



TEGLA LOROUPE PEACE FOUNDATION

Peace Through Sports

**Tegla Loroupe
President, the Tegla Loroupe Foundation**

**Testimony to the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on
National Security and Foreign Affairs**

June 7, 2007

It is an honor to appear here before the United States Congress to discuss Darfur and the Olympic Spirit. Thank you Chairman Tierney, Congressman Shays, and to the other members of the committee for this opportunity.

I am Tegla Loroupe. I am from Kenya. I am an Olympian.

I would like to tell you about the spirit of peace of the Olympics, and about the powerful role of sports in bringing peace to conflicts around the world.

For the past five years, I, together with a group of fellow Olympians from Kenya, Holland, South Africa, and Uganda have organized Peace Marathons in conflict areas in Kenya and Uganda.

We have brought warring tribes together; we have negotiated peace agreements and disarmament agreements for warriors. We have helped warriors to give up their AK-47 weapons and agree to abandon raiding. We struggle against the flood of cheap small arms in our region that has led to escalating violence, and we fight against this by bringing communities together through sports.

A few months ago, our Peace Marathon brought together three thousand warriors from 8 tribes in Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan.

We were honored that Michael Ranneberger, the current United States Ambassador to Kenya and a recent former head of the State Department's Sudan Programs Group, joined us, together with many of his staff, to run with the warriors, and to dedicate United States resources to support our school for the orphans of the conflicts.

I was proud to make new friends, to run in friendly competition.

But the tragedy of the flood of small arms ravaging our region struck unexpectedly only a few weeks later, when robbers in another part of Kenya attacked a US Embassy vehicle

with AK-47's. They attacked our friend who ran with us, Craig White, political officer at the US Embassy, and killed his wife and her mother.

Our friendship could not save them. Our peace efforts through sports did not reach these armed criminals.

We are redoubling our efforts to use sports to reach everyone. Our next Peace Marathon, in two weeks, will bring two thousand warriors to Moroto, Uganda; many will choose to disarm. Our school can teach children to compete peacefully.

Our marathons also inspire other positive outcomes. In Uganda, fathers came to me pledging to keep their girls in school. In Masai Mara I joined Ambassador Ranneberger in a run to promote an end to the practice of female genital mutilation. I feel strongly that by promoting education and the rights of girls we are creating a culture of peace.

Sports can create peaceful relations among people. We have shown over the past five years in Africa how sports can replace killing, create peace from violence, and do this in some of the most dangerous conflict areas in the world.

In Africa today we have many conflicts; some are caused by tension over scarce resources. Some are caused by ethnic or tribal rivalries. Some are caused by disputes over fair distribution of oil, or diamonds, or other sources of wealth.

The conflict in Darfur contains elements of all of these.

The Darfur crisis is a very painful issue for the people of the African continent.

I feel the pain, peacemakers feel the pain, and we athletes share the pain.

The government of Sudan, as the custodian of its people's security, must take the largest share of blame for the crisis in Darfur. And the government of Sudan has been able to ignore humanitarian appeals and international pressure to bring peace in Darfur because the government of Sudan has sudden wealth from selling its oil abroad, primarily to China.

The Peoples Republic of China, as a global actor, and as a major source of support for Sudan, must responsibly ensure that its business dealings bring peace, justice and respect to humanity and human rights, particularly in Sudan.

The People's Republic of China has embraced peace in hosting the 2008 Olympics, the world's greatest example of peaceful competition.

We Olympians will gather in Beijing next summer to honor the ancient and traditional Olympic spirit of peace. We will judge our success in bringing that spirit to the world by how the world performs in bringing peace to areas of conflict, such as Darfur.

When we Olympians gather in Beijing, we will gather under the hospitality of our Chinese hosts, who have chosen this theme for the Olympics:

One world, one dream.

Peace is our dream. Olympic peace in Beijing in 2008, Olympic peace in Darfur, and Olympic peace around the world.

As an Olympic athlete from the African continent, I appeal to China, host of our upcoming celebration of sport and peace, to take part in addressing the crisis in Darfur.

As an Olympic athlete from the African continent, I appeal to all my fellow Olympians worldwide to act responsibly to bring peace, particularly in Darfur.

As an Olympian, I call upon all governments to work with all athletes to promote peace in their respective countries, to use the power of sports to unify, bring joy, peace and harmony to people of all economic, social and racial status.

May I also appeal to all countries to ratify the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons treaty, to eliminate this dangerous threat to peace.

It is my sincere hope that the United States Congress will express its support for the people of Darfur, and act to ensure that Darfur becomes peaceful and safe in the shortest time possible.

With your support I am anxious to use my foundation and academy to promote peace in Darfur, through our organization of peace marathons that include Darfur athletes and by recruiting Darfur children to attend my peace academy which will open in January.

We Olympians can only try to set an example; it remains the task of governments, as custodians of the security of their people, to act, and act now for peace.

THANK YOU