



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
4TH SPECIAL SESSION  
(Geneva, 12 December 2006)

"The Human Rights situation in Darfur"

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Vesa HIMANEN  
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on behalf of the European Union

Check against delivery

Mr President,

I am taking the floor on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

As we convene for this Special Session of the Human Rights Council, we must all be acutely conscious that the grave crisis in Darfur is on-going. The magnitude of the human rights and humanitarian emergency is well-documented and profoundly shocking.

Last month we received reporting by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights about an attack on several villages around the Jebel Moon Area, resulting in the killing of civilians, including 26 children. In the last few days, new reports have reached us describing clashes in North Darfur, in the area of El Fasher, including a series of attacks against villages. The clashes are in clear violation of the Darfur Peace Agreement and the N'djamena humanitarian cease-fire agreement. Just last week, the Secretary-General expressed his deep concern about the worsening security situation in Darfur. His spokesman reported that in the last six weeks alone, more than 80,000 people had been forced to flee their homes, 50,000 of them in Darfur and 30,000 in Chad, that several hundred civilians, including women, children and the elderly, had been killed, and that there continued to be disturbing reports of mass rapes and other gross violations of human rights. Perpetrators of these violations are not prosecuted and punished, and they operate in a climate of impunity.

In total, the number of deaths is estimated by the United Nations to be more than 200,000, and at least another two million have been forced to leave their homes because of fighting across Darfur. The escalating violence and attacks against relief workers forced the UN to start evacuating their personnel from El Fasher last week, further aggravating the plight of civilians in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.

I could go on - but I believe the overall picture is clear. Darfur is experiencing a severe and large-scale human rights and humanitarian crisis as we speak.

It is against the background of this grave suffering by civilians that we are calling on this Council to do what the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan asked us to do in his statement on 29 November: to come together at this Council, on the basis of the mandate entrusted to us, to scrutinise the situation in Darfur and to decide on immediate measures. This new Human Rights Council simply must act.

We must emphasise the primary obligation of the government of Sudan to protect all civilians, in particular women and children, against all forms of violence.

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\* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

We must call on all parties to the conflict to put an immediate end to the ongoing violations of human rights and humanitarian law, and to ensure full, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Mr President,

It was encouraging to see the willingness of countries from all regions to come together to convene this Special Session on Darfur. Indeed, the list of convenors was signed by 65 countries including 33 members of the Council. The holding of this Special Session is a cross-regional initiative. Finland as the focal point of this process, has aimed to ensure adequate transparency and open consultations and to foster dialogue and a cooperative approach with all delegations. We hope this will serve as a precedent for the future.

In this special session it is very important to address different aspects of the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Darfur. One crucial aspect in this regard is to abolish impunity, and another is to focus on the most vulnerable groups in this conflict, including children who have been traumatized by the conflict and violence. We note that paragraph 185 of the Darfur Peace Agreement states that "the relevant authorities shall make all necessary efforts to respond to violations of human rights, redress the impact of such violations and take all necessary measures to ensure justice in a timely and effective manner."

It is also essential to have effective follow-up to this session. This Council must make sure that our work is geared towards concrete and operational outcomes - and not settle for statements delivered for their own sake. For this reason, an urgent Assessment Mission to Darfur, with the essential levels of expertise, objectivity and independence, including the Special Rapporteur in Sudan, has been called for.

Extensive and detailed information based on independent monitoring notably by OHCHR and other Agencies on the human rights situation in Darfur already exists. The African Union, notably through the AMIS operation has also been active on the ground and reports regularly. The suggested mission should therefore build on these existing efforts, and seek to identify ways in which the Government of Sudan should implement recommendations for the better protection of the human rights of its citizens, and in which all parties can alleviate the dire human rights situation.

I hope that this Special Session will give us the opportunity to decide ways in which the suffering of the people of Darfur can be urgently alleviated. The cooperation of the country concerned, the Government of Sudan, is essential for these efforts to lead to any improvement on the ground in Darfur. We therefore call on the government of Sudan to co-operate fully and without delay with the follow-up mechanism agreed at this Special Session. I appeal to all of you to let this Council deal constructively and effectively with the issue of this special session. We do it for the people of Darfur.

I thank you.

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