Mr. President, I have

repeatedly come to the floor to speak

about one of the worst human tragedies

in recent memory—the crisis in

Darfur.

For 4 long years the world has

watched this tragedy. We have witnessed

the killing of hundreds of thousands

of innocent civilians, the

torching of entire villages, rape, torture,

and untold human suffering.

Many of us on both sides of the aisle

and in the international community

have repeatedly called for greater U.S.

and global action.

Upon taking office in January of this

year, U.N. Secretary General Ban Kimoon

said that ending the violence in

Darfur was going to be one of his top

priorities. President Bush has rightly

called the situation in Darfur genocide.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown

has said that, ‘‘Darfur is the greatest

humanitarian crisis the world faces

today.’’

Today, I speak once again about this

crisis.

Quite simply, we are at a critical

juncture in Sudan.

The situation in Darfur has become

increasingly complex. Rebel groups are

jockeying for power and fighting

amongst themselves. Banditry and lawlessness

are on the rise and humanitarian

workers remain at great risk. In

late September, a rebel group brutally

killed ten African Union peacekeepers

in a surprise raid.

Just last week, reports surfaced of a

new, appallingly violent massacre in

southern Darfur. According to reports,

more than 30 civilians were killed, including

a young boy who was shot in

the back while trying to run away.

And now the peace agreement between

North and South Sudan—a U.S.

brokered accord that might have

formed a blueprint for a political settlement

in Darfur—appears increasingly

in jeopardy.

Sadly, without action, Sudan may be

on the verge of even greater instability

and human misery.

Yet thanks in part to the tireless

work of Secretary General Ban, we also

have two critical opportunities to

bring about a long-term resolution to

this crisis.

First, in late July the U.N. Security

Council voted to implement a significantly

increased U.N./African Union

peacekeeping force.

This peacekeeping force is desperately

needed and the United States

should work with the U.N. and the

global community to make sure it is

deployed as soon as possible.

I commend the White House for including

funding for this urgent mission

in its supplemental appropriations request.

But the peacekeepers are only one

important step. Sudan also needs a

long-term political agreement. As Secretary

General Ban said recently in

Sudan, ‘‘There must be a peace to

keep.’’

This weekend in Tripoli, a first round

of peace talks between the various factions

and the Sudanese government

will begin.

The peacekeeping forces and the

Tripoli negotiations are two critical

steps toward ending the violence, and

they deserve our strongest support.

We must make it clear that we expect

all factions to stop the violence

and participate in good faith in the

peace talks.

We must demand that China and Russia

immediately halt the sale of weapons

in Sudan. That’s right, two permanent

members of the U.N. Security

Council are the primary arms suppliers

in Sudan. Global leaders have a responsibility

to halt such sales.

But ultimately, we must hold the Sudanese

government accountable. Its

culpability in the years of violence and

stonewalling of international efforts is

well known.

Sudanese President Bashir must be

held to his commitment to allow

peacekeepers in the country and to

participate in the peace talks. He must

also work to ensure the North-South

peace agreement does not collapse.

Early statements by his government

said that it would ‘‘contribute positively

to secure the environment for

the negotiations’’ and ‘‘facilitate the

timely deployment’’ of the 26,000 member

peacekeeping force.

Sadly, we have every reason to be

skeptical of the regime’s intentions.

It is therefore critical that we maintain

pressure on the Sudanese government

to honor its commitments. The

administration should continue its diplomatic

efforts and we in Congress

should consider tightening economic

sanctions if the Sudanese government

does not cooperate with the peacekeepers

or the upcoming peace negotiations.

The stakes are too high, and the humanitarian

crisis has dragged on too

long to allow any more delay in Sudan.