 2005, 152pp.)

We would like to make four points which are essential for finding a just solution:

- 1) The Regional Dimension of the Darfur Conflict;
- 2) The Impact of the Darfur Conflict on the North-South Sudan Peace Agreement;
- 3) The Deep Impact on Basic Structures of Society;
- 4) The Need for Peace-building and Reconciliation.

### *The Regional Dimension*

We have highlighted the impact that refugee flows from Darfur can have upon the Government and society of Chad. Chad is a country which has had more than its share of civil wars, frontier disputes and military coups. In the past, Darfur had been used as a relief area for forces in Chadian conflicts. Now we see that Chad is increasingly torn by the Darfur conflict.

Likewise there are dangers of instability spreading to the Central African Republic, especially that wedge between South Darfur and Chad with Birao as the largest town. There have been refugees going into Sudan as well as refugees from Sudan going into the Central African Republic. Some of the Janjaweed troops are already speaking of taking “pasture lands” in the Central African Republic. There is a real danger of regional destabilization if the Darfur conflict continues.

### *The Impact of the Darfur Conflict on the North-South Sudan Accord*

The conflict in Darfur is influenced by the 1982-2005 North-South civil war in Sudan. The Darfur situation is not a “sudden happening.” For some time, armed bands of pastoral ‘Arab’ tribes from Darfur and adjacent Kordofan had been raiding villages in northern Bahr El Ghazal, bringing back both loot, including men to work, and women, raped so they would reproduce. These bands were progressively structured into militias with close relations to the forces of the Government of Sudan. Thus, the pattern of destruction and slavery was already in place before it was turned onto the agricultural populations of Darfur itself.

The Darfur violence poses a menace to the North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on 9 January 2005 which brought to an end the civil war. It is difficult after a long conflict to put into place a system of governance that will enable all the people of Sudan to exercise their rights and obligations equally. Hope lies in the active and growing Sudanese civil society which is willing to create links beyond their ethnic-religious membership. These efforts merit international interest and help.

The North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement is fragile being based on a sharing of power and oil revenues — not a deep reconciliation. It would not take very much to see this peace agreement fly apart with negative regional impact.

### *The Deep Impact of the Darfur Conflict on Basic Structures of Society*

Darfur (which means the region of the Fur — one of the agricultural peoples being decimated) is an area the size of France with some six and a half million people — all population figures are estimates. Most people, probably 80% are agriculturalists, living in relatively small villages which depend on wells for water for household use and modest irrigation of vegetable gardens in basically subsistence agriculture.

These agriculturalists are divided into separate peoples who are structured into tribes and clans: the Fur, the Massaleits, the Zayhawa, the Birgit are among these peoples who are targets of armed attacks from the semi-nomadic pastoralists who consider themselves ‘Arabs’ because of the prestige of the Arabic language they speak. In fact, these Sudanese ‘Arabs’ have no relation to the peoples of Arabia and are more related to pastoral tribes in Libya and Chad. In the past, there have been both complementary relations between agriculturalists and pastoralists as well as rivalry over water and grazing rights. In periods of drought, there is an increase in rivalry and sporadic attacks by pastoralists on agricultural villages — the pastoralists having camels which allow them to move quickly over wide areas.

To these “traditional” tensions between pastoralists and agriculturalists, there has spread in the last 10 years a racist ideology of Arab supremacy under the name Tajamir al Arabia (The Arab Gathering). It is a movement which, it seems, began in Libya and has spread to Sudan and Chad. The ideology holds that only the people who came from Arabia are true Arabs and that it is these people who must govern. The ideology is opposed to the Government of Sudan led in the Arab Gathering view by “riverine half-caste Nubian-Egyptians”. The ideology, however, has spread among some of the Janjaweed militias which are allied to the Government of Sudan. The ideology reinforces the determination of the Janjaweed to drive out ‘non-Arab’ peoples from their homelands. This Arab Gathering thought must be actively opposed as it adds a harmful ideological element to an already complex situation.

Moreover, the agricultural economy of Darfur has collapsed, and there is no prospect for revival under conditions of combat. The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, has stressed the ongoing, deliberate destruction of the agricultural infrastructure — the greeneries needed both for food and for seeds to replant, the deliberate destruction of wells that are filled and covered with sand, the destruction of all farm tools, as well as houses and storage areas.

Thus there is a need to implement rural development schemes aimed at reducing conflicts over water and grazing land. This requires bringing together the existing research results dealing with relations between pastoralists and agriculturalists in Darfur and the wider Sahel ecological zone. A special emphasis should be placed on the study of dispute settlement among pastoralists and agriculturalists to see which of these techniques are still valid and if new methods need to be developed.

*The Need for Peace-building and Reconciliation*

Development and reconstruction must be planned now so as to deal with the root causes of the conflict. Improved State institutions with a fairer system of justice, better education and health facilities, infrastructure and local markets need to be planned so that people will see immediate improvements in their lives and so support a peace process.

Physical reconstruction may be costly given the degree of destruction of the agricultural infrastructure. However, social reconstruction may be more difficult given the degree of violence and uprooting of a large number of people. The texture of social trust is likely to be more difficult to rebuild than houses and wells.

Thus planning for post-violence reconstruction and ecologically-sound development needs to be started now drawing upon the ideas and insights of a wide circle of those concerned with the ecology of dry areas such as Darfur and the social coexistence of pastoral and agricultural groups. Such peaceful social coexistence requires a program of ecologically-sound development based on mutually-beneficial economic and social relations so as to prevent future conflicts. The task of rebuilding must aim to exclude none.

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