

Response to the Crisis in Darfur

We, the members of the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church, note with concern the evolving humanitarian catastrophe and security crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan. Since the Board's statement of October 2004, the situation has deteriorated even more.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan recently released his "Report of the Secretary-General on Darfur," mentioning a "new kind of terrifying violence" on top of the localized violence that Darfur already experienced prior to the conflict that erupted in February of 2003. The Secretary General reported:

"The notorious Janjaweed, coupled with militia attacks and indiscriminate air bombardment, contributed to the razing and burning of villages, the rape of girls and women, the abduction of children, and the destruction of food and water resources. The result has been death, devastation and displacement in Darfur, with more than 200,000 civilian casualties, more than 2 million people displaced from their homes and condemned to misery, and millions more having their livelihoods destroyed."

The report said that "The cycle of terror inside Darfur also threatens regional peace and security. The 1,000 kilometer border between the Sudan and Chad has been repeatedly violated by armed groups and has ratcheted up tension between Khartoum and Ndjamena. The cross-border violence has also led to additional flows of refugees and internally displaced persons in both Chad and the Sudan, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region."

The US Congress has recently passed the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (H.R. 3127), directing the US President to block assets of and deny visas to individuals believed to be involved in acts of genocide or other war crimes in Darfur, including expressing the sense of Congress that the US President should immediately impose sanctions on commanders of Janjaweed militia who impede the peace process or commit atrocities.

We call for the immediate deployment of the 17,500 UN peacekeepers and over 3000 UN civilian police authorized by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1706 passed on August 31, 2006. This same resolution seeks to encourage the safe transport and implementation of all needed humanitarian aid to the suffering people of the Darfur. We urge the government of Sudan to comply with the Darfur Peace Agreement so that this most horrible human tragedy can come to an end and the suffering of the people stop. We also welcome the referral of Sudan to the International Criminal Court and urge all parties to cooperate with the Court.

To these ends, all efforts of the United Nations, the Africa Union, the United States, and the international community must be encouraged, especially toward disarming the Janjaweed militia and other armed outlaw groups and toward setting up the infrastructure for sustainable economic recovery and restoration of Darfur and all the Sudan. We call

for peace and justice throughout the region and for the Sudanese government and all parties that have a stake in the future of Sudan to work toward these ends.

We take our call for this action from the prophet Micah who said “they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” (4:3) and from Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

October 14, 2006