

Aid pledge to Darfur 'not enough,' says African church leader: A positive step, but insufficient

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A Christian leader in the Horn of Africa has welcomed a Sudanese government pledge of \$300 million in aid for Sudan's Darfur region but said that it is insufficient and should not distract attention from the underlying causes of the conflict.

"It is a positive step, but it is not enough," said Fred Nyabera, executive director of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa.

Nyabera was commenting October 3 on reports that Sudanese president Omar Hassan al-Bashir had promised the multimillion-dollar aid package in a meeting with a group known as The Elders, led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former U.S. president Jimmy Carter.

Former South African president Nelson Mandela assembled the group, which also includes his wife, child rights activist Graça Machel; former UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi; and billionaire British businessperson Richard Branson.

Carter was quoted by Reuters news agency as saying that al-Bashir had "promised us there would be \$300 million in all coming to the Darfur region in compensation—\$100 million coming from the government and \$200 million to be a loan from the Chinese."

The Elders were visiting Darfur following the killing of 10 African Union peacekeeping soldiers September 29 in Darfur's Haskanita area when rebels overran their post. More than 20 other troops are said to be missing.

"The real issues have never been sufficiently addressed," Nyabera said. He added that churches working for peace in Darfur have often been disappointed that the crisis has been used as a "bargaining chip" while suffering continues. "The focus has

always been on the consequences.”

While in Darfur on October 1, Tutu urged the international community to constitute a peacekeeping force adequate for the role that it is intended to fulfill. “We need to have the hybrid force deployed as quickly as possible. It’s awful that it should be allowed to be here when it is so inadequately equipped,” Tutu told reporters. –

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