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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
727TH MEETING
27 OCTOBER 2017
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(DCCXXVII)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 727th meeting held on 27 October 2017, was briefed by the Joint Special Representative for the AU-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), Ambassador Jeremiah Kingsley Mamabolo, on the ongoing implementation of the UNAMID exit strategy following the PSC Communique PSC/PR/COMM.2 (DCXCI) adopted on 12 June 2017.

Council took note of the statement by Ambassador Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security, as well as the presentation on the prevailing political and security situation in Darfur, as well as the UNAMID exit strategy by the Joint Special Representative of UNAMID. Council also took note of the statements made by the representatives of the Government of Sudan, Ethiopia, in its capacity as the Chair of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and African Member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and Egypt, in its capacity as the African Member of the UNSC, as well as the European Union (EU).

Council recalled its previous communiqués and press statements on the situation in Darfur, including communiqués PSC/PR/COMM. (DCV) and PSC/PR/COMM. (DCLXXIII), PSC/PR/COMM.2 (DCXCI) adopted at its 605th and 673rd meetings, held on 13 June 2016, 29 March 2017 and 12 June 2017, respectively. Council also recalled the UN Security Council resolution 2296 (2016) of 29 June 2016 and 2373 (2017) of 29 June 2017.

Council reiterated its appreciation to the UNAMID leadership, in particular the Joint Special Representative, the Force Commander and the Police Commissioner, as well as to the Mission's personnel, for their dedication and contribution to the promotion of peace, security, stability and reconciliation in Darfur. In this regard, Council commended the Government of Sudan with the support of UNAMID for the reduction of inter-communal clashes, as well as the progress made in ensuring the protection of human rights, including the efforts made by the local authorities to request the Chief Justice of Sudan to open more courts in localities in North Darfur.

Council noted with appreciation the efforts made in the implementation of UNAMID's mandate, particularly with respect to the protection of civilians. In this regard, Council paid tribute to the UNAMID personnel who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty for the cause of peace in Darfur. Council also expressed appreciation to all the Troop Contributing Countries and Police Contributing Countries that have played a pivotal role through their selfless contribution to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and subsequently to UNAMID, in pursuit of peace and stability in the Darfur region of Sudan.

Council commended UNAMID for its efforts in implementing the above-mentioned Communique of 12 June 2017 and UN Security Council resolution 2363 (2017) pertaining to the reconfiguration of UNAMID, notably the conclusion of the first phase of the withdrawal

process, resulting in the closure of eleven (11) UNAMID team sites in North, South, West and East Darfur before the set deadline of 31 December 2017. Council encouraged the Government of Sudan and UNAMID to maintain this cordial working environment in order to further strengthen efforts between the Government of Sudan, the AU and the UN towards attaining a sustainable peace and security in Darfur.

Council noted the significant decrease of hostilities between the Government of Sudan and the rebel forces. In this regard, Council commended the Government of Sudan for extending a unilateral ceasefire as announced on 8 October 2017 and encouraged the armed movements to also reciprocate the overture meant to maintain peace and stability in Darfur.

Council also noted with concern that in spite of the significant progress made during the past few months, there are some challenges remaining that may impede the speedy restoration of sustainable peace, security, stability and reconciliation, as well as socio-economic recovery in Darfur. Thus, Council acknowledged the fragility of the security situation in Darfur, partly due to underlying tensions brought about by the unresolved root causes of the conflict as well as the proliferation of illegal arms and weapons in Darfur. In this regard, Council encouraged the Government of Sudan to continue with the arms collection campaign and ensure that the disarmament process realizes its objective of sustaining peace in Darfur. In this regard, Council urged UNAMID as well as the international partners to provide all the assistance to the Government of Sudan to carry out a successful disarmament process that helps to sustain peace.

Council noted with concern the limited progress in the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), particularly on issues related to durable solution to displacement, the administration of land, water and other scarce resources and the issue of armed militias. In this regard, Council requested UNAMID to continue to engage the relevant authorities within the residual institutions of the DDPD, currently operating within the Presidency, to help them to effectively and efficiently address the outstanding challenges, including through capacity building.

Council welcomed the forthcoming Joint UN and AU Assessment Mission to Darfur scheduled for 5 to 17 November 2017 and looked forward to receiving the report therefore.

Council, once again, reiterated its full support to the African Union High Level Implementation Panel on Sudan and South Sudan (AUHIP) for its efforts to resume negotiations between the Parties on the basis of the Roadmap Agreement including facilitating a cessation of hostilities between the Government of Sudan and the Darfur armed movements. In this context, Council, once again, encouraged all the armed movements to join the peace process and demonstrate the required spirit of commitment and responsibility. In this regard, Council underscored the need for the parties to urgently address, with the assistance of the AUHIP and JSR, ongoing differences over the utilization of the DDPD in the search for a lasting solution in Darfur.

Council noted that in spite of the improvement of the political and security situation in the past months, humanitarian situation remains of great concern. A total of 2.7 million people are displaced, of whom 2.1 million are in need of humanitarian assistance, and that 300,000 Sudanese refugees are located in neighboring Chad. Council called for the speedy and coordinated engagement by the Government of Sudan, UNAMID and UN Country Team, with the support of the international community, to restore the necessary conditions for the voluntary return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to their areas of origin or any other agreed settlements, and called on the AU Commission to actively assist in this regard. Once again, Council underscored the primary responsibility of the Government of Sudan in ensuring the safety and security of the IDPs as UNAMID withdraws from Darfur.

Council appreciated the efforts made by the Government of the United States of America on lifting the travel ban and revoking some economic sanctions imposed on Sudan since 1997. This decision constitutes a milestone towards improving the lives of the people in Sudan, including Darfur and a step forward on realizing durable peace, stability and development in Darfur.

Council encouraged the Government of Sudan to make good use of the structures inherited from UNAMID for development purposes, such as public education, and hospitals for the development of the people of Darfur, who have suffered enough for peace, stability and development of their communities.

Council requested the AU Commission, in collaboration with the UN and UNAMID, to provide quarterly assessments of the implementation of the reconfiguration of UNAMID military and police component and the evolution of the situation on the ground, in order to enable Council to provide guidance as necessary.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.