

Briefing on the Situation in Darfur and the Activities of UNAMID

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Tomorrow (24 October) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council will have a session to consider the situation in Darfur and the activities of AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley Mamabolo the Joint Special Representative and Head of the UNAMID is expected to brief the Council.

Liberia as the Chair of the month and the Director of Peace and Security Department are also expected to make statements. The Council will receive a briefing on report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, which assesses the political and security situation on the ground and provides recommendations on the drawdown and exit strategy of UNAMID. The report is expected to assess the political developments under the new transitional government particularly in relation to the situation in Darfur.

In the political front, the report is expected to provide update on the state of implementation of the agreed arrangements for the transitional process, including those relating to peace. On 6 September, the new government of Sudan under Prime Minister Abdela Hamdok announced the formation of a committee tasked with the responsibility of laying down the groundwork for the constitution of a Peace Commission. The briefing may also provide further details on the on going peace talks between the transitional government and armed movements and the particular role of the AU in providing technical and political support in the process. Following the signing of the Juba Declaration for Confidence Building and

Preparation for Negotiation between the Transitional Government and the Sudan armed movements in Juba on September 11, further negotiations and peace talks have taken place. The Sovereignty Council has made concessions to bring on board the Sudan Liberation Army led by Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW) in the peace talks including through the pardon of prisoners and face to face meeting between Prime Minister Hamdok and Abdul Wahid. The peace talks among the various armed movements have commenced on October 14 in Juba.

In the security sphere, the situation in Darfur particularly the Jebel Marra area remain tense due to the ongoing fighting between the Sudanese forces and SLA-AW will be covered. In this context the declaration of a ceasefire by President Burhan on 16 October 2019 is expected to contribute positively in improving the security situation in Darfur. In order to prevent further tension and confrontation among the people the government may also accelerate the work of the national committee to investigate the 3 June massacre.

The briefing is also expected to provide an overview on the status of the UNAMID drawdown and liquidation. In this regard the PSC at 856th session held on 13 June decided the 'Closure of eight team sites that are no longer active', for UNAMID troops to 'be relocated to the remaining team sites which have been identified as security hot spots' and for the AU and UN in consultation with UNAMID to reconsider the number of civilian staff to ensure that they are commensurate with the requirement of the current mandate implementation'.

The PSC has also tasked the AUC and the UN Secretariat 'to develop a political strategy that helps address the remaining political challenges, in consultation with the African Union High Level Panel (AUHIP), UNAMID and the UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa'. During the oral update to the UNSC on 26 August, Smail Chergui highlighted developments since the PSC 13 June meeting. Chergui stressed AU's support to the 'delay

in the drawdown plan to reduce the military component ceiling to 4,050 to allow the mission to protect its sites and installations, in particular the logistics hub in El Fasher, thereby maintaining a strength of 4,375'. In the same session Jean Pierre Lacroix highlighted the steps towards the development of the joint AU-UN political strategy for post-UNAMID engagement. Lacroix pointed out that AU-UN would jointly engage the new cabinet to ensure the smooth drawdown and transition from peacekeeping to peace building. Tomorrow's PSC

session may consider mechanisms in which the AU can provide support and fast track the planned political strategy.

The report of the Chairperson also expected to highlight on the exit strategy. It may highlight the need to take in consideration the security situation and ongoing peace talks which are expected to extend over the next sixmonth. The report may also reiterate PSC's 13 June decision on realignment of troops to focus on 5 sites, instead of the cutback on the number of military personnel. The report may further highlight on the need for the post-UNAMID mechanism to be a home-grown initiative driven by the government to ensure sustainability and ownership.

In October, the UNSC is expected to renew the mandate of UNAMID ahead of its expiry on 31 October. On 27 June, the UNSC its resolution 2479 (2019) decided 'to extend temporarily and exceptionally, the period of drawdown for UNAMID's military personnel'. Ahead of the session, the UNSC is expected to receive a Special Report by the UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AUC. Central issues related to the structure and the changes to the mandate of UNAMID in line with the eventual mission's exit in 2020 are expected to be addressed. Although the AU has clearly stated its support to delay any further drawdown, there are a number of options which the UNSC may explore including executing the existing

plan of drawdown.

The expected outcome is a communiqué. The PSC may commend the political actors in their efforts towards finding a common ground through the peace talks. It may task the Commission to strengthen its efforts in providing technical support to political actors that are participating in the dialogue. With regards to UNAMID the PSC may consider the slowing down of the drawdown particularly to prevent any further risks that may reverse the gains made in the political and security situation. The PSC may also take note of the continuing volatile security situation in Darfur, hence the need for the protection of civilians. It may provide key recommendations and direction towards the development of the joint political strategy and may also articulate its position ahead of the UNSC session on Darfur and UNAMID mandate renewal.