

# Briefing on the Situation in Sudan

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Tomorrow (25 January), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1059th session to receive a briefing on the situation in Sudan.

Permanent Representative of Ghana to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month, Amma Adomaa Twum-Amoah, is expected to make opening remarks. AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye, may brief the Council, including in light of his recent visit to Sudan. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission to the Sudan, Mohamed Belaiche, may also brief the Council. As per usual practice, the representatives of Sudan and Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are expected to deliver statements in their capacity as the concerned state and relevant regional bloc. The Special Representative of the Secretary General Hanna Tetteh may also make a statement.

Tomorrow's session will be the third time the PSC convenes to discuss the situation in Sudan after the 25 October 2021 military seizure of power that plunged the country into a political crisis. In its first session (1041st), where the PSC decided to suspend Sudan from all AU activities 'until the effective restoration of the Civilian-led Transitional Authority', it also requested the Chairperson of the Commission to 'immediately dispatch to Sudan his emissary to engage with Sudanese stakeholders on necessary steps needed to expedite the restoration of constitutional order in Sudan'. The Council further requested the Chairperson of the Commission to provide monthly updates on the situation in Sudan.

Tomorrow's session is convened as a follow to this request and at the backdrop of PAPS Commissioner Adeoye's recent visit to Sudan. While the dispatching of the AUC Chairperson's emissary has not been followed up as envisaged in the PSC decision, on 18 January, Adeoye was visiting Khartoum during which he delivered 'a special message' from the AU Commission Chairperson to General Abdeltatah Al Burhan.

One of the major developments since the 21 November political agreement between Prime Minister Abdala Hamdok and Al Burhan that reinstated Hamdok was the latter's resignation on 2 January 2022, and further deepening the crisis in Sudan's transition that has been stumbling since the 25 October coup. The resignation came amid unrelenting deadly protests and failure of the military not to interfere in cabinet appointments. It is worth recalling that despite the 21 November agreement that reinstated Hamdok to his position as Prime Minister, the mobilization of opposition against the military and the staging of protests continue unabated.

Hamdok's resignation raised international concerns about the worsening of the political crisis in Sudan's transition. For instance, the Chairperson of the Commission, Moussa Faki, issued a statement on 3 January expressing his concern over the resignation and the continued protests and violence in the country. In his statement, the Chairperson urged 'all national civilian and military actors to intensify their efforts to find a path towards consensual approaches and a peaceful resolution to the crisis, in conformity with the transitional political agreements', and expressed AU's readiness to accompany Sudan in its quest for peace. Similarly, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, after expressing his regrets over the lack of political understanding, encouraged 'all stakeholders to continue engaging in meaningful dialogue in order to reach an inclusive, peaceful and lasting solution'. The European Union (EU) and the Troika on Sudan (Norway, the UK and the US), in a 4 January statement, also

'strongly urged' stakeholders to 'commit to an immediate, Sudanese-led and internationally facilitated dialogue' to address the current political crisis.

Against the background of growing calls for dialogue and in the context of lack of progress towards breaking the political stalemate internally, on 8 January, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) formally launched a 'UN facilitated intra-Sudanese political process' on the way forward for democracy and peace under its good offices mandate. The success of this effort however rests heavily on the backing it has from both internal and external actors. Thus far, two of the three major pro-democracy groups, the Sudanese Professionals Association and the Resistance Committee, have rejected the initiative while the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) expressed willingness to participate in the consultation on condition that the purpose is to 'resume the democratic transition'. The military reportedly welcomed the initiative. International partners such as the Sudan Quad (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, UK, and US) and Friends of Sudan (core members of the Friends of Sudan group include France, Germany, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Norway, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, UK, US and the EU) also expressed their strong support to the initiative of UNITAMS.

The political process that UNITAMS initiated is sure to benefit from active role of regional actors such AU and IGAD. A statement issued by the 'Friends of Sudan' on 18 January 2022 recognized the 'important and necessary engagement of regional bodies' in advancing Sudan's democratic transition and the role they can play in 'supporting' UNITAMS ongoing effort. It is worth noting that Mohamed Hamdan Degalo (Hemeti), Al Burhan's deputy arrived in Addis on 20 January on a two-day official visit. AU Commission Chairperson met with Hemeti to discuss, according to the Chairperson, 'the worrying situation in Sudan'. In his communication via twitter after meeting Al Burhan, Adeoye noted the reaffirmation by Sudanese

actors of 'the imperative for a constructive and active role for the AU in Sudan'. In tomorrow's session, members of the Council may seek clarification from Adeoye on plans for AU's engagement to push for restoration of constitutional order and the available entry points in this regard.

Given the persistent protests and the security response that has increasingly claiming the lives of unarmed protesting civilians, the most immediate issue of concern for the PSC is how to calm down the increasingly violent confrontation between protesters and the military. In terms of the political process to achieving consensus on the transition, there are several contentious issues among Sudanese stakeholders. For instance, whether the August 2019 Constitutional Declaration remain a relevant framework to guide the transition seems contested. The manner and basis for the selection of a new civilian leadership, the place of the military in the transition, and the timeframe for the election remain highly divisive among political forces. Protesters and opposition political parties rejected any power-sharing with the military while the latter's commitment to transfer power to a civilian component as envisaged under the Constitutional Declaration remains doubtful. Furthermore, some of the transitional tasks stipulated in the political agreements including the formation of the Transitional Legislative Council and other oversight mechanisms remain unimplemented nearly a year and half after 2019 Constitutional Declarations.

Apart from the political developments, the Council may assess the security and socio-economic as well as human right conditions of Sudan that have seen deterioration since the military coup. In his 10 December 2021 UN Security Council briefing, Volker Perthes, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan and Head of UNITAMS, noted a 'resurgence of intercommunal conflicts and armed banditry in Darfur, Blue Nile and the Kordofans'. The coup also put a break on the flow of international financial assistance,

thereby disrupting the process of economic recovery. The human right situation has also worsened as security forces increased the use of force in their attempt to contain the largely peaceful protesters. More than 71 protesters have been reported killed since the 25 October coup. There are also allegations of rape and sexual violence against protesters at the hands of security forces, as well as reported attacks on medical facilities.

The expected outcome of tomorrow's session is a communique. Among others, the PSC may express its concern over the worsening of the political crisis and the attendant resignation of Prime Minister Hamdok. The Council may emphasize the need to take concrete measures for deescalating the worsening tension and accompanying instability. The PSC may welcome the political process that UNITAMS initiated and underscore the imperative of ensuring that any effort to resolve the ongoing political crisis is inclusive and representative of all sections of society including the youth and women and garners the support of all political and social forces. The PSC may also encourage the AU Commission to enhance its engagement to accompany Sudan on its transition to democratic and civilian rule. The Council may call on all the Sudanese actors to use the August 2019 Constitutional Declaration as a basis of the dialogue towards achieving consensus on the transitional political arrangements while upholding the Juba Peace Agreement. Regarding the violence against protesters, the Council may urge the Sudanese authorities not to use of excessive and lethal force against protesters and reiterate its 1050th session in urging the Sudanese to undertake a 'prompt, independent, transparent and effective investigation into alleged violations and abuses perpetrated since 24 October 2021'. The PSC may reiterate its decision 'to dispatch a mission to Sudan to engage with the authorities and other relevant stakeholders with a view to facilitating and supporting the ongoing transition process, and to report thereon.'