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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
990TH MEETING (VIRTUAL MEETING)

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PSC/RPT/(CMXC)

**DRAFT REPORT OF THE FIELD MISSION OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL TO THE
REPUBLIC OF SUDAN, CONDUCTED FROM 30 MARCH TO 1 APRIL 2021**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. From 30 March to 1 April 2021, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), led by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the AU, H.E. Ambassador Jean Njeri Kamau, in her capacity as the PSC Chairperson for March 2021, undertook a field mission to Sudan, within the overall context and framework of the Council's mandate of promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. The field mission was also undertaken pursuant to the Council's decisions and those of the AU Assembly in relation to the situation in Sudan, particularly the current transition process.

II. COMPOSITION OF THE PSC DELEGATION

2. The Delegation of the PSC comprised the following eleven PSC Members, namely: Burundi, Cameroon, Djibouti, EgyptGhana, Kenya and at the Permanent Representatve to the AU level alongside with Chad, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Senegal. It also included the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission to Sudan, Ambassador Mohamed Belaiche and support staff from the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission.

III. OBJECTIVES

3. The field mission was undertaken to enable the PSC to gather first-hand information from various relevant stakeholders on the ground, regarding the prevailing political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in the country; follow-up on the implementation of the Constitutional Declaration of 2018 and the Juba Peace Agreement signed on 3 October 2020; review the situation in Darfur following the departure of UNAMID and the Sudanese deployment of the for protection of civilians; assess progress made on the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), with a peacebuilding mandate, to support Sudanese authorities to have a successful democratic transition; as well as to express AU solidarity with the Government and people of Sudan, and reaffirm the unwavering commitment of the AU to continue supporting the current transition in the country.

IV. METHODOLOGY

4. During the visit, the PSC Delegation held consultations with various key stakeholders in Khartoum, that include the Head of Sovereignty Council, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Head of the Sovereignty Council, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Group of Ambassadors, Permanent Members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States of America), European Union (EU) and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for UNITAMS. The PSC Delegation travelled to El Fasher, Darfur and held consultations with the Wali of North Darfur and staff of UNAMID. While in Darfur, the PSC

Delegation visited AbuShouk internally displaced persons (IDP) Camp and held a meeting with the representatives of the IDPs.

V. KEY FINDINGS

A. Government Priorities

5. During the meeting with the Prime Minister of Sudan, the PSC Delegation was informed that the reconstituted Government of Sudan has placed Sudan in the right track to address challenges facing the country with a focus on five (5) key priorities areas, namely:

- i. Economic recovery and stabilization;
- ii. Restoration of durable peace, security and stability in the country;
- iii. Security Sector Reform (SSR), and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes;
- iv. Improving the country's foreign policy by rebuilding its image in the global arena and normalizing its diplomatic relations with the rest of the world; and
- v. Addressing issues relating to transitional justice and national reconciliation.

6. The Prime Minister emphasized that naturally, transition processes, including in Sudan, are always messy, never unidirectional and face many challenges. He stressed the uniqueness of the Sudanese transition model, which is based on cooperative partnership between civilians and the military. Nevertheless, he assured the PSC Delegation that the transitional partners are committed and determined to make this model work successfully.

B. Political Situation

7. It is important to note that the Constitutional Declaration of 2018 provides for a 39 months transitional period, which, initially, commenced on 17 August 2019, but was later rescheduled by the Juba Peace Agreement to start on 3 October 2020, and thus, ending in January 2024. During the field mission the PSC Delegation noted commendable progress made by Sudan during the transitional period. Examples of the progress made include the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement on 3 October 2020, with the involvement of all relevant political actors, the establishment of a new Cabinet based on the Peace Agreement, which includes most of the former armed movements; removal of Sudan from the United States of America list of State Sponsors of Terrorism (SST), leading to the lifting of economic sanctions imposed against the country and improved international relations, undertaking courageous economic reforms as well as the recent signing in Juba of the 'Declaration of Principles' with SPLM-N that calls for freedom of religion in Sudan.

8. The Government has also established a "Partnership Council" which supports cooperation, dialogue and consensus between the different participants in the ongoing transition. This model of cooperation which has been referred as "Sudanese model" has brought harmony between the the different political components and contributed to resolving several challenges the country had been facing.

