

Report of the PSC field mission to Sudan and UNAMID

Automatic Heading TextDate | 18 May, 2018

Tomorrow (18 May) the Peace and Security Council (PSC) will hold a session on the report on its field mission to Sudan and UN/AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). The Peace and Security

Department and the Joint Special Representative for Darfur and head of UNAMID Jeremiah Mamabolo are scheduled to brief the PSC. The PSC Secretariat is expected to introduce the report. The consideration of the Special Report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary General of the UN on the Strategic Review of UNAMID envisaged in the agenda for this session as set out in the updated PSC program of work for May has been postponed for June.

The agenda for the session anticipates the participation in this session of the UN office to the AU (UNOAU) and representatives of the African members (A3) of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and

the five permanent members of the UNSC. The PSC undertook its field mission to Sudan from 5 to 9 May. Apart from engaging various stakeholders around the ongoing review and downsizing of UNAMID and the preparations for smooth transition, the field mission aimed at providing the PSC with first hand information on the current state of the peace and security situation in Darfur. This visit follows the Joint visit to Darfur of Smail Chergui, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping in April 2018.

In Khartoum, the PSC held discussions with the General Commissioner of the Humanitarian Aid Commission on humanitarian issues and with Sudan's Commissioner for DDR on

the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process being implemented by the Government of Sudan in Darfur. It also met the Director of the Darfur Peace Follow up Office and discussed the implementation of the residual activities on Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). The senior government officials with whom the PSC met include the Minister of Defense of Sudan and the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sudan. The PSC also met with the African Group of Ambassadors.

In Darfur, it met with the Acting Governor of Northern Darfur State and other officials of the state and discussed the political, security and humanitarian situation in Northern Darfur. It visited Soroti and interacted with IDPS on the security and humanitarian situation at Zam Zam IDP camp. The PSC delegation also held a meeting with the Joint Special Representative and UNAMID team in El Fasher in Darfur.

From its visits and interactions, the PSC has established that the security situation in Darfur has stabilized. Most notable in this regard is the cessation of direct hostilities between government forces and armed groups in Darfur. The implementation of the weapons collection campaign of the government seems to be limiting militias and bandits from freely using their weapons and thereby contributing further to the improvement of the security situation.

Despite such improvements in the security situation in Darfur, concerns remain. There are incidents of inter-communal violence leading to major displacement of civilians. Over 11,000 civilians fled their homes to IDP camps following inter-communal clashes in Jebel Marra area last month. Another source of threat for civilians comes from attacks from armed militias and criminals. There are also incidents of clashes relating to the compulsory collection of weapons. From the perspective of lasting peace and realization of full political solution, there are fundamental challenges. Despite the improvement in the security situation, IDPs could not return

to their territories. Their land has been taken over. Additionally, no full political settlement accepted by all armed and political forces in Darfur has been achieved. Notwithstanding the absence of direct hostilities, armed rebel groups still exist in Darfur. While the manifestations of the conflict in terms of direct armed fighting has ended or been reduced, the underlying causes of the conflict and the consequences of the conflict remain unresolved.

As highlighted during the PSC briefing on the joint visit of Chergui and Lacroix, these remaining issues underscore a need for supporting the stabilization process in Darfur and the effort for full political solution. This also emphasizes that the implementation of the phasing out or withdrawal of UNAMID should be done without creating security vacuum and the risk of relapse of conflict in Darfur.

The briefing on UNAMID would focus on the ongoing review and downsizing of UNAMID. Currently, phase two of the reconfiguration of the mission running until end of June is underway. The repatriation of three infantry battalions from the mission handing over the team sites to formed police units has been ongoing, with the repatriation of the two battalions from Rwanda and Senegal.

As the delay in the departure of the third battalion from Ethiopia until the end of June for addressing prevailing security conditions shows, there is a level of flexibility required in the implementation of the reconfiguration of UNAMID. With the closure also of three military sector headquarters (Sectors East, North and West) during this second phase, the force will be left with two sectors the Jebel Marra Task Force, with its headquarters at Zalingei, and the State Security Assistance Force, with its headquarters at Nyala.

In April, the Joint AU-UN Strategic Review of UNAMID undertook a two-week visit to Sudan. Apart from considering a new mission concept with adjusted priorities, the review will lead

to a report that will be submitted to the PSC in early June. While, as it pushes for the withdrawal of UNAMID, the Government of Sudan has requested the UN for a peacebuilding support in Darfur, it remains uncertain if Darfur would be put under the UN Peacebuilding Commission mandate.

This session presents the PSC the opportunity to assess the ongoing reconfiguration of UNAMID and to set some of the parameters for further review and reconfiguration of the mission. In this respect, while there is support for and consensus in the PSC for the process of withdrawal of UNAMID, there is recognition that this has to be done in a planned and phased way. As the PSC indicated in its statement on its filed visit urging 'all Sudanese parties to commit to the full realization of peace and stability in Darfur', there is a need both for mobilization of support for stabilization of the region and full political settlement in Darfur.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. This will present the PSC's appreciation of the current security and humanitarian situation in Darfur and its assessment of the implementation of the reconfiguration of UNAMID. While expressing its expectation to receive the Special Report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary General of the UN on the Strategic Review of UNAMID, the PSC could also articulate its expectations on the pace and scale of the reduction of the force size of UNAMID and the review of UNAMID's mandate whose renewal is due on 30 June.

The role that the AU could play in supporting the stabilization process in Darfur and the steps to be taken in this respect including the conduct of a needs assessment are also matters that could feature in the outcome of this session.