

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 DECEMBER 12.01 AM NEW YORK TIME

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**MESSAGE TO THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN DARFUR**

Geneva, 12 December 2006

I am glad that you are holding this special session to address a crisis that demands the full attention of the international community. I am only sorry that I can't be with you in person.

For more than three years now, the people of Darfur have endured a nightmare. In recent weeks, the fighting has escalated, and conditions for the civilian population have got even worse. Armed militias continue to attack defenceless civilians with impunity, destroying dozens of villages and displacing thousands more in the last few weeks alone. Large numbers of women are still being subjected to rape and other forms of violence. Some four million people need humanitarian assistance, including two million internally displaced, and conditions are such that many of the most vulnerable can no longer be reached by humanitarian relief workers. And the violence has now spread to two neighbouring countries.

As you know, the Security Council and the Secretariat are actively engaged in seeking agreement with the Government of Sudan on the deployment of a larger, more effective, robust African and international force to protect the civilian population. And there is an intensified effort, led by the African Union and the United Nations, to find a political solution to the crisis. But your deliberations today are also of vital importance. It is essential that this Council send a clear and united message to warn all concerned, on behalf of the whole world, that the current situation is simply unacceptable and will not be allowed to continue. The people in Darfur cannot afford to wait another day. The violence must stop. The killings and other gross violations of human rights must end.

It is now more than two years since the High Commissioner and my Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide first travelled to Darfur, and nearly two years since the International Commission of Inquiry submitted its report. The Commission's findings were shocking. What is even more tragic and deplorable is that the crimes it reported continue to this day.

I urge you to lose no time in sending a team of independent and universally respected experts to investigate the latest escalation of abuses. It is urgent that we take action to prevent further violations, including by bringing to account those responsible for the numerous crimes that have already been committed.

That is the very least you can do to show the people of Darfur that their cries for help are being heard.