

Briefing on the Situation in Darfur and UNAMID

Automatic Heading TextDate | 03 March, 2020

Tomorrow (3 March) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is scheduled to receive a briefing on the situation in Darfur and the UNAMID transition. Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley Mamabolo the Joint Special Representative and Head of the UNAMID and the AU Peace and Security Department are expected to brief the Council.

Tomorrow's session is an occasion to look into the political and security context in which the drawdown and the planned exit of UNAMID will take place. In October 2019, at its last session on Darfur and UNAMID, the PSC has urged the Sudanese government 'in cooperation with the AU and UN to agree on a comprehensive withdrawal roadmap and to ensure that the process is carefully sequenced, conditions based, and aligned with the priorities and timelines of the Government'.

Following the PSC meeting, UNSCR 2495 (2019) decided that until 31 March 2020 UNAMID will maintain its current troop and police ceilings and during this time UNAMID will maintain all team sites for mandate implementation, with the exception of its sector headquarters in South Darfur, which shall be closed. The UNSC further noted that by the end of March it would make a decision on 'courses of action regarding the responsible drawdown and exit of UNAMID' and 'to adopt a new resolution at the same time, establishing a follow-on presence to UNAMID'. Prior to the UNSC decision on UNAMID however, the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the UN Secretary-General are expected to provide the UNSC with a special report including an assessment of the situation on the ground, an update on the peace process, information on the status of UNAMID team sites previously handed over to the government,

recommendations on the appropriate course of action regarding the drawdown of UNAMID, and options for a follow-on presence to UNAMID. The PSC may also receive an update on the status of the report.

For members of the PSC, the first issue to look into during tomorrow's session is the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur in particular and Sudan in general. The situation remains volatile. The intercommunal clashes that erupted in West Darfur around end of December have further exacerbated the precarious conditions. Taking in consideration these factors the PSC may also assess the risks associated with the security vacuum that may be created with the drawdown.

Other issues of interest for the PSC include the factors and conditions that will determine the drawdown before the set deadline.

Ahead of the various meetings that are planned at the UNSC level, the PSC session may provide members the opportunity to frame a clear position on the drawdown based on the assessment of the situation on the ground and may also identify key measures. The PSC may also assess the situation in Darfur in relation to the transition of the country and the impact it may have on the wider political process that is unfolding in Sudan. To this end, the PSC may further examine the implication of the troop drawdown on the security situation in Darfur. In terms of timing, convening this meeting early in the month is also essential to ensure that the outcome informs subsequent meetings planned at the UNSC. In the context of the transition, some progress was made in the political sphere. The session may look into the process and outcome of the recently signed peace agreement. UNAMID has played a key role in repositioning itself in the support of the peace process in line with provisions of the Constitutional Declaration.

The mission has been engaged in the negotiation process by providing technical support to the Sudanese peace talks

between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the armed movements represented by the Sudan Revolution Front (SRF) and Sudan People Liberation Movements- North of Abdul Aziz Alhilu and Malik Agar held in Juba. The peace talks were concluded with the signing of the framework agreement signed between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the Darfur armed movements on 28 December 2019.

The signing of the agreement requires further follow up. As indicated in the October 2019 AUC Chair and UNSG report the implementation of the agreement will entail coordinated work and resources on the security arrangements, the voluntary return and durable solutions for internally displaced persons and refugees, the system of governance, issues of land, transitional justice and reconciliation. This will require the concerted and coordinated efforts of the AU and UN under the guidance of the government of Sudan. Critical in this respect is the presence that the AU and the UN would have following the exit of UNAMID.

The PSC at its 884th session and later at its 906th session in January 2020 has reiterated its decision to undertake a visit to Sudan. Although this visit has yet to materialize, it will be an important step for the PSC to collect all the necessary first-hand information and to also formulate the way forward based on the outcome of the engagement it has with the actors on the ground.

This will enable the PSC to assess the situation in Darfur and to also examine if it indeed allows the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. Thus, the PSC may set a new timeframe for the planned visit. The expected outcome is a communiqué. The PSC may urge for a phased drawdown that is informed by the security and humanitarian needs of people in Darfur. The PSC may stress the need that the drawdown should not put at risk the political gains made so far and the ongoing peace process in the country. The Council may welcome the signing of the framework agreement and ongoing talks and

may call for the signing of the final peace agreement. It may also urge the parties to honor their commitments. The PSC may further reiterate its previous calls for the lifting of the sanctions imposed against Sudan and to de-list the country from the list of state sponsor of terrorism to support the country's transition and economic recovery. It may also call for further support for the upcoming donor conference in April 2020.