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## **Darfur United to Play in Inaugural World Unity Cup, 25-29 August 2016 CELEBRATING THE JOY OF BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGH THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF GAMES: FOOTBALL**

*HERMOSA BEACH, CALIFORNIA* - Darfur United, a program of Hermosa Beach-based organization iACT, is pleased to announce its participation in the first-ever World Unity Cup, to take place 25-29 August 2016 in Sutton, South London, United Kingdom.

Four teams — Chagos Football Association, Ellan Vannin International Football Team, Darfur United, and Tamil Eelam Football Association — will compete to qualify for the CONIFA World Football Cup 2018, a tournament for teams not otherwise recognized by FIFA. The World Unity Cup stands as an opportunity for these players to set their cleats on the international stage, many for the first time. These four teams represent people groups which, for various reasons, have either been displaced from or have lost autonomy over their native homelands. Each team plays football not only for the love of the game, but also to give voice to their often silenced communities.

The Darfur United Men's Team is an all-refugee soccer team, the majority of which is from twelve refugee camps in eastern Chad currently housing over 360,000 displaced people. Darfur United began in 2012 as a joint effort between the refugee community, iACT, the UN Refugee Agency, and soccer fans. Since then, the team has competed in two international tournaments — The Viva World Cup 2012 in Iraqi-Kurdistan and The CONIFA World Football Cup 2014 in Sweden — and has been a vehicle for global refugee awareness.

“The World Unity Cup is the perfect opportunity to highlight the positives and the beauty of people coming together,” said Gabriel Stauring, Founding Executive Director of iACT and Darfur United. “Football creates joy for the players and fans, and Darfur United is looking forward to sharing this joy with the world.”

Prior to the tournament, Darfur United will be training with coaching staff and at facilities graciously provided by Strachan Football Foundation, one of the UK's premier and leading football education programs. The Foundation instills high personal standards in young people and develops them with “aspirations to achieve in life both on and off the field.”

When speaking about competing in the World Unity Cup, Darfur United Head Coach, United Kingdom native, and Beach FC Director of Youth Development Mark Hodson said:

“We are incredibly honored to bring our team to the UK to compete in the upcoming World Unity Cup and to have the opportunity to keep the world engaged in the ongoing and seemingly endless challenges the displaced families of Darfur face each and every day. This is of course extra special for me, being able to coach the team in my home country, the place where I developed a love for the game that somehow miraculously led me along a winding path to coach the Darfur United team.



“We couldn't be any happier to make this trip and this year, with the added support of my good friend coach Dan Elliott and the Strachan Football Foundation in the United Kingdom, our goal is to make this the most rewarding experience yet for our players and their future happiness.”

The World Unity Cup tournament will be held at:  
Sutton United FC  
The Borough Sports Ground  
Gander Green Ln  
Sutton SM1 2EY

Matches are free and open to the public. Press can register for full access to the tournament at [worldunitycup.org](http://worldunitycup.org).

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Darfur United is a program of iACT. iACT is a Los Angeles-based organization providing humanitarian action to aid, empower, and extend hope to those affected by mass atrocities. In the U.S., iACT provides tools and training necessary to create a new culture of participation for people facing and responding to humanitarian crises. iACT utilizes innovative thinking, human-centered design, and collaborative relationships to co-create replicable and cost-effective programs in refugee camps. Since 2005, iACT has facilitated refugee-led education, sports, and human rights programs that build resilience and cultivate recovery in refugee camps in eastern Chad. [www.darfurunited.com](http://www.darfurunited.com) [www.iactivism.org](http://www.iactivism.org)

The World Unity Cup celebrates the joy of bringing people together through the most beautiful of games: Football. This inaugural Cup is a four-team football tournament taking place in London on August 25th to the 29th. The winner qualifies for the CONIFA World Football Cup 2018. Competing: Tamil Eelam Football Association, Chagos Football Association, Darfur United, and Ellan Vannin International Football Team. [www.worldunitycup.org](http://www.worldunitycup.org)