

UN Member States and Permanent Missions

13 July 2009

Your Excellency,

We are writing to encourage you and your government to support the norm of the Responsibility to Protect through words and actions in the upcoming 63rd Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly.

The conviction that states have a responsibility to protect civilians from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity received global support in the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect at the 2005 UN World Summit. The norm is based on the recognition that the failure of states and the international community to prevent international crimes must not be allowed to continue anywhere in the world.

Crucial leadership around the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect in 2005 came from the global south, especially from African governments and leaders, who had already enshrined the principle as a governing norm in Article 4 of the African Union (AU)'s Constitutive Act.

Later both the AU and sub-regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States put the principle into effect through the development of standards and mechanisms which began to operationalize Africa's commitment – from the deployment of the AU mission in Sudan (now a joint African Union/United Nations mission) to responding to Senegal's request for assistance in prosecuting former Chadian President Hissène Habré accountable for international crimes. In addition, the norm has been enshrined in the Great Lakes Pact, which was adopted by the eleven heads of state and government of the member states of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and entered into force in 2008.

In the coming month, states will be asked to consider the Responsibility to Protect and the fundamental principles it encompasses in the 63rd General Assembly, and in other major UN and African peace, security and human rights forums. We urge your government to continue to support the Responsibility to Protect in Africa and at the global level in line with the continent's progressive stance.

As civil society organizations, we are committed to supporting the Responsibility to Protect and are exploring ways to organize ourselves to better assist you and your government, alongside the AU and the UN, in this important peace initiative.

Action pour les Droits Humains et l'Amitié Sénégal

Centre for Human Rights Sierra Leone

Citizens United to Promote Peace and Democracy in Liberia

Conscience International

Darfur Alert Coalition

Darfur Consortium

Darfur Reconciliation and Development Organization

Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre

Le Groupe d'Etude, de Recherche et d'Aide à la Décision

Human Rights Network Uganda

International Refugee Rights Initiative

Kenya Human Rights Commission

L'Action de la jeunesse Guinéenne pour l'Aide au Développement et à la Prospérité

Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

West African Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Network

Recontre Africaine Pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme

Yours sincerely,

Action pour les Droits Humains et l'Amitié Sénégal, Senegal

Centre for Human Rights Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone

Citizens United to Promote Peace and Democracy in Liberia, Liberia

Conscience International, the Gambia and Sierra Leone

Darfur Alert Coalition, Sudanese Organization in the United States

Darfur Consortium, Uganda

Darfur Reconciliation and Development Organization, Sudanese Organisation in the United States

Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre, Sudanese Organisation in Switzerland

Le Groupe d'Etude, de Recherche et d'Aide à la Décision, Senegal

Human Rights Network, Uganda

The International Refugee Rights Initiative, Uganda and the United States

Kenya Human Rights Commission, Kenya

L'Action de la jeunesse Guinéenne pour l'Aide au Développement et à la Prospérité, Guinea

Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project, Nigeria

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the United States

West African Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Network, Senegal

Recontre Africaine Pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme, Senegal