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Statement by Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, Alternate United States Representative for Special Political Affairs , on the Humanitarian Situation in Africa, at the Security Council, April 4, 2007

I would also like to thank Under-Secretary Holmes for his informative briefing on the humanitarian situation in Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic. It is particularly helpful to hear his first-hand observations, and we are grateful that Mr. Holmes decided to focus his first field mission as Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs on this most pressing crisis.

The United States shares the view that the international effort since 2004 has been largely successful at stabilizing the humanitarian situation in Darfur. The large-scale relief effort helped bring mortality and malnutrition levels below emergency thresholds. However, as Under-Secretary Holmes noted, in the past year key indicators have taken a turn for the worse and our collective gains are now under threat. Rising violence, including targeted attacks on aid workers, increasingly restricted access to populations in need, and the Government of Sudan's continuing bureaucratic stranglehold on relief efforts keep Darfur on the brink of catastrophe. We commend the recent agreement between the UN and the Government of Sudan to lift restrictions for humanitarian workers in Darfur. However, we note that similar commitments have been made-and not honored-in the past, and we therefore again call on the Government of Sudan to abide by its commitments and to lift its obstruction of humanitarian operations in Darfur.

We are deeply concerned about the continuing rise of violence in Darfur, including the direct targeting of humanitarian workers through vehicle hijackings, detentions, and armed invasions of NGO compounds. UN and NGO staff who coordinate security awareness among humanitarian actors are increasingly harassed and prevented from doing their job. This environment of violence and intimidation

affects the morale of relief workers, who are already working in an incredibly challenging environment, and negatively impacts the ability of UN agencies and NGOs to recruit and deploy qualified staff.

In the last week we have witnessed further violence in eastern Chad, displacing up to 8,000 civilians in an area already hosting a large number of Sudanese refugees. This highlights the broader impact of the Darfur conflict on neighboring regions. We strongly support Under Secretary General Holmes' call for the deployment of a peacekeeping force to eastern Chad and encourage the UN to finalize modalities for such a force with the Government of Chad as soon as possible.

We share Mr. Holmes' positive outlook on the humanitarian situation in southern Sudan. With a negotiated settlement to the more than twenty years of civil war, the people of southern Sudan are now able to focus on recovery and development. We recognize that continued support for the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructure in southern Sudan is critical to sustainable peace and development. We also recognize that assistance to returning refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as support for the communities that receive them, is central to southern Sudan's recovery. We salute the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration in leading efforts to assist displaced Sudanese to return home and restart their lives.

Ending the violence and suffering in Darfur remains among the highest priorities for the United States. We continue to work closely with the United Nations, the African Union and our international partners to stop the conflict, ensure the delivery of humanitarian relief, and hold accountable those individuals responsible for atrocities against the people of Darfur.

We welcome the recent conversations between Secretary General Ban and President Bashir affirming the Government of Sudan's commitment to the consensus previously reached on November 16, 2006 in Addis Ababa. We call on the Government of Sudan to honor its commitments and facilitate implementation of the agreed upon framework, including the deployment of a hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping force to Darfur. The Security Council will judge the commitment of the Government of Sudan by real advancement towards peace and security for the people in Darfur.

Thank you, Mr. President.