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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

August 21, 2024

His Excellency António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
760 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Guterres:

I write to urge you to lead an immediate response to address the spiraling humanitarian situation in Sudan where parties to the conflict have committed gross violations of human rights, including the use of food as a weapon of war.

Without bold, decisive action by the United Nations (UN) to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance, it will be impossible to prevent millions of Sudanese from starving. The community of nations must act.

Earlier this month, the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS NET) and Famine Review Committee confirmed what aid groups have been warning about for months—that the continued conflict and impediments to humanitarian access by the warring parties have led to famine in parts of Sudan. These expert bodies issued an alert that famine is present in the Zamzam camp in North Darfur which hosts more than 400,000 internally displaced people. Furthermore, there is a risk of famine across the rest of El Fasher, home to 800,000 people, and other parts of Darfur and South Kordofan if the current siege continues. The determination was only made possible because there remain humanitarian groups in North Darfur that were able to gather the requisite data. Experts expect that similar conditions are likely occurring across many more communities in Sudan where there is no such access.

Notwithstanding this reality, the limited UN humanitarian presence in Sudan has impeded cross border delivery, paralyzed the humanitarian response and exacerbated food insecurity. The NGO community cannot duplicate the scale and reach of the UN and UN Agencies. Operating without the support of multilateral organizations places our partners in legal and actual peril as they attempt to continue their humanitarian missions.

I appreciate your efforts to respond to the crisis to date: from obtaining the recent agreement from the Sudanese Armed Forces to use the border crossing at Adre for 90 days, to appointing Ramtane Lamamra as your Personal Envoy for Sudan, to calling for a cessation of hostilities, to urging member states to increase funding for humanitarian aid. In addition, I welcome the passage of Security Council Resolution 2736 calling on all parties to the conflict to

uphold international humanitarian law, including by allowing and facilitating unhindered humanitarian access so that life-saving aid can reach those in need. However, nearly a year and a half into the conflict, the UN's response to the humanitarian crisis remains insufficient.

Under your leadership, the UN can, and must do more. I urge you to swiftly take the following steps:

- **Call publicly for the UN Security Council to urgently and immediately facilitate the provision of life-saving aid and consider options for the protection of civilians:** With millions of lives at stake and humanitarian access blocked by parties to the conflict, there is a moral imperative for the UNSC to protect and provide for the delivery of aid to innocent civilians. This should include considering authorizing cross border aid as was done in Syria—an initiative which you strongly supported, as well as working with the African Union to urgently develop options for the protection of civilians.
- **Convene a high-level meeting on Sudan at the UN General Assembly 79th session:** The upcoming General Assembly session is an opportunity for you to shine a spotlight on the dire humanitarian crisis in Sudan and galvanize global action. Convening a high-level meeting on Sudan would send a clear signal to the international community of the urgency of this issue, facilitate dialogue between key actors and regional stakeholders, help to revitalize and accelerate efforts to resolve the conflict, and mobilize additional resources to scale up the humanitarian response.
- **Elevate the need for humanitarian access:** All parties to the conflict must provide safe, full, unhindered humanitarian access so that aid agencies can reach civilians in need at scale. Both crossline and cross border routes must be made permanently available for humanitarian access. Re-opening airspace to facilitate humanitarian air bridges is also critical to enable assistance to reach hard-to-access areas. Parties to the conflict must also suspend administrative requirements that prevent swift access by humanitarian actors.
- **Urge the UN to take forward-leaning steps to increase humanitarian assistance:** Working with international and local NGOs, the United Nations should explore every possible pathway and mechanism to ensure humanitarian assistance is delivered with speed and at scale. This could include a Security Council fact-finding trip, the United Nations enhancing provisioning to NGOs, establishing a monitoring mechanism to help facilitate cross border aid, or mobilizing additional resources to coordinate the humanitarian response.

The devastating famine in Sudan was both predictable and preventable. At a moment of unimaginable suffering, the international community cannot stand by. Together, we must be active, bold, and innovative in our efforts to save innocent lives and end the suffering of the Sudanese people.

As UN Secretary General, you are uniquely positioned to spur the international community to greater action and to take important strides towards ending this crisis. I stand ready to support you and to work collectively to address the ongoing humanitarian emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben Cardin", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Benjamin L. Cardin
Chairman