9. The Head of Sovereignty Council and the Prime Minister informed the PSC delegation that despite the achievements made on political situation, the country is still facing pressing challenges. The major challenge is the fact that the Transitional Government is undertaking a monumental task of transforming a deeply-entrenched 30-year-old system. Furthermore, there are other armed groups that have not yet fully embraced the peace process, particularly the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) led by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu and Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) of Mr. Abdel Wahid Nur, which remain a concern. The Government assured the PSC delegation of its commitment, readiness and willingness to continue to constructively engage with these parties within the relevant national processes and structures that have been agreed to in the Constitutional Declaration and the Juba Peace Agreement.

10. The Transitional Government is expected to make preparations for the convening of a constitutional conference which would lead to the drafting of the future national constitution. This process would address the issues relating to the future Sudanese State and prepare the country for the holding national elections that will mark the end of the transitional period, in the context of which a request was made for the AU to provide technical support to Sudan, in order to ensure the successful organization of those elections.

11. The PSC Delegation was also informed that the Transitional Legislative Council (TLC), which is to be the third branch of the State, is yet to be established, having missed several deadlines with the last one having been 25 February 2021. New State Governors were also expected to have been appointed by 15 February, but unfortunately that deadline was also missed. It was emphasized that all these governance structures and arrangements are critical to ensure good governance and a successful democratic transition in the country.

12. The Transitional Government acknowledged that women were a very critical component of Sudan's transition and also emphasized the important role that women and the youth could play in the peace processes and peacebuilding. In this regard, the Government assured the PSC Delegation of its commitment and readiness to ensure that women and the youth are well represented and participate more meaningfully in the transitional process guided by the UN and AU Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

C. Security Situation

13. The PSC Delegation was informed about the relatively improved security situation in Sudan, particularly in Darfur. However, there have been reported incidents of violent inter-tribal clashes in some communities in Darfur, including in El Geneina, in West Darfur. Most of these violent conflicts are rooted in disputes over land ownership and tensions between farmers and herders. The Wali of North Darfur assured the PSC Delegation that the Government was already addressing these conflicts including through initiation of the implementation of the agreed security arrangements particularly the to-be-formed joint force. In addition, the PSC Delegation was informed about the presence of armed elements and sympathizers of Abdul Wahid in the IDP camps which is a high-level security threat against civilians in the IDP camps. The

representatives of the IDPs requested the PSC to make efforts ensure that Abdul Wahid movement join the peace process.

14. With regard to the protection of civilians, the Delegation was informed that, following the close down of UNAMID, the Transitional Government was already implementing some security measures that include the deployment of the Joint Security Forces (JSF) in Darfur, under the government's National Action Plan on Protection of Civilians, which has an initial estimate of 12,000 troops. It was stated that since UNAMID started drawing down, there have been no any major security incidents reported in Darfur. However, the PSC Delegation was informed that efforts to improve the security situation is faced by two major challenges, namely, the unavailability of sufficient financial resources to implement the Juba Agreement and secondly, the presence of elements of the Abdul Wahid movement in Darfur which threatens the ongoing peace process. In addition, the country is still awash with a lot of illegal acquisition of firearms and weapons. In this regard, there was emphasis on the need to strengthen the country's border control measures, in order to curb the proliferation of weapons, including from Libya.

15. The representatives of the IDPs of AbuShuk IDP Camp also informed the PSC Delegation that they have never experienced peace in their camp for over 17 years, since the outbreak of the Darfur crisis in 2003, when they moved into the camps. On their part, the representatives of women complained about abductions and sexual violence against women and children and cited recent cases. They appealed to the PSC to request the Government of Sudan to further enhance security in the IDP camps. International partners who had consultations with the PSC Delegation also confirmed that the security situation in Sudan has improved, which has contributed to the relative peace and tranquility in the country. However, they emphasized the need for the Government to redouble efforts to fulfil the expectations of the people in order to prevent a possible relapse to violence. They emphasized the need of sustained regional and international support to the efforts of the Government to fulfil the expectations of the people.

D. Economic situation

16. The PSC Delegation was informed that the Government had inherited an ailing economy, following many years of economic mismanagement and sanctions. However, the PSC Delegation noted major steps towards addressing the economic situation in the country, including removal of Sudan from the United States of America list of state sponsors of terrorism and subsequent improved relations with the international financial institutions (IFIs), which collectively, contributes to attraction of more foreign direct investment in the country. Sudan is also working on rectifying the currency exchange rate and review of its systems of subsidies which also paves the way for its re-integration into the international financial system and benefit from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The economic reforms will be accompanied by reliable social protections programs and measures, such as the current family support program funded by international partners, to mitigate the impact of these reforms on the most vulnerable in the population.

