

Update briefing on the situation in Sudan

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Tomorrow (2 November), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is set to convene its 1117th session to receive update briefing on the situation in Sudan.

Permanent Representative of Namibia to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of November, Emilia Ndinealo Mkusa, is expected to make opening remarks. AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye, is expected to deliver statements while the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission to the Sudan, Mohamed Belaiche, will brief the Council during the closed segment of the session. The representative of the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) may also deliver statements as the relevant regional mechanism.

PSC has considered the situation in Sudan only in four instances ([1041st](#), 1050th, [1060th](#), and [1076th](#) sessions) since the 25 October 2021 military coup despite its decision, at its 1041st meeting, to receive monthly update on the evolution of the situation in Sudan. Sudan gave the AU and its PSC cold shoulder after the latter suspended Sudan on 26 October last year, which, to an extent, seems to have constrained PSC's active engagement in resolving the political crisis in the country. It is to be recalled that PSC's planned field mission to Sudan, which was slated for February, could not take place as Sudan's military authorities were reluctant to receive the delegation.

25 October marked first anniversary of the coup, which derailed the civilian-led transition process and plunged the country into a protracted political instability. Tens of thousands of protesters marched on the anniversary of the coup, demanding a return to civilian rule. The 25 October 2021 coup was staged just a few months before the military's handover of the chairship of the Sovereign Council—a body composed of the army and civilians with the task of overseeing the transition—to the civilian leadership as agreed in the 2019 Constitutional Declaration. It apparently aimed at pre-emptively averting both the risk of security sector reform and the concomitant potential loss of the military's role and influence in the economy & politics of the country and the risk of accountability for alleged human right violations – past and present. The military authorities led by al-Burhan justified the 25 October seizure of power as a necessary step to put the transition back on track and improve the worsening conditions of the country.

One year after the coup, the socio-economic, political, security and humanitarian situations of the country indicate a downward spiral. In his 2 September 2022 [report](#) to the UN Security Council, UN Secretary-General noted that 'the lack of political agreement and of a fully functional Government contributed to insecurity in various parts of the country, as well as to the deterioration of the economic and humanitarian situation.' Intercommunal conflicts and armed banditry in West, North and South Darfur, West Kordofan, Kassala, Blue Nile States have spurred with the latest intercommunal violence in Blue Nile State reportedly killing over 220 people. International partners and financial institutions have suspended their financial assistance until the restoration of civilian transition. The ongoing political impasse and rising insecurity coupled with global dynamics as marked by food price spike, as well as the suspension of financial assistance by international partners and financial institutions on account of the Coup have sent Sudan's economy into free fall.

The year-on-year inflation in 2022 is estimated to remain high at 245.1 per cent, according to UN Secretary-General's 2 September report. The socio-economic condition is further compounded by natural disasters, including flash floods.

On the political front, the military coup has also continued to face stiff resistance from the streets despite a heavy crackdown that reportedly killed hundreds of protesters since 25 October 2021. Despite some hopes in recent times, breaking the political deadlock on some of the sticky points on how to restore a civilian transition remains as elusive as before. In a televised speech on 4 July 2022, al-Burhan announced army's withdrawal from the political dialogue facilitated by the UN-AU-IGAD trilateral mechanism to 'allow space for political and revolutionary forces to form a government of national competencies' to lead the transition period. He further pledged to dissolve the Sovereign Council, following the formation of an interim government, and establish a Supreme Council of Armed Forces composed of the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, which will be responsible for security and defence tasks and 'related responsibilities', in consultation with the government. This is seen as an attempt to keep the security forces from required reforms and there is still lack of clarity and disagreement among different actors over the exact mandate & composition of the envisaged Council as well as the need for civilian oversight.

Meanwhile, military's announcement of withdrawal from the political negotiation has placed the ball in the court of the civilian actors to reach on a consensus for an interim government and the way forward to the transition. Currently, efforts are underway to forge unity, the drafting of constitutional declarations by the Sudan Bar Association (SBA) being an encouraging step in this regard. In August, the SBA unveiled a final draft of a new transitional constitution, which saw the participation of wide range of stakeholders from the Forces for Freedom and Change-Central Council (FFC-CC),

resistance committees, the Communist Party of Sudan, as well as rebel groups. The draft constitution is hoped to replace the August 2019 constitutional document if it succeeds in garnering support from majority of Sudanese stakeholders. Around mid-October, the FFC, which was part of the 2019 power-share deal and continued to remain an important political actor, rolled out its political vision for the restoration of the transitional civilian government based on the SBA's draft constitution. The vision reportedly proposes to, among others, form a technocrat cabinet, amend the Juba Peace Agreement, and a Security and Defence Council under the chair of a civilian Prime Minister. However, nature of the cabinet (technocratic versus party cabinet), the role of the military in the transition, status of the Juba Peace Agreement and duration of the transition remain contested issues.

In the short term, appointing an agreed Prime Minister and establishing an interim civilian government seem priority in the move towards the restoration of a civilian transition. However, getting the country on a path toward sustainable peace and democracy requires reckoning with longstanding issues that have become divisive and continued to shape the political state. This would necessitate reforms in the governance architecture of the state under a new constitution, civil-military relationship including security sector reform, transitional justice and accountability and reforms in the economic sector.

The expected outcome of tomorrow's session is a communique. Among others, Council may express its concern over the growing insecurity and deterioration of socio-economic and humanitarian conditions of Sudan amid the ongoing political deadlock. It may call on Sudan authorities to urgently address sources of insecurity and take appropriate measures to ensure peace and stability of conflict hotspots, including the full implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement. It may also highlight the importance of breaking ongoing political

deadlock and bring the transition back on track to resolve multidimensional challenges facing Sudan. Council may express concern over the slow pace of progress towards the restoration of a civilian transition for whose disruption the military coup is to blame. Council may urge civilian actors to expeditiously agree on the appointment of a Prime Minister and establishment of a civilian interim government and urge the de facto military authorities to commit to the principles on civilian oversight on the defence and security forces and civilian leadership over defence and security decision-making. Council may commend the UN-AU-IGAD tripartite mechanism for its effort to facilitate the Sudanese-led and Sudanese-owned consultations among the various actors. Council may encourage these actors to engage in a political dialogue to build consensus on the outstanding issues to restore the civilian transition, including the transitional bodies, role of military in the transition, and duration of the transition. Regarding the status of the Juba Peace Agreement, Council may welcome the recent training of the first batch of nearly 2000 troops from the signatory armed groups to the peace agreement and may further call on Sudanese authorities to expedite the training and integration of the remaining forces of the armed groups. Against the background of the violent responses of the military authorities toward peaceful protests, Council may call on the authorities to respect the right to peaceful assembly and ensure the non-use of disproportionate force against peaceful protests and to reiterate its previous call on Sudanese authorities to undertake a credible investigation into the killings of protesters and other violations since 25 October coup and held perpetrators accountable.