

Briefing on the Situation in Sudan

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Tomorrow (6 October) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to discuss on the situation in the Sudan, which is the only country situation in the program work of the PSC for the month. Although it was initially envisaged that the PSC will consider the report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, the session has since been changed into a briefing session. This session is envisaged to take place virtually through VCT.

It is expected that the PSC will receive a briefing from the Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson and Head of the AU Liaison Office in Sudan, Mohamed Belaichi. The representative of Sudan is also expected to make a statement both as representative of Sudan and in Sudan's capacity as Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

It is to be recalled that the PSC requested the Chairperson of the AU Commission to regularly brief the Council on the situation in the Sudan, in particular, on the implementation of the Political Agreement and the Constitutional Document. Tomorrow's briefing is expected to provide an update on the overall political situation, the evolution of the transition including the peace process launched following the establishment of the transitional government. Other issues of major concern include the economic situation and the progress towards removing Sudan from the US list of states sponsoring terrorism.

The major development in the transition process in Sudan is the significant progress registered in the peace process that

has been launched following the establishment of the transitional government. On 3 October, a landmark peace deal was signed in South Sudan's capital Juba by the transitional government and the Sudan Revolutionary Front – a coalition of armed opposition groups. The regional body IGAD, the AU and the UN have all welcomed the signing of the peace deal as a significant step forward towards bringing lasting peace and stability in the Sudan, although not all armed groups are part of this deal.

The other major armed opposition groups, which are not part of this peace deal are the Al-Hilu faction of SPLM/N and the Abdul Wahid faction of Sudan Liberation Army (SLA). Al-Hilu has already signed an agreement of principles with Sudan's Prime Minister in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 3 September. This is considered encouraging. Al-Hilu is said to have attended the signing ceremony in Juba and met with Prime Minister Hamdok and President Salva Kiir to discuss about the ongoing talks between his movement and the transitional government. However, Abdul-Wahid's faction continues to reject talks with the transitional government and downplayed the significance of the peace deal signed in Juba.

The signing of the peace deal is only the first step, but challenges lie ahead in terms of its implementation. The need for the parties to translate their commitment into action will be critical to move the country forward. Apart from the challenges of implementation that arise from the internal power dynamics of the transitional government and the influence of various security entities in Sudan, a major formidable test for the peace process is the economic situation in Sudan. This will also pose a major challenge in financing the implementation of the peace deal. It is feared that this will test the resolve of the parties for honoring their commitments under the deal signed in Juba.

Belaichi's briefing may shed lights on the scale of the economic pressure facing Sudan. There is already growing

frustration within the society with protesters resurfacing again on the streets. The country has already declared a state of economic emergency because of the drastic fall of the Sudanese Pound. That is why it needs international support, but it may not be easy to come by given the current realities in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic even though there was generous pledge made by partners to support the transition during the Berlin Conference.

One of the major stumbling blocks for the country in rehabilitating its economy and attracting much needed investment from outside has been the fact that Sudan remains in the list of state sponsors of terrorism. This is one of the issues that the representative of Sudan may provide update on. Progress has been made in the discussion with the US on removing Sudan from the list and the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in his letter to the Senate Majority Leader Mitchell McConnell, has urged US lawmakers to support the removal explaining the progress made in the discussion on compensation to the victims of the 1998 terrorist attack on US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and underscoring the need to support the transition process in the Sudan. However, this is now overshadowed by new demands that the country should take cues from other Gulf countries in normalizing its ties with Israel. This appears to be creating obstacles to the delisting process, which was expected to happen this month.

Sudan has also declared another emergency because of the worst flooding which overflowed the Nile river banks. More than half a million Sudanese are said to have been affected by this disaster and 99 people lost their lives. This disaster has further compounded already existing challenges and left many Sudanese in need of humanitarian assistance. This is another issue in respect of which both Belaichi and the representative of Sudan are expected to provide analysis on how this emergency would affect Sudan's transition.

The transition in Sudan would certainly benefit from strong

and sustained regional and international backing. It is to be recalled that, in January, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok had requested the United Nations “to seek a Security Council mandate to establish, as soon as possible, a Chapter VI peace support operation in the form of a special political mission with a strong peacebuilding component”. He further requested that the mission’s mandate should cover the entire territory of Sudan. Although there were some complications in the ensuing discussion on the deployment of the mission with regard to the mandate of the mission and its composition, the United Nations Security Council eventually adopted resolution 2524 (2020) establishing an integrated transition assistance mission in the Sudan. The mandate of the mission includes, among others, to support the transition process, provide good offices for peace negotiations, assist in peacebuilding, civilian protection, and rule of law, and support the state’s capacity to extend its presence.

The expected outcome of the session is a communique. The PSC is expected to welcome the signing of the peace deal between the Sudan government and armed groups in Juba and express its full support for the deal. The PSC may also encourage those groups which are not part of the peace deal to join the peace deal which promises lasting peace and stability to the whole of Sudan. The PSC may recognize the enormous challenges that the country continues to face and reiterate its call to bilateral and international partners to mobilize assistance in support of the Sudan. In this regard, it may urge partners to redeem the pledge made in the Berlin Conference. The PSC may also once again reiterate its call for the lifting of all economic and financial sanctions on Sudan, most notably the removing Sudan from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, more so considering the commitment that Sudan’s transitional government demonstrated by fulfilling the demands of the US government relating to compensation for bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The PSC may also encourage countries in the region and the AU as well as partners to

enhance their support to the transitional process in Sudan and commend the support that various countries extended in support of the transitional government.