17. The international community and Friends of Sudan continue to work with the Transitional Government to find possible ways of addressing most of these economic and political challenges facing the country. The Delegation was also informed by both, the Government officials and Sudan's development partners about preparation for the upcoming Paris High Level Meeting to be convened at the initiative of the President of France, to take place on 17 May 2021. The Summit will mainly focus on mobilizing international support for economic recovery and stabilization in Sudan, including clearance of arrears and debt relief or cancellation for the country. An appeal was made for the AU to actively support these efforts.

E. Humanitarian situation

18. The issue of humanitarian situation was mentioned mainly with regard to the plight of IDPs in Darfur. The PSC was informed that there is still a large population of IDPs in Darfur and Sudanese refugees such as in Chad. The IDPs at Abu Shuk IDP Camp lamented the absence of basic needs in the camp such as food, water, health facilities and schools. They complained that they have not yet enjoyed the peace dividends following the signing of the Juba Agreement and that their humanitarian situation in the camp has not yet improved. They appealed to the PSC Delegation to raise their concerns with the Government officials.

19. The Government informed the PSC Delegation that it is in consultations with IDPs and Sudanese refugees in Chad with a view to provide safe and voluntary returns. Although the IDPs are willing to return to their original communities, the big challenge is that their lands were confiscated by other people. The Government assured the PSC Delegation that it will address all stated challenges and create conducive conditions for voluntary returnees. The Wali of North Darfur State and the IDPs also informed the PSC Delegation about a recent visit to Darfur by the Minister of Internal Affairs in his capacity as the Chairperson of the Supreme National Committee for the protection of civilians. The intention of this visit was to identify the challenges facing Darfur and the IDPs so as to have them urgently addressed. Furthermore, the PSC Delegation was informed that some of the properties of UNAMID were already being handed over to the Government of Sudan for civilian use by surrounding communities. The Wali of North Darfur States said that, one of the closed UNAMID team sites had already been converted into a public hospital, which was also confirmed by UNAMID.

20. IDPs stressed the need to feel the dividends of peace in their daily lives in terms of safety and security, as well as basic access to services. A particular concern was raised in relation to shortage of water resources exacerbated by the pull-out of the drillers availed by the exiting UNAMID mission. The PSC raised this concern with the leaderships of UNAMID and UNITAMS and was informed that these drillers were purchased by and transferred to UNMISS in South Sudan. This concern should be immediately and effectively addressed by the UN.

21. The Head of Sovereignty Council informed the PSC Delegation that Sudan is also hosting a number of refugees from Ethiopia.

F. The exit of UNAMID and establishment of UNITAMS

22. The UNAMID mandate came to an end on 31 December 2020, and the mission was given six months to withdraw its personnel and equipment, as well as disposing UNAMID assets and sites. This means by the end of June 2021, UNAMID will be completely closed down.

23. During the consultations with the Government officials, the PSC Delegation was informed that UNAMID had done a tremendous job in the search of peace in Darfur, and that the Transitional Government and UNAMID are in close collaboration with regard to the winding up of the Mission. The PSC Delegation was informed that the Transitional Government is ready to take over from UNAMID the principle responsibility of protection of civilians, which has been a major concern of the international community.

24. UNAMID informed the PSC Delegation that it is in its final stage of winding up and out of 14 team sites, 8 are yet to be closed, but they are optimistic that by June 2021, all team sites will be closed down. UNAMID is currently repatriating troops and civilian staff from the team sites which have been closed down back to their home countries, adding that, all its assets will be disposed in line with the UN rules and regulations and some might be shipped to other missions in other countries like Somalia, South Sudan and Central African Republic. But other assets might be transferred to the new mission, UNITAMS. Furthermore, contingency owned equipment will be shipped back to the troop and police contributing countries.

25. The PSC Delegation was further informed that UNAMID is working closely with UNITAMS to facilitate a smooth transition while ensuring that UNITAMS continues with the implementation of some activities which were being implemented by UNAMID, which are in the mandate of UNITAMS. The PSC Delegation appreciated the work done by the UNAMID and appealed for taking stock of the 13 years of UNAMID for purposes of documenting lessons learnt and to share such documentation once finalized.

