

**Statement to the Human Rights Council
Special Session on Darfur**

Mr. President,

We are pleased that the Human Rights Council is holding this Special Session on the situation in Darfur, Sudan, to highlight the ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in that country. It is high time for this Council to act in accordance with its mandate to prevent human rights violations and to promote cooperation and remedial measures.

Mr. President, Canada remains deeply concerned by the persistent culture of impunity; the continued systematic and gross violations of human rights, including sexual and gender based violence; and repeated violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict in Darfur. We are alarmed at the increasingly insecure conditions for civilians, and note with growing unease the spill-over of the conflict into neighbouring Chad and the Central African Republic in recent months, marked by the same lack of consideration for human life and the same patterns of violent abuse committed by militias that criss-cross the porous borders.

The primary reason we are here today is to signal first and foremost to the people of Darfur that we have not forgotten them; secondly to remind the Government of Sudan that it has the primary responsibility to protect its population; and thirdly, that the international community is ready to work in cooperation, openness and transparency with the Sudanese government to improve the human rights and humanitarian situation in Darfur. However, in the absence of the Government of Sudan's willingness or ability to protect its population, the international community, in accordance with the Responsibility to Protect which it accepted in 2005, must do all that it can to provide protection to the people of Darfur. We are greatly concerned that the international community is failing to do just that.

We call on all parties to the conflict in Darfur to implement the recommendations contained in the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Sudan; the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and the International Commission of Inquiry, as well as relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. It is critical that perpetrators of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law be brought to justice in accordance with international standards and through a transparent and legitimate process. Combating impunity is a deterrent to further abuse and an essential part of building long-term peace and stability in Darfur.

The international community must do all that it can to help the Government of Sudan through human rights monitoring and providing technical assistance in human rights education and the administration of justice. Canada has already provided significant support to the African Union Mission in Sudan, particularly transport assistance, which has been critical in enabling the AU to carry out its work. In that regard, Canada supports a decision by the UN Human Rights Council to dispatch promptly an independent human rights assessment mission with suitable expertise to provide an impartial assessment on the human rights situation in Darfur, and recommendations on what practical short term actions can be taken to improve the situation.

Thank you