Mr. Speaker,

I’m proud to support the bill before us,

H.R. 180, the Darfur Accountability and

Divestment Act.

It was 3 years ago this month, Mr.

Speaker, that Congress passed the historic

resolution declaring that genocide

was occurring in the Darfur region

of western Sudan. This was the first

time in the history of this body that

genocide was declared as the atrocities

were occurring.

The decision to evoke the word

‘‘genocide’’ at that time was not taken

lightly, but the evidence of vast

slaughter, aerial bombardments and

forced displacements targeted against

the African tribes in Darfur left us

with little choice.

No one could claim that they did not

understand the gravity of the human

rights and the security crisis in Darfur.

We read about it in the papers. We saw

the images on television. We heard

about it from humanitarian groups in

the region, and some of us have now

even seen it with our own eyes.

It was believed that, by making such

a bold declaration, other responsible

nations would feel compelled to join

the United States in taking firm action

to halt this senseless slaughter of innocent

civilians in this far off place, but

here we are 3 years later and the carnage

in Darfur continues.

Hundreds of thousands have been

killed, over 2 million others have been

forced from their homes. Entire villages

have been razed, crops and wells

destroyed, and countless young women

and girls raped. And here we are again

forced to go it alone, for the sake of

the victims of genocide in Sudan.

Currently, the U.N. Security Council

is once again held hostage to the

search for consensus. Council members

are engaged in a senseless debate over

the latest resolution on Darfur, fighting

over whether deploying a truly capable

peacekeeping mission, with a

chapter 7 mandate to protect civilians,

violates the so-called sovereignty of a

genocidal regime.

Several of my colleagues and I traveled

to the United Nations last week as

part of a delegation led by our majority

leader, STENY HOYER. We focused

our efforts on securing support for immediate

action by the United Nations,

but we cannot afford to continue to

wait.

I cannot forget the faces of the children

and the families in the camps that

I visited in April. Their eyes spoke volumes,

piercing through our souls,

clamoring for the world to help them.

It is, therefore, time once again to

take bold action in the hope that it

will finally compel the murderous regime

in Khartoum to simply end this

madness. We need to send a clear message

to Khartoum that we are not

fooled by their half measures and delay

tactics and that we are serious about

ending this conflict. And to do so we

must speak in language that they will

surely understand, the language of economic

interests.

b 1300

This Sudanese regime has proven

time and time again that it responds

only to real pressure. The only true leverage

we have is to strike at their

economic interest. H.R. 180 does exactly

that. It requires that the Secretary

of the Treasury publish and

maintain a list of companies or entities

whose business dealings directly

benefit the regime in Khartoum. It enables

State and local governments to

divest from those companies and provide

safe harbor to fund managers who

do divest.

In essence, this allows the contributors

to and the beneficiaries of State

and local government pension funds to

avoid directly or indirectly supporting

genocide in Darfur. Divestment campaigns

of this nature have drawn criticism

by some who fear that they inappropriately

violate the sanctity of U.S.

markets.

It is true divestments should not be

taken lightly. But in the case of genocide,

we are bound by conscience and

overarching U.S. values to do all that

is within our power to intervene. Having

served as witness to this catastrophe,

I have no hesitation in supporting

the cause of divestment.

In fact, it gives me great pride to say

that in my own district, south Floridians

have joined in this humanitarian

effort. It is time to stop funding the

war machine in Sudan. Adoption of

this legislation today will no doubt put

us at odds with a number of our allies,

with members of the U.N. Security

Council, and those with significant economic

interest with Sudan, such as

China.

Our labeling of the atrocities in

Darfur as genocide also put us at odds

with others. But their indifference did

not deter us in 2004, and it must not

deter us now. I urge my fellow Members

to take a stand today on behalf of

the people of Darfur and to support

this important legislation.