26. In response to the question on the establishment of the UNITAMS and its cooperation with the Transitional Government and the AU, the PSC Delegation was informed by the Government officials that UNITAMS was established in response to the request of Sudan to the UN. The Delegation was also informed that UNITAMS is a technical mission which will provide support to Sudan during the transition period and it will have about 250 staff without any military component. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for UNITAMS informed the PSC Delegation that UNITAMS is yet to develop a vision for possible areas of cooperation with AU. However, he assured the PSC Delegation that the UN Office to the African Union, would certainly continue to collaborate with the AU adding that the UN is open for any constructive engagement or idea on how the AU and UN can jointly support the transition in Sudan.

G. Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)

27. During the mission, the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) was mentioned by different interlocutors who engaged with the PSC delegation, including by the most senior officials of the Sudan. The Government officials raised their concern that Ethiopia, in

2020, unilaterally, filled the dam and afterwards released the water from the dam, without notifying or coordinating with the parties concerned and thus negatively and severely affected the Sudanese communities along the Nile river, adding that, when Ethiopia unilaterally filled the GERD, Sudan suffered an artificial drought and when the dam was re-opened, it caused increased floods downstream in Sudan. This affected Sudan, especially the overall water supply and the farmers who heavily depend on the Nile River. The Sudanese officials expressed their deep concern towards the Ethiopian announcement of proceeding with the second round of filling of the Dam.

28. The representatives of the Government of Sudan assured the PSC Delegation that they support African solutions to African problems with regard to the mediation process of the GERD and with the genuine desire to arrive at a win-win solution that prevents significant harm on Sudan and Egypt. They emphasized that the Sudanese proposal to involve the EU, US and UN in a format of 1+3, under the full leadership of the AU, is aiming at supporting the mediation process, and empowering it with legal and technical expertise to produce the desired outcomes. The Prime Minister emphasized the need to work together to resolve the challenges facing the utilization of the River Nile, with a view to create a win-win decision for all the riparian countries concerned.

29. The PSC Delegation informed that the AU contribution on this subject matter is under the supervision of the Chairperson of the AU, H.E. the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, with the support of the Chairperson of the Commission. The PSC Delegation emphasized that the AU-led process will allow for a consensual agreement that corresponds to the needs and concerns of the different parties.

H. Sudan/Ethiopia border crisis

30. The PSC Delegation was informed that Sudan is facing a crisis at its eastern border with Ethiopia. Sudan said that there are Ethiopian farmers who are violating the Sudanese border and illegally residing and conducting economic activities on its territories in addition to their frequent armed attacks on local communities and the Sudanese Armed Forces. Sudan informed the PSC Delegation that it had lengthy engaged with Ethiopia and intended to resolve the issue peaceful and in an amicable manner, however due to lack of progress including on borders' demarcation it had to take effective measures to assert its sovereignty on its national territories. The Sudanese leadership informed the PSC Delegation that Sudan would like to see the involvement of the AU, through its Border Programme, on this matter for an amicable African solution. Partners who had interaction with the PSC Delegation, appealed to the PSC that even though the issue of border is not yet in the PSC agenda, it is important to address it, as soon as possible, to prevent its escalation which might cause more damage to the region.

31. The Sudanese leadership also explained the recent impact of the situation in Tigray Regional State in Ethiopia on Sudan including in relation to the influx of close to 70,000 refugees to Eastern Sudan. It also explained the measures it has undertaken to secure its borders with Tigray and prevent the illicit transfer of arms and fighters.

