



Insights on the PSC

Session on the AU-UN Special Report on the Strategic Review of UNAMID and the renewal of its mandate

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Tomorrow (11 May) the Peace and Security Council (PSC) will hold a session on the Special Report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the UN Secretary-General on the Strategic Review of the UN/AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). The PSC will also consider the renewal of the mandate of UNAMID whose current mandate ends on 30 June.

Ademore Kambudzi, Acting Head of the Peace and Security Department is expected to deliver a statement on behalf of Smail Chergui, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security. The Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of UNAMID Jeremiah Mamabolo is also scheduled to brief the PSC.

The agenda for the session anticipates the participation in this session of the UN office to the AU (UNOAU) and representatives of the African members (A3) of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the five permanent members of the UNSC. The Government of Sudan is also expected to make statement emphasizing the need for supporting the stabilization of Darfur and to this end for putting Darfur on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission. Although much of the ongoing UN efforts in ending and reducing its peacekeeping operations is a result of the push from the US for budget cuts, the US seem to have concern over setting a final timeline for finalizing the withdrawal of UNAMID, which it is expected to raise during its intervention tomorrow.

During the session, the PSC is expected to make an assessment of the progress made in the review and reconfiguration of UNAMID. Currently, phase two of the reconfiguration of the mission running until end of June is underway. The repatriation of three infantry battalions from the mission handing over the team sites to formed police units has been ongoing, with the repatriation of the two battalions from Rwanda and Senegal. As the delay in the departure of the third battalion from Ethiopia until the end of June for addressing prevailing security conditions shows, there is a level of flexibility required in the implementation of the reconfiguration of UNAMID. With the closure also of three military sector headquarters (Sectors East, North and West) during this second phase, the force will be left with two sectors the Jebel Marra Task Force, with its headquarters at Zalingei, and the State Security Assistance Force, with its headquarters at Nyala.

In the statement of the PSD, Kambudzi is expected to highlight the progress made including in terms of the security situation in Darfur, while noting the remaining security challenges in Darfur including the intermittent clashes pitting the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid faction against government forces and nomads in the Jebel Marra area. The statement would also underscore the need for full political settlement, peacebuilding initiatives and the responsibility that the Government of Sudan bears for taking initiatives for addressing the root causes and remaining legacies of the conflict in Darfur.

Apart from updating the PSC on the efforts of UNAMID to deal with the current security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, Mamabolo's briefing is expected to address the status of the implementation of the second phase of the reconfiguration of UNAMID. It is also anticipated to address UNAMID's expectations on its mandate and on its plan on the implementation of its mandate while implementing its phased withdrawal during the coming year.

In April, the Joint AU-UN Strategic Review of UNAMID undertook a two-week visit to Sudan. Apart from considering a new mission concept with adjusted priorities, the review has culminated in the special report of AUC Chairperson and UN Secretary-General finalized on 1 June.

The Special Report provides an analysis of the conflict, highlighting the current security situation and conflict drivers in Darfur, the political and humanitarian situation, as well as the development needs critical for avoiding a relapse into conflict. Importantly, the report provides details on the redefined priorities of UNAMID focusing on protection of civilians and mediation both of the political process between government and non-signatory armed forces on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) and at the local level to address inter-communal and other local conflicts. It also envisages a limited area of operation for UNAMID, with the withdrawal and liquidation of UNAMID set to end in December 2020.

In its deliberation, the PSC will also benefit from the filed visit that it undertook to Sudan from 5 to 9 May and the briefing that it received in April from Smail Chergui and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping on their joint visit to Darfur. From both the briefings it received from Chergui and Lacroix and its filed visit, the PSC has established that the security situation in Darfur has stabilized. Most notable in this regard is the cessation of direct hostilities

between government forces and armed rebel groups in Darfur. The implementation of the weapons collection campaign of the government seems to be limiting militias and bandits from freely using their weapons and thereby contributing further to the improvement of the security situation.

Despite such improvements, concerns remain. There are incidents of inter-communal violence leading to major displacement of civilians. Over 11,000 civilians fled their homes to IDP camps following inter-communal clashes in Jebel Marra area in April. Another source of threat for civilians comes from attacks from armed militias and criminals. Apart from the lack of full political settlement and of resolution of the underlying causes and the legacies of the armed conflicts, there are also incidents of clashes relating to the compulsory collection of weapons.

There are members of the PSC who may require clarification about plans for addressing the concerns that IDPs expressed to PSC members during its field visit to Darfur over the withdrawal of UNAMID. Despite supporting the December 2020 timeline for the final liquidation of UNAMID, it is also expected that AU PSD and PSC members would call for flexibility in terms of both the implementation of the withdrawal plan and the area of operation of UNAMID until 2020. On both counts, the expectation is that the process should allow adequate space for UNAMID to address changes that may arise in the security situation in Darfur. This would entail that UNAMID continues to have a wider area of operation than envisaged in the Special Report.

In terms of measures to be taken for preventing the withdrawal of UNAMID from creating security vacuum, as has been noted earlier, the Government of Sudan, while pushing for UNAMID's withdrawal, has sent a request to the Secretary-General to have Darfur under the UN Peacebuilding Commission mandate. Indications are that some permanent members of the UNSC may not support that, while it is expected to receive the support of members of the PSC as one measure for preventing return of the armed conflict in Darfur.

The outcome of the session will be a communiqué. This will present the PSC's appreciation of the current security and humanitarian situation in Darfur and its assessment of the implementation of the reconfiguration of UNAMID. While welcoming the Special Report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary General of the UN on the Strategic Review of UNAMID including the December 2020 end date for completion of the liquidation of UNAMID, the PSC could also

articulate its expectations on the modalities of implementation of the revised concept of operation of UNAMID. Its endorsement of the process of withdrawal would come with a caveat of its plan to continue to monitor the situation and take appropriate action that developments on the ground warrant. The PSC would also renew the mandate of UNAMID for another twelve month. The role that the AU could play in supporting the stabilization process in Darfur including in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform and the steps to be taken in this respect including the conduct of a needs assessment are also matters that could feature in the outcome of this session.



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