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**U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan General Scott Gration**  
**"Sudan Reflections on International Women's Day" - March 8, 2010**

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Scott Gration

U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan

Nairobi, Kenya

March 8, 2010

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I am currently on a trip to Kenya and Qatar, and I wanted to take a moment from here in Nairobi to recognize and reflect on the importance of today, International Women's Day.

Over the last several weeks, we've seen a lot of progress on the issues facing Sudan. On Darfur, major progress has been made with the signing of the landmark ceasefire and framework agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), one of the largest Darfuri rebel groups. This agreement, combined with the recent Chad-Sudan agreement and the normalization of relations between the two countries, provides an unprecedented opportunity for a significant reduction in violence in Darfur. With the involvement of other major rebel movements, such as the newly unified Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM), as well as civil society, there is also a key opportunity for an inclusive and comprehensive peace in Darfur.

On the North-South issues in Sudan, we've also seen progress over the past several weeks. The National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) reached important agreements to resolve the census dispute, make progress on the north-south border demarcation, and formally agree to begin discussions on post-2011 arrangements.

These are all important steps and they present real opportunities to improve conditions on the ground in Sudan and to improve the lives of the Sudanese. However, despite this progress, it is important that we take a moment to step back, to reflect on the unique challenges and horrors that women as a group have had to endure and continue to face in Sudan. Though agreements have been reached in capital cities like Doha and N'Djamena and Khartoum, women in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Darfur still fear leaving the camp to collect firewood for the threat of gender-based violence. And women still face widespread insecurity, even in their own surroundings within the camps.

Since the expulsion of aid groups from Darfur one year ago this month, much of the previously lost capacity has returned. However, many services for addressing gender-based violence and its consequences have not resumed, and the women of Darfur have suffered accordingly. Women also face severe risk of death and complications from childbirth, and infant mortality is tragically high.

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These challenges and conditions can seem insurmountable. Yet there are still rays of hope. For the first time, women are running in elections across all political levels in Sudan, from local assembly to state governor to national assembly to the Presidency. Since the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, educational opportunities for women in the South have greatly expanded. On Darfur, women continue to play a significant role in peace process. During the 2009 civil society conference arranged by the AU/UN mediation team, women were active in formulating the consensus documents that provided civil society's views on pushing the peace process forward. In addition, just today a group of Darfuri women met with the Special Envoy's staff in Washington, D.C. to deliver a briefing on their recent visit to Doha at the beginning of 2010. As the President said in his statement from the White House today, "Women are vital to the solutions to these problems, and we will not sow the seeds for a brighter future or reap the benefits of the change we need without the full and active participation of women around the world." I have seen the women of Sudan put forward ideas for a better future and I continue to support these women in their endeavors.

It is my sincere belief that the hope for a brighter future largely rests with the women of Darfur and Sudan. It is the strength, resolve, and leadership of the women of Sudan that will be the deciding factor in making Sudan a land of peace, stability, and prosperity. So it is important that we take a moment on this International Women's Day to remember this and to resolve to do better to end the impunity of GBV, to do better at bringing security to the camps, and to do better at bringing healthcare to the women of Sudan. We must do better for the women of Darfur and Sudan – the future of Sudan depends on it.

As of April 2010, the main switchboard for the U.S. Embassy at its new location in Soba will change to **+249-1-870-2-2000**.

For further information, please contact the U.S.  
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