

Many of us on both sides of the aisle and in the international community have repeatedly called for greater U.S. and global action.

Upon taking office in January of this year, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that ending the violence in Darfur was going to be one of his top priorities. President Bush has rightly called the situation in Darfur genocide. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said that, "Darfur is the greatest humanitarian crisis the world faces today."

Today, I speak once again about this crisis.

Quite simply, we are at a critical juncture in Sudan.

The situation in Darfur has become increasingly complex. Rebel groups are jockeying for power and fighting amongst themselves. Banditry and lawlessness are on the rise and humanitarian workers remain at great risk. In late September, a rebel group brutally killed ten African Union peacekeepers in a surprise raid.

Just last week, reports surfaced of a new, appallingly violent massacre in southern Darfur. According to reports, more than 30 civilians were killed, including a young boy who was shot in the back while trying to run away.

And now the peace agreement between North and South Sudan—a U.S. brokered accord that might have formed a blueprint for a political settlement in Darfur—appears increasingly in jeopardy.

Sadly, without action, Sudan may be on the verge of even greater instability and human misery.

Yet thanks in part to the tireless work of Secretary General Ban, we also have two critical opportunities to bring about a long-term resolution to this crisis.

First, in late July the U.N. Security Council voted to implement a significantly increased U.N./African Union peacekeeping force.

This peacekeeping force is desperately needed and the United States should work with the U.N. and the global community to make sure it is deployed as soon as possible.

I commend the White House for including funding for this urgent mission in its supplemental appropriations request.

But the peacekeepers are only one important step. Sudan also needs a long-term political agreement. As Secretary General Ban said recently in Sudan, "There must be a peace to keep."

This weekend in Tripoli, a first round of peace talks between the various factions and the Sudanese government will begin.

The peacekeeping forces and the Tripoli negotiations are two critical steps toward ending the violence, and they deserve our strongest support.

We must make it clear that we expect all factions to stop the violence and participate in good faith in the peace talks.

We must demand that China and Russia immediately halt the sale of weapons in Sudan. That's right, two permanent members of the U.N. Security Council are the primary arms suppliers in Sudan. Global leaders have a responsibility to halt such sales.

But ultimately, we must hold the Sudanese government accountable. Its culpability in the years of violence and stonewalling of international efforts is well known.

Sudanese President Bashir must be held to his commitment to allow peacekeepers in the country and to participate in the peace talks. He must also work to ensure the North-South peace agreement does not collapse.

Early statements by his government said that it would "contribute positively to secure the environment for the negotiations" and "facilitate the timely deployment" of the 26,000 member peacekeeping force.

Sadly, we have every reason to be skeptical of the regime's intentions.

It is therefore critical that we maintain pressure on the Sudanese government to honor its commitments. The administration should continue its diplomatic efforts and we in Congress should consider tightening economic sanctions if the Sudanese government does not cooperate with the peacekeepers or the upcoming peace negotiations.

The stakes are too high, and the humanitarian crisis has dragged on too long to allow any more delay in Sudan.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

#### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

• Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, today, President Bush is meeting with President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC.

This meeting is very important. The DRC symbolizes the hope that so many Africans have for the future of their continent. The country is also emblematic of so many of the challenges facing Africa.

Stabilizing the DRC and fostering democracy are high priorities for American objectives in Africa. Given the country's size, efforts at political and economic reform, and wealth of natural resources, it is imperative that we support the Congolese Government to end more than a decade of warfare and several decades of unaccountable and non-transparent government.

For this reason, I attached an amendment to the 2006 Iraq supplemental appropriations bill, together with Senator LEAHY, that provided \$13.2 million to the Congo, including \$8.2 million for military reform and \$5 million to support free and fair elections. In December 2006, the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act passed into law. I was proud to have introduced this legislation, which authorized \$52 million

in U.S. assistance for the Congo, called for a special envoy to resolve ongoing violence, and urged the administration to strengthen the U.N. peacekeeping force.

Unfortunately, the administration has ignored the call by Congress to appoint a special envoy, and it has done little to strengthen the U.N. peacekeeping force which is working to stabilize the eastern part of the Congo.

Over the past several months, there have been reports of the mobilization of military forces in the eastern Congo. These reports are deeply disturbing. It is my hope that all Congolese leaders will recommit themselves to the search for peace in this part of the country. The pursuit of military solutions in the eastern part of the country will inevitably prove elusive and will only yield more bloodshed and misery for the civilian population.

The seriousness of the situation in eastern Congo was recently highlighted by a devastating report about the escalation of sexual violence against women in the region. For this reason, I wrote a letter to Secretary of State Rice earlier this month to express concern about the escalation of sexual violence in eastern DRC. Specifically, I asked the Secretary to respond to nine questions concerning steps that the administration is taking to help end the sexual violence and make the perpetrators accountable. To date, I have not received a reply to my letter. For the DRC's transition to democratic governance to be successful, the U.S. and its partners will have to intensify their commitment to work with the Congolese Government to enhance security, resolve conflicts, and spur the country's social and economic reconstruction.

Despite the success of last year's elections, the first in 40 years, the international community must be actively engaged in the country for the foreseeable future not only to bring an end to the conflict in the east but to assist in the emergence of institutions that will ensure accountability and economic development. It is a sobering fact that nearly 80 percent of the country's 56 million people live in absolute poverty and more than 70 percent are undernourished.

At the same time, the Kabila government must be encouraged to adopt inclusive and transparent political processes, involving opposition parties and civil society organizations. Moreover, I welcome the return of American investors to the DRC, to help develop and add value to the country's natural resources. It is imperative, however, that American businesses, as well as investors from every other country, especially China, commit to a zero tolerance for corruption while implementing effective measures to preserve the nation's environment.●

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)