



October 18, 2007

His Excellency Hu Jintao  
President, People's Republic of China  
Beijing

Dear President Hu:

We write to urge China to intensify its diplomatic engagement in support of a peaceful solution to the crisis in Darfur. As a primary economic, military, and political partner of the Government of Sudan, as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, and as a country crucial to development across the African continent, we believe China is uniquely positioned to help end the crisis. Of course, China need to be joined by other countries in that effort, and we urge that China take a lead in working with those with special influence in a concentrated diplomatic campaign to achieve durable, just peace in Darfur.

We are writing on behalf of the more than 180 faith-based, advocacy and human rights organizations in the United States that make up the Save Darfur Coalition. Our member organizations represent 130 million Americans of all ages, races, religions and political affiliations.

The coming weeks are a critical period for Darfur. Either very fragile progress will be cemented towards peace and reconciliation, or promising initiatives will founder and the suffering of millions of Darfuris will deepen. Your government has it within its power to ensure the positive outcome.

Murder, bombings, and ethnic cleansing in Darfur continue, as do attacks against humanitarian workers and African Union peacekeepers. These include the horrendous attack in Haskanita, likely by a breakaway rebel faction, that killed at least 10 AU peacekeepers, and the subsequent horrific destruction of Haskanita by the Sudanese armed forces. The displacement of Darfuri civilians is again on the rise, and there is mounting evidence that non-Sudanese, including citizens of Niger and Chad, are being resettled into emptied Darfur villages by the Government of Sudan. Moreover, the United Nations continues to report that rape as a weapon of war remains a major part of the conflict, with women inside and outside of IDP camps at risk.

The general deterioration of the security and humanitarian situations in Darfur augurs ill for the prospects of the UN's recent peacekeeping and negotiations initiatives, which China has supported with several positive steps in recent months. These include its vote in favor of UN Resolution 1769 in the Security Council, and its commitment of a 315-member military engineering contingent for service in UNAMID.

The appointment of the Special Representative on the Darfur Issue, Ambassador Liu Guijin, was a further indication of China's growing engagement in international efforts to end the Darfur conflict. We appreciated meeting Ambassador Liu during his recent Washington visit, and in our meeting, we recognized the positive steps China has taken.

As we emphasized to Ambassador Liu, however, we are convinced that China's current stance toward Darfur and Sudan, viewed in its entirety, is ambiguous and sends mixed messages, at best, to the Sudanese government. The great emphasis placed on promoting continued growth in trade between China and Sudan (trade which, inevitably, provides resources to help the Sudanese government fund its military operations in Darfur), your specific infrastructure aid to the government outweighing your help to the victims in Darfur, the diplomatic backing that you often still provide to Khartoum, and the active, unconditional engagement in promoting closer ties with the Sudanese military – all these undermine the effectiveness of China's positive measures your representatives have described to us aimed at bringing peace to Darfur. The balance of Chinese engagement in Sudan, Mr. President, does not clearly prioritize ending the horrific and destabilizing conflict in Darfur, and indeed can still more easily be assessed to the contrary.

In this transitional period, Darfur is especially vulnerable. The success or failure of the UN engagement China helped bring about may be determined before it properly launches, by the disruptions and jockeying of forces on the ground. Additional, immediate initiatives should be undertaken by China. They would help reverse the deterioration in the situation on the ground in Darfur. They would also encourage other countries to assume their responsibilities to provide concrete support to UNAMID and the full implementation of Resolution 1769, and contribute to the advancement of an inclusive peace process.

- China and all UN Security Council members have an obligation to ensure that Resolution 1769 is fully implemented, and that all deadlines set in it are met. Secretary-General Ban has just informed the Security Council that Sudanese foot-dragging on UNAMID force composition and the failure of capable member states to commit helicopters and heavy transport are preventing the Department of Peacekeeping Operations from meeting the first of those deadlines. Unless those obstacles are removed quickly, delays in implementation – in getting forces into Darfur that can deter spoilers, protect civilians, and create the space for a peace process, will only compound. The cycle of Sudanese non-compliance and lack of adequate international support to UNAMID must be broken now, before it deepens. China can and must lead in pressing Khartoum to facilitate the swift, full implementation of Resolution 1769, and in pressing those member states that should be committing needed resources for the peacekeeping operation to do so.
- In addition to calling for this forceful Chinese engagement with Khartoum and its international partners, and in applauding China's contribution of engineers, we urge that your government contribute more directly, especially by providing helicopters and heavy transport from your ample capabilities.

- Your government continues to sell arms and weapons to the Government of Sudan, some of which are being used against innocent people in Darfur. China should suspend all arms and weapons sales to Sudan, and military cooperation more generally, as long as the fighting in Darfur continues; condition resumption of military cooperation on visible transformation of Khartoum's military posture in Darfur toward one protecting rather than attacking Darfur's own population; and call for other nations with military ties to Khartoum follow its example.
- Finally, we urge China to join others in the international community pressing all sides to respect an immediate ceasefire, and to lend its diplomatic good offices and support to the United Nations and African Union in advancing a truly inclusive peace process which brings all relevant combatant and civil society leaders to the negotiating table, including the government, rebel movements, representatives of the internally-displaced and refugee populations (especially women, who have been so victimized), and tribal leaders not affiliated with the rebel movements.

Mr. President, because of the ambiguity and mixed nature of China's engagement with Sudan this year, it is entirely plausible to view China's positive steps towards resolving the Darfur crisis primarily as an effort to deflect criticism directed against your country as you prepare to host the Olympic games next summer, and not as sincere. We wish to believe differently. By publicly undertaking the actions outlined above, the Chinese government can convince the international community that it is truly committed to playing its key role in ending the crisis in Darfur.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Wasserman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "W".

Bill Wasserman  
Executive Director