

February 24, 2006

SCHAKOWSKY STATEMENT ON DELEGATION TRIP TO AFRICA

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky released the following remarks upon her return from a senior bipartisan delegation trip to five African nations. The highlights of Schakowsky's week-long trip to Africa were a visit to Darfur, meeting with the new woman President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and the discussion in South Africa with President Mbeki.

"A briefing from an African Union commander in Darfur made it clear that the security situation is grave," said Schakowsky. "Our delegation was told that a doubling of troops is needed, yet the Khartoum leaders, including the Governor of the state of North Darfur and the 2nd Vice President of Sudan scoffed at the notion of genocide or ethnic cleansing and seemed quite undisturbed by the growing humanitarian crisis."

Second Vice President Taha admitted that the Sudanese government had aided the Janjaweed militia. The delegation visited one of the earliest camps for Internally Displaced People in Darfur, where some of the 2 million IDPs have been living in small tents for nearly two years.

The delegation, which was led by Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and included members of the Congressional Black Caucus as well as Republican Joe Wilson, want to see immediate action to stop the killing, thus creating more space for a negotiated peace settlement among the combatants.

President Mbeki of South Africa, while agreeing that more troops were needed to stop the violence, emphasized the importance of all parties attending the peace talks now taking place in Abuja, Nigeria.

The delegation had a warm meeting with the new President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first women in history elected as head of an African nation, and "we pledged to advocate on behalf of support for Liberia", a nation with historical ties to the U.S. that has been devastated by two decades of civil war.