

Briefing on Darfur and UNAMID

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Tomorrow (26 February) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is scheduled to hold its first briefing of the year on the situation in Darfur and on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operations in Darfur (UNAMID). The Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of UNAMID Jeremiah Mamabolo is scheduled to brief the PSC. Ademore Kambudzi, Acting Head of the Peace and Security Department is also expected to deliver a statement on behalf of Smail Chergui, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security. The PSC also expects to hear update statement from the Government of Sudan. The agenda for the session anticipates the participation of the UN office to the AU (UNOAU) and representatives of the African members (A3) of the UN Security Council (UNSC).

In terms of the situation in Darfur, Mamabolo is expected to update the PSC on the developments in the security situation in Darfur since the PSC's last meeting of 19 September 2018. Like the October 2018 report of the Secretary-General, his latest report covering 4 October 2018 to 3 January, noted that the security situation in Darfur remains relatively stable except for intermittent clashes between government forces and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid in the Jebel Marra area. It also indicates improvements noting in particular the decline in inter-communal violence and human rights violations, enabling some internally displaced persons to return to their place of origin.

It is to be recalled that one area of concern highlighted in the PSC field visit to Darfur and the communiqué on its field mission report has been the treatment of internally displaced persons and the challenges surrounding clashes over land including for IDPs seeking to return to their place of origin.

In this regard, its communiqué of the 773rd meeting highlighted the 'need to urgently and equitably address the land tenure issues as it relates to the returnees'. The Secretary-General's latest report also observed that the underlying causes of the conflict remain unaddressed. This is one area on which the briefing from Mamabolo is expected to provide some update to the PSC.

It is to be recalled that the various communiqués of the PSC (communiqués of its 778th and 794th sessions) and notably its communiqué of the 773rd session urged 'the Government of Sudan to intensify efforts towards addressing the root causes of conflict in Darfur, including the return of the IDPs.' PSC members may wish to learn about the government's specific plans and concrete measures in these respects.

Members of the PSC would wish to follow up on the effort for achieving political settlement, particularly with groups that are not signatories to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) as highlighted in its 794th session. In this respect, some progress has been observed. The African Union High-level Implementation Panel on Sudan and South Sudan (AUHIP) convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 22-23 November 2018 with the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM) and the Gibril Ibrahim faction of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM-Gibril), focusing on achieving a pre-negotiation framework that would facilitate the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement and the resumption of political negotiations. On 6 December 2018, at a meeting in Berlin, Germany the government of Sudan and the SLA-MM and JEM-Gibril signed a pre-negotiation agreement, providing for the resumption of negotiations within the framework of the DDPD, under the auspices of the AUHIP.

Despite this slow progress and the renewal by these groups of their cessation of hostilities until February, fighting has not completely stopped. With respect to UNAMID, developments relating to

the benchmarks in the exit process of UNAMID are of particular interest. It is to be recalled that its communiqué of the 778th session 'while welcoming the proposal by the Special Report of the Secretary General and the AU Commission Chairperson that the UNAMID would exit on 30 June 2020 and its liquidation be completed by December 2020,' the PSC noted that consideration should be given to '[e]nsuring a gradual drawdown that would allow the Mission's exit to be guided by the political and security situation on the ground so as not to create a security vacuum and expose civilian populations'.

As expected to be highlighted in Mamabolo's briefing, it is of interest for the PSC that the October 2018 report of the Secretary General contained proposed 'benchmarks and indicators of achievement' for the eventual exit of UNAMID with a view towards this exit taking place in 2020, 'provided that there is no significant change in the security situation in Darfur and key indicators are fulfilled'. Also of significance for the PSC to note is the UNSC presidential statement of Cote d'Ivoire of 10 December that requested the Secretary-General, and invited the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, to provide detailed reporting on the progress made towards achieving the benchmarks and indicators attaching 'particular priority to progress against the benchmarks and indicators focused on protection of civilians, particularly relating to internally displaced persons and returning refugees, human rights, rule of law, the humanitarian situation, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the regular 90-day reports'.

A key issue that may be raised during the briefing is the challenge around resource and financial mobilization to support the implementation of the transition to plan. The UNSC presidential statement makes reference to the need for resources not only to the successful attainment of the benchmarks and indicators but also to the long-term transition to peacebuilding and development.

In line with the timetable adopted by the UNSC, the UNAMID troops have been reduced from 8,735 to 5,470 and the number of police officers has also been lowered from 800 to 760 by the end of December 2018. The upcoming joint UN and AU assessment mission in March will review the reconfiguration of UNAMID in light of the set benchmarks and present report both to the PSC and UNSC.

Beyond troop reduction, the transition plan includes the transfer of various locations to the control of the Government of Sudan. In a press statement that UNAMID issued on 20 December 2018, it reported that it concluded the closure and handing over of 10 team sites to the Government of Sudan. In the

statement UNAMID urged the Government of Sudan to use the facilities for non-military civilian purposes, including to 'contribute towards institutions such as universities, hospitals and schools, that meet critical needs of health and education, while benefiting large parts of communities.'

It is of interest for the PSC to inquire from Mamabolo if there are aspects of the situation in Darfur and UNAMID's exit processes that, in the assessment of UNAMID, could be affected by these ongoing political instability in Sudan, most notably the most recent declaration of state of emergency and the removal of state governors. The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. On the situation in Darfur, the PSC could reiterate its earlier concerns on the challenges facing IDPs and returnees and the need for addressing the underlying conflict drivers in Darfur such as those leading to inter-communal clashes, including land issues and resource distribution. The communiqué could also welcome the progress towards inclusive political settlement and the need for not losing momentum. With respect to UNAMID's exit process, the communiqué could take note of the benchmarks and indicators of progress contained in the UN Secretary-General and the UNSC's Presidential statement calling for periodic reports using the

benchmarks and indicators for assessing progress, which is in line with the PSC's communiqué of the 778th session. The PSC may also wish to request that UNAMID monitors and provides feedback on the impact of the overall situation in Sudan on Darfur and the mission.