



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**Statement Attributable to Under-Secretary-General and
Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos
Khartoum, Sudan, 23 May 2013**

The purpose of my visit to Sudan was two-fold: first, to look at humanitarian operations in the country; and second – given the sometimes difficult relations between the Government of Sudan and the United Nations on humanitarian issues – to work to build trust and confidence so that we are in a stronger position to help meet the humanitarian needs of people in Sudan.

During the last three days I received a warm welcome and had some very constructive and informative meetings with the President, other senior Government officials in Khartoum and Darfur, as well as with UN Member States, UN agencies, NGOs and other humanitarian partners. In all my meetings I have stressed the desire of the international community to assist in meeting the needs of war-affected people in Sudan.

Sudan is a country that faces a number of different challenges: on-going fighting in Darfur; unresolved conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile; rebel attacks that have spread recently to North Kordofan; a massive displacement crisis; and high levels of malnutrition in many parts of the country, including Eastern Sudan, where some of the highest malnutrition rates have been recorded.

Since my arrival, I have had a chance to see first-hand the humanitarian situation in Darfur. Yesterday I was in Zamzam camp for displaced people just outside El Fasher. Despite all the hardship that the people in Zamzam camp have endured over the last ten years, I was sorry to see that they still suffer from a lack of adequate basic services, including schools and the necessary education materials for their children. There are hundreds of thousands of children all over Darfur who were born in camps and who have never known life outside these camps. We cannot forget these children. They are the future of Darfur and of Sudan.

And the women also need our help. Speaking of life in a camp, one woman said to me that she feels like a bird in a cage.

I was particularly shocked when we visited some of the new arrivals in ZamZam camp. I saw people who had recently fled fighting in South Darfur sheltering under small pieces of tarpaulin in the hot desert sun, in desperate conditions.

Although the situation in Northern Darfur, where I visited, is now much calmer than it was earlier this year when fighting erupted in the Jebel Amir gold mining area, in other parts of Darfur fighting has unfortunately continued. The UN estimates that 300,000 people have fled fighting in all of Darfur in the first five months of this year, which is more than the total number of people displaced in the last two years put together. This is

an extremely worrying situation and it is clear that humanitarian aid agencies are struggling to cope.

I am concerned that despite overall needs increasing, the amount of funding available to us is decreasing. This is for a variety of reasons, including concerns about where we are permitted to go because of the on-going conflict, competing needs in other countries, and a difficult global economic environment. We have a serious funding crisis in Sudan. We need to attract more funds from our traditional donors, but we also need to expand our partnerships and attract funding from other Governments in the region and elsewhere.

We cannot let Darfur slip off the radar screen of the international community. With 1.4 million people still living in camps, and a majority of the people in Darfur still suffering from inadequate access to basic health-care, education and other services, the challenges remain enormous.

We also need to change the way we work. After ten years of major humanitarian operations in Darfur, we need to find more sustainable ways of supporting displaced people who have no other option but to remain in the camps. We need to build stronger bridges between humanitarian and development work. In this regard, I welcome the Darfur Donors Conference which recently saw US\$ 3.6 billion in pledges for Darfur, including a commitment of US\$ 2.6 billion from the Government of Sudan.

With regard to South Kordofan and Blue Nile, I am pleased to see that aid agencies in Sudan have greater access to war-affected people in Government-controlled areas today than they did a year ago – particularly in Blue Nile. But I am worried about the safety and well-being of civilians in the war-affected areas that are not under Government control.

The stories we hear from refugees arriving in South Sudan and the poor conditions in which many of them arrive, are a constant reminder of the hardships faced by people in the war zone. Farming is affected, food is in short supply and people die every day from a lack of access to adequate health facilities, clean water and other basic services. Ordinary people – men and women, boys and girls, the sick and the elderly – are paying the price. We know this also from those humanitarian organisations which have crossed the border to assist people in desperate need.

The UN and the international community has in the past condemned the Government of Sudan when there have been reports of armed attacks targeting or affecting civilians, as we do everywhere else in the world. However, it is important to note that rebel movements in Sudan are also responsible for similar crimes. I was shocked to hear detailed reports of the recent attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure by the Sudan Revolutionary Front in Northern Kordofan and parts of South Kordofan. I condemn these attacks on civilians in the strongest terms.

Once again it is the civilians who are paying the biggest price in this war. The people of Sudan have suffered enough. I call on the parties to stop the fighting and to resolve their disputes by peaceful means. And above all, I call on the parties to protect civilians and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

I welcome the direct talks between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM-N that started in April under the auspices of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel. I hope the talks will resume soon and that they will lead to a resolution of the conflict so that people can return to their homes and start to rebuild their lives.

In the meanwhile, the United Nations has called on both the Government and SPLM-N to agree to a one week moratorium in fighting to allow it to carry out a polio vaccination campaign for 150,000 children under the age of five. Sudan has recently been declared polio free and leaving pockets of unvaccinated children risks reversing this hard-won status. The vaccines have no military value. Both sides have agreed in principle for the vaccination campaign to go ahead, although the SPLM-N has insisted that it should take place from Kenya or Ethiopia rather than from Sudan. We will be meeting with both sides to try to resolve this issue so that the vaccination campaign can take place quickly, before the rainy season makes the roads impassable.

Whether it is Darfur, South Kordofan or Blue Nile, what is needed above all else is for the fighting to stop and for the conflicts to be resolved by peaceful means. The people of Sudan have suffered enough. Everyone I have spoken to in Sudan in the last three days has told me that what this country needs now is peace, not more war.