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## **CARDIN, BIPARTISAN GROUP OF SENATORS CALLS FOR OLYMPIC TRUCE IN DARFUR**

*Senators Say Olympic Tradition Provides Opportunity for Host Nation China, and the International Community, to Press for an End to Conflicts in Sudan*

Washington, DC – A bipartisan group of U.S. Senators is urging the international community to use the world stage provided by the upcoming Olympic Games to call for an end to the violence in Darfur, Sudan and the wider region. As the world prepares to come together for the Olympic Games in Beijing, China, on August 8th, the group of U.S. Senators including Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Russ Feingold (D-WI) Norm Coleman (R-MN), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), John Kerry (D-MA), Joe Lieberman (ID-CT), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Sam Brownback (R-KS) and Tim Johnson (D-SD) today introduced a resolution calling for a cessation of hostilities and renewed efforts toward peace in Darfur, Sudan, as well as in neighboring Chad and the Central African Republic. The tradition of an “Olympic Truce” arose from efforts to ensure the safety of athletes traveling to the games, but has evolved over recent years to address the safety of civilians caught in the midst of conflict or strife. The resolution also calls on host nation China to press the government of Sudan, with which it holds close ties, to end the violence.

“In the spirit of the Olympic games, we are calling upon the factions within Chad, Central African Republic and the Darfur region of Sudan to set their conflicts aside and unite in peace to enjoy the healthy competition among athletes from around the world,” **said Senator Cardin**. “For the people caught in the midst of strife or war, our hope is that this Olympic Truce can lead to constructive dialogue and a longer lasting peace.”

“With the world watching, we must take advantage of the opportunity provided by the Olympic Games to recommit ourselves to ending the conflict in Darfur and the wider region,” **said Senator Feingold**. “China in particular, as the Games’ host, can make a strong statement by joining this call and showing support for the hundreds of thousands of innocent people still at risk in Sudan and the region.

“As the world turns its attention to the Olympic Games, it is appropriate to reflect upon the spirit of the games and celebrate our shared humanity,” **said Senator Coleman**. “We are calling on parties to set aside hostilities and violence in Darfur.”

“As China works to clear the air in Beijing, it must also use its time in the spotlight to push for an end to violence in Darfur and Central Africa,” **said Senator Whitehouse**. “The Olympics have always stood for peace and reconciliation around the world, and the host nation should not shrink from this opportunity to lead by example.”

“The Chinese government hoped to show the world a new China with the Olympics, but instead the spotlight will be on their same old policies that disregard the rights of human beings. It would be a tremendous step toward peace and human rights across the globe if China, joined by the international community, would commit to helping to bring an end to the bloodshed in Darfur and elsewhere in Africa. If we can achieve this at the Olympics, the world will recognize the severity of the situation and the importance of action,” **said Senator Menendez**

“At the heart of the Olympic Charter are core traditions of peace, human dignity and the international unity represented by the five interlocking Olympic rings. It is in this spirit that world class athletes come together to compete and it is important not to forget the violence and strife that keeps too many living in fear across the world. As the host of the games, it is incumbent on China to bring pressure to bear on its close allies and help quell the terrible violence that permeates Darfur and the African continent,” **said Senator Landrieu.**

“The Olympic Truce—like the games themselves— is a sage legacy of our forbearers which raises humanity above hostility. Just as the ancient Greek states sought safe passage for their athletes during the Olympics, the countries of the modern world must seek to protect the life and dignity of the people of Darfur as we gather in Beijing,” **said Senator Snowe.**

"We should leverage the global cooperation and unity of the Olympic Games to push the international community to demand an end to the suffering in Darfur and the wider African region," **said Senator Kerry.**

The resolution specifically encourages the new joint African Union-United Nations mediator’s efforts to revive a comprehensive peace plan, while urging that the U.N.-A.U. Mission in Darfur and the U.N. Mission in Sudan be fully equipped and deployed.

The “Olympic Truce” originated in ancient Greece to ensure the safety of athletes traveling to the games. The U.N. reaffirmed the tradition’s importance in 2003 and 2007, emphasizing the role of sport as an instrument to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation. The Olympic Truce traditionally begins one week before the Olympic Games, and extends one week after the end of the Paralympic Games. The Olympic Games begin on August 8th and the Paralympic Games conclude on September 17th.

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