**Remarks by Ambassador Joseph Stafford at the Darfur Donors’ Conference, Doha, Qatar**

**April 8th 2013**

Mr. Deputy Prime Minister, honorable delegates -

It’s a pleasure to be here today, on behalf of the United States and Secretary Kerry, to demonstrate the importance that my government and the American people accord to peace, reconstruction and development in Darfur. I’d like to thank, in particular, the Government of Qatar, for its continued generosity in sponsoring and organizing this conference and, more broadly, for its extraordinary efforts to promote peace in Darfur. We also appreciate the hard work of UNDP, the DRA and other donors that went into preparing the DJAM and the Darfur Development Strategy.

Yesterday’s presentations offered a sobering reminder of the myriad challenges that Darfur faces – challenges of governance, rule of law, security, social services, underdevelopment and marginalization. While only one of Darfur’s rebel groups, and recently a section of JEM, have signed the DDPD, my government has supported it nonetheless, because it contains solid provisions to address many of these challenges, notably provisions on land, security, compensation, economic development, voluntary returns, militia disarmament, political freedoms and human rights.

However, without full and rapid implementation of aspects of the agreement that bring tangible benefits to the people of Darfur, the DDPD will have little impact on the situation there. The primary responsibility for implementation rests with the signatory parties, the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement. The United States, and other members of the international community, are not signatory parties to the DDPD, and are not responsible for its implementation. However, we are all stakeholders given our support to the people of Darfur through the years.

Unfortunately, progress in many of areas of the DDPD is lacking. Militia activity remains a major threat to security and stability in Darfur, and we urge the Government of Sudan to begin the disarmament process and give it priority. Similarly, there has been little forward movement on compensation, and on addressing issues of land occupation which lie at the heart of the conflict.

We note some encouraging steps by the Special Prosecutor to hold accountable those who have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, and we hope that this will be the beginning of a new effort on the part of the Sudanese government to end impunity in this region. Much more, however, remains to be done in this regard, notably the establishment of the Special Court and the appointment of African Union and United Nations observers.

The DDPD commits the Government of Sudan to transfer $2.65 billion to Darfur between 2011-2016, through the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund, the Compensation Fund, the Micro-Finance Fund and support for social services in Darfur. While we acknowledge the difficult financial situation facing Sudan following the independence of South Sudan, it is regretful that no funds were transferred through these mechanisms during the initial 18 months after the signing of the DDPD, until the recent announcement that the DRA now has a line of credit available for 800 million Sudanese pounds. We hope that the DRA’s access to these funds will be unimpeded by bureaucratic obstacles, and that the DRA will be able, in the coming months, to implement projects within the DDS framework that will be a tangible demonstration of the GOS’s commitment to peace in Darfur.

My government deplores actions taken by some non-signatory movements to impede the peace process, such as SLA/AW’s abduction of IDPs on their way to attend the Nyala IDP and refugee conference, and recent offensives by SLA/MM against Sudanese troops. These actions underscore the need for full and rapid implementation of the DDPD, to demonstrate to these groups the Government’s political will to address Darfur’s many problems. They also demonstrate the need for the Government of Sudan and the non-signatory movements to engage in serious negotiations to end the conflict.

The security situation, particularly in North Darfur, Jebel Marra, and areas south of Nyala, is deeply troubling, due to intensifying conflict and displacement. There are over 100,000 newly displaced in El Sireaf and Jebel Marra, over 30,000 new refugees in Chad, and ongoing aerial bombardments in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. Significant rebel groups remain in open confrontation with the Sudanese government. It is impossible to say, in this environment, that the conflict is nearly over, or that we have reached a point where a total shift from humanitarian assistance to recovery is possible.

Reconstruction efforts of the type proposed in the Darfur Development Strategy cannot move forward without political will and commitment of all parties to the conflict, as well as the lifting of access restrictions. USAID and its implementing partners have faced serious access restrictions in Darfur, which have been a major challenge for my government in undertaking the types of early recovery projects we would like to see in parts of Darfur where such activities are possible. The Government of Sudan’s new Directive on Humanitarian Assistance holds promise for improved work in Darfur and the rest of Sudan. We eagerly await to see how fully it will be implemented. Given the disconnect we have often witnessed between central government and state or local officials, it is critical that the Government of Sudan lend its full weight to ensuring implementation of the directive at all levels to improve access, including to rural areas. I commend the DRA for constantly raising the importance of this issue, and I hope that we will see prompt action on the part of the Sudanese government to grant unimpeded and regular access to humanitarian and development agencies.

My government remains the single largest donor to Darfur, and is committing to continuing to assist Darfur’s people as they strive to live in peace and to rebuild their lives. This commitment reflects the deep concern of many Americans about Darfur’s people and its conflict. Over the past decade, we have provided over $7.5 billion for humanitarian, transition and peacekeeping assistance in Darfur and Eastern Chad. This includes on average $200 million annually in humanitarian aid and transition assistance. We have pioneered early recovery efforts in Darfur where access and security permit, by supporting saving and lending mechanisms at the local level; strengthening local seed production and markets, building local capacity to manage health and nutrition needs; and pursuing market-oriented alternatives to in-kind food assistance. We have also supported the DDPD through funding for the All Darfur Conference, the IDP/Refugee conference, the DJAM and capacity building for the DRA. We are prepared to consider future contributions to the multi-donor trust funds established as part of the Darfur development strategy, provided that our concerns over access and DDPD implementation are addressed.

Ten years after the conflict in Darfur first came to the world’s attention, Darfur is still in need of peace. The United States remains committed to supporting efforts to achieve peace in Darfur, and in all of Sudan, and to supporting early recovery activities where access and security permit. Thank you for your attention.