

Joint Statement

Statement on the Humanitarian Situation in Darfur

6 March 2009

The Government of Sudan's order suspending 16 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will have devastating implications for the citizens of Darfur. Aid operations in North Sudan, the largest humanitarian emergency in the world costing over \$2 billion annually, will be irrevocably damaged.

The UN Agencies operating in Sudan [UNICEF, UNHCR, UNJLC, WFP, WHO] and OCHA, are deeply concerned by this situation. The suspended NGOs account for more than half of the capacity for the aid operation in Darfur. If the life-saving assistance these agencies were providing is not restored shortly, it will have immediate, lasting and profound impacts on the well-being of millions of Sudanese citizens. It is not possible, in any reasonable time frame, to replace the capacity and expertise these agencies have provided over an extended period of time.

The decision to expel these sixteen organizations, our main implementing partners, effectively removes some 6,500 staff, or 40% of the humanitarian workforce, from being able to carry out critical humanitarian activities in Darfur. These organizations provide a lifeline to 4.7 million people in Darfur alone, and millions more in other areas of Northern Sudan. While some 85 international NGOs operate in Darfur, without these organisations much of the aid operation literally comes to a halt.

We are also alarmed that the Government has confiscated assets from these organizations, which are critical to the humanitarian operation, including computers, vehicles, and communications equipment.

While the UN agencies reaffirm their commitment to do everything possible to cover the most pressing and critical gaps caused by this suspension during the coming days, neither this commitment nor remaining capacity on the ground is sufficient to meet the humanitarian needs in the long run. As such, we appeal to the Government of Sudan to urgently reconsider this decision and to restore our ability to assist their most vulnerable citizens.

This statement has been endorsed by the following UN Agencies:

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC)
World Food Programme (WFP)
World Health Organization (WHO)
and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

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