

Dear Dr. Lucas,

Thank you for your letter dated 23rd April 2004, in which you voice your concern about the situation in Darfur. I can assure you that the Commission shares your worry as regards the severity of this tragedy and that no efforts are being spared to tackle the most urgent consequences of this crisis, both in its political and humanitarian dimension.

Following the truce agreement signed on the 8th of April in N'Djamena by the Sudanese belligerents, the Commission has undertaken every effort to ensure humanitarian access to the region. In addition, the Commission has been actively involved in the N'Djamena talks as an international observer and has declared, through diplomatic channels, its deepest concerns to the Sudanese authorities about this situation.

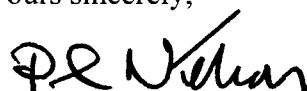
The Commission has also been active, together with the Council and Member States, in enabling a quick EU response to the efforts of the African Union in deploying an independent monitoring mechanism of the cease fire. A reconnaissance mission is presently in the Sudan, with EU representatives, to assess the feasibility of the establishment of a cease fire implementing mechanism. Moreover, depending on the outcome of this mission, the Commission could envisage an EC contribution, through existing or additional programmes, towards identified financing needs.

In parallel, I would like to stress that the Commission is already financing initiatives in Darfur to support IDPs and refugees. Current EC funded activities in Darfur amount to 16.5 M€. They include a strong component of food aid and food security as well as humanitarian assistance. In addition, in view of the growing needs, new interventions amounting to 15,3 M€ are under preparation: ECHO is finalising an additional 10 M€ programme for Darfur on an urgent basis, while 5 M€ have been earmarked under the Food Aid/Security Budget line. The European Commission's initial contribution to the Darfur, including current and planned activities, amount to almost 32 M€.

Unsurprisingly, because of its nature, the situation is fast evolving and in need of constant monitoring in order to provide a rapid response. The Commission will, therefore, continue to work with the Member States and the international community in general with the aim to provide every possible support to the endangered population and to promote a peaceful solution to the crisis.

I hope the above will give you a clearer picture of the Commission's actions related to the Darfur crisis.

Yours sincerely,



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