

The African Union



Organization Background: The African Union (AU) originally formed as the Organization of African Unity. In 2000, on adoption of its constitution, the organization officially became known as the African Union. The AU aims to protect the security of the continent rather than the **sovereignty** of individual states — a change from the mission of its initial organization. Fifty-four countries in Africa are members of the AU, which is headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The AU is the world's only regional or international organization that explicitly recognizes the right to intervene in a member state on humanitarian and human rights grounds.

The AU played an increasingly high-profile **peacekeeping** role in Sudan, most prominently in Darfur. The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was an AU **peacekeeping** force operating primarily in Darfur with the aim of performing **peacekeeping** operations related to the Darfur conflict. It was founded in 2004, with a force of 150 troops. Initially, there were 7,200 troops, military observers, civilian police, and civilian staff in Darfur. In September 2006, the AU extended the mandate of its **peacekeeping** forces in Darfur after the Sudanese president refused to accept a UN **peacekeeping** force of 20,000 authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1706 (UNSCR 1706).

The AU authorized its forces to monitor the ceasefire and to help improve overall security, but only to protect civilians who were under immediate threat in sight of AU **peacekeepers**. The limited number of **peacekeepers** and equipment for such a large area left AU **peacekeepers** unable to provide protection for targeted communities and camps. The AU mandate expired when UN Security Council Resolution 1769 went into effect on January 1, 2008. This resolution authorized the deployment of 26,000 infantry troops and police officers to Darfur and the AU troops became part of the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

The members of the AU appear to have a complicated relationship with Sudanese president Bashir. In January 2007, AU members at the annual summit refused to grant the presidency of the AU to Bashir even though he would have been eligible for this office in the normal rotation. Instead, they named President John Kufuor of Ghana. Nonetheless, AU member countries have rallied around Sudanese President Bashir in a show of support after he was charged by the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** in 2008. Several AU members threatened to withdraw their membership in the **ICC** if Bashir were to be indicted. Inadequate resources and lack of political will from some member countries constrain the AU's ability to address the Darfur situation without international support. However, in addition to the concerns regarding mutual respect for national sovereignty, the history of colonialism in Africa makes direct action in Sudan by western nations a particularly sensitive issue.

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Opening Position:

- The AU responded to the crisis in Darfur swiftly, responding with diplomatic efforts, as well as financial and military resources.
- The AU was the first entity to provide a **peacekeeping** force in Darfur and the UN recognized this action saved many lives.
- You think the AU and UN should continue to have a significant **peacekeeping** presence in Darfur via UNAMID to ensure the implementation of political agreements.
- You believe that efforts to broker a political peace between the government of Sudan and rebel groups should be led by African nations.
- You encourage the United States and other countries to continue providing training and monetary aid to support AU **peacekeeping** missions.
- You do not believe that President al-Bashir should be prosecuted by the **ICC**.
- You need to convince the Sudanese government that **peacekeeping** troops will provide security to all parties.

Questions to Consider:

- What is the current strength and scope of UNAMID operations? Is the mandate sufficient?
- What is the view of the government of Sudan regarding an increased AU role?
- What else could the African Union do?
- What are the limitations on further AU action?
- How can President al-Bashir be held accountable for the humanitarian care of all people in Sudan from this point forward in the negotiations?
- Why is the Sudanese government concerned about **peacekeeping** troops being stationed in the country?

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