

**Opening Statement of
National Security and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee
Chairman John F. Tierney**

**“Darfur and the Olympics: A Call for International Action”
June 7, 2007**

The Olympics has always transcended sport. It has always been about more than gold medals, world records, and individual athletic achievements.

The Olympics goes beyond the compelling stories of the athletes, their families, and loved ones. It is much more than the accumulation of all of the athletes' dedication; countless hours of work; and limitless devotion to perfection.

The Olympics is that rarest of institutions in our modern age in which all the nations of the world put aside their differences and come together in peaceful pursuit. It is an aspirational call for what our world could be; and not about our individual and inevitable faults.

The Olympics is a call to our better natures; a symbol of what we can achieve if all of us – all the nations and peoples of the world – come together.

The ancient Greeks had a tradition of the Olympic Truce, or “Ekecheiria,” during which wars and battles would cease and all athletes, supporters, pilgrims, and artists could travel freely and unharmed to and from the games.

The Olympic truce has carried through to the modern day and has been ratified repeatedly by the United Nations.

But the Olympic spirit should go beyond a mere temporary cessation of hostilities.

In 2000, North and South Koreans entered Sydney's Olympic stadium under one flag.

Just before the 2002 Olympics, the President of the International Olympic Committee, Dr. Jacques Rogge, publicly hoped that, and I quote: “this peaceful gathering of all Olympic athletes in Salt Lake City will inspire peace in the world.”

And for the upcoming 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China, the host country chose the theme, “One World, One Dream.”

We haven't always lived up to the Olympic ideal, of course, but that just underscores the importance of redoubling our efforts. The hearing we are holding today asks the simple, yet fundamentally important, question: shouldn't the upcoming Olympic Games in Beijing serve as the catalyst to finally put to an end to the horrific, and unfortunately ongoing, tragedy in Darfur.

The images of the genocide in Sudan are forever burned into our collective consciousness.

400,000 people dead. Kids killed and maimed in front of their moms; moms raped and beaten in front of their kids.

Entire villages burned to the ground....

Atrocities and destruction on both a wide scale.... And on a very personal scale....

2.5 million people uprooted from their lives, their livelihoods, and their homes. We'll hear from one of those individuals today.

And the tragedy and violence continue. The Boston Globe recently called it, "The Unending Agony of Darfur."

Also, as we meet here today, scores and scores of refugees are living in camps, still fearing for their lives, and dependent on aid for their very survival – aid and workers threatened today by the Sudanese government.

For Darfuris – who still today fear for their lives and their children's future – the glorious theme of the 2008 Summer Olympics, "One World, One Dream" stands as nothing but an empty promise.

And while the way forward in Darfur is complicated and will take a sustained effort, one thing is crystal clear. Expert after expert, and report after report, all stress the importance of a united world pressuring the Sudanese government in a coordinated manner to finally allow a full deployment of the hybrid African Union / UN forces in Darfur and to ensure that humanitarian workers can go about their business without fear for their lives.

Sustained international pressure is also key in bringing all parties of the Darfur conflict together to craft a comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement.

Far too often, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has played one country off another, whether in failing to disarm the Janjaweed or in blocking deployment of the 20,000 United Nations peacekeepers.

The international community's lack of coordination and unity have allowed these atrocities to continue for far too long. That is why the International Crisis Group in a recent report stressed that "[i]nternational efforts need to be unified" and that it is vital to "build international consensus on a new political strategy, particularly with China and the U.S., in order to acquire the necessary leverage over the parties to the conflict."

And increasing focus is being placed on the host country of the 2008 Beijing games as the lynchpin in ending the atrocities in Darfur. Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman

Tom Lantos and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer sent a letter signed by 108 Members of the House of Representatives to Chinese President Hu Jintao on this subject.

A remarkable 96 Senators joined a similar letter in that other body. And just this week, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly on a resolution by Congresswoman Barbara Lee asking China to do more.

And the China/Sudan connection is made for good reason. China is Sudan's top trading partner and one of its top weapons suppliers.

Over two-thirds of Sudanese oil goes to China, and the Chinese National Petroleum Company has recently built a 900 mile pipeline in Sudan. China has cancelled \$100 million in Sudanese debt and has even offered a nearly \$20 million interest-free loan for the Sudanese government to build a new presidential palace.

If anyone in the world community has leverage on the Sudanese government it's China, and what better country to help lead the effort to end the tragedy in Darfur than the host of the 2008 Olympics.

While China has recently made some initial steps to be helpful, I don't know of anyone who thinks they couldn't do more. And this is not a question of one country infringing upon the sovereignty of another; it's a question of being a responsible stakeholder in the world community and of living up to the Olympic ideals as its temporary host.

But it's not just China that needs to step up to the plate. The United States could do more, especially in helping to lead a multilateral effort.

Former Secretary of State Powell courageously brought attention to Darfur by calling what's happening there genocide, and President Bush recently implemented some additional unilateral economic sanctions. But unilateral actions can only go so far; success in Darfur now rests on the hard and sustained work of forging coordinated international pressure on the Sudanese government.

China could and should be doing more. The United States could and should be doing more. Russia could and should be doing more. The Arab League and the European Union could and should be doing more.

The Darfur tragedy has continued for more than four years. And the young people of our world are saying enough is enough. Our young people are stepping up and playing the role of humanity's conscience.

My wife and I recently attended a community presentation by a young constituent, Kimberly Pomerleau. Kim, a 2007 graduate from Reading High School, had the courage and conviction to speak out to people twice or three times her age, and to say enough is enough.

On our first panel today, we will hear from the two Massachusetts founders of the “Dollars for Darfur” high school challenge; young adults whose initiative and creativity raised more than \$306,000 and counting to help the people of Darfur.

When I visit high schools in my district, I hear again and again from students, enough is enough; that the horrible atrocities in Darfur simply cannot and should not happen in this day and age; not on their watch.

I have right here in my hand letters from 12 students from just one high school in my district – Lynnfield High School – on Darfur. These students and their terrific teacher, Kacy Soderquist, are inspirations.

The young people of the world are loudly and vigorously pointing the way, and it is past time for the rest of us follow.