I. Transitional Justice

32. The PSC Delegation was informed that one of the priorities of the second transition period of Sudan is to address the issues of transitional justice, as well as the organization of the conference for drafting the new constitution and ensuring the people's right to vote, and to address issues of justice and accountability. The Prime Minister said that Sudan would like to go through the truth and reconciliation process with the support of the UN and to learn from the experiences of other African countries such as Rwanda and South Africa. This was also mentioned by the IDPs who stressed the importance of drawing lessons from the rich experiences of Rwanda and South Africa, while bearing in mind the uniqueness of the Sudan situation.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

33. In view of the detailed first-hand information gathered during the field mission, Council may wish to consider the following:

- a) Reiterate AU solidarity with the people and Government of Sudan in their efforts to overcome the multifaceted challenges facing their country, as well as to reiterate the unwavering commitment of the AU to continue to support them in addressing those challenges;
- b) Express AU commitment and support to the Transitional Government of Sudan in implementing its peace agreements and the five priorities of the Transitional Government;
- c) Commend the Transitional Government of Sudan for the progress made, thus far, in the implementation of the Constitutional Declaration of 2018, particularly the signing the Juba peace Agreement of 2020; the formation of the new Transitional Government that includes the opposition and the armed groups; the removal of Sudan from the list of States Sponsors of Terrorism and improved relations with international community; and the recent signing of the 'Declaration of Principles' with SPLM-N Abdel Aziz El Helu;
- d) Commend the cooperation and collaboration between the Sovereign Council and the Transitional Government and encourage them to further strengthen this unique cooperation in addressing all challenges facing their country. Also commend the establishment of a Partnership Council which brings together the governing parties to address the different challenges through dialogue and consensus and urge them to continue for the sustenance of the transition towards durable democracy;
- e) Take note with appreciation the progress made in addressing security challenges in Sudan, particularly in Darfur and appeal to the Government to ensure that civilians are protected and security forces are deployed in those areas to ensure security;
- f) Express deep concern over the non-signing of the Peace Agreement by the Abdul Wahid movement and condemn its presence in the IDP camps which threatens the security of IDPs.

In this regard, condemn of the behavior of the Abdul Wahid movement and urge it to place the supreme interests of the country and the people of Sudan above all else, and join the national peace process without any pre-conditions;

- g) Also express deep concern about instances of killings, abductions and sexual violence against women and children in the IDP camps and appeal to the Government to increase security measures in their camps to protect IDPs and to provide conducive conditions to those IDPs and refugees who are willing to voluntarily return to their home lands;
- h) Applaud the Government of Sudan for addressing the economic situation which hampered the development of Sudan and encourage them to place premium focus on the national economic revival; request the Chairperson of the Commission to engage with the Government of Sudan to provide support in this regard;
- i) Welcome the readiness of the Transitional Government to address the issues of transitional justice, including accountability for previous gross violations of human rights, through a truth and reconciliation process. In this regard appeal to African countries which have experiences such as Rwanda and South and the UN to provide the required support to Sudan;
- j) Appreciate the support of the international community to Sudan on its economic reform and looks forward for the Paris High Level Meeting to take place on 17 May 2021, which will contribute in addressing the economic situation in Sudan, including the issue of debt relief, while encouraging international partners to avail sustained and additional support for the purpose of economic recovery;
- k) Commend UNAMID for its selfless contribution to the search for lasting peace in Sudan and Darfur in particular with close cooperation with the Government of Sudan and pay tribute to the Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) of UNAMID for their ultimate sacrifices in pursuit for a peaceful and secured Darfur;
- l) Appreciate the efforts made by the Transitional Government and the United Nations on the set up of the UNITAMS and welcome the UNITAMS establishment under Chapter VI, with a view to assist Sudan during the transitional period in a manner that reflects Sudanese priorities and national ownership and assure the Transitional Government of the AU's continued commitment to supporting the transitional process including through working with UNITAMS and Friends of Sudan.
- m) Take note of the request of the Government of Sudan for support on the organization of constitutional conference and organizations of elections and request the Chairperson of the Commission to engage with the Government of Sudan to provide the necessary support as part of a comprehensive needs assessment in the area of post conflict reconstruction and development as previously mandated by PSC;

- n) Encourage the Transitional Government to continue with its policy of women and youth inclusion in the peace process in the country in order to address their concerns and to have more inclusive peace process;
- o) Express deep concern over the living conditions of the IDPs in the camps in Darfur and appeal to the Transitional Government and the international community to ensure that IDPs basic needs are provided, including food, water, health facilities and schools, among other;
- p) Commend Sudan also for hosting a number of refugees including from Ethiopia and also commend Chad for hosting refugees from Sudan and encourage the international community to continue providing support, particularly basic needs for the refugees;
- q) Reiterate its request to the AU Commission to undertake a technical needs assessment mission to Sudan with a view to engage the Transitional Government to identify areas, particularly those on post-conflict reconstruction and development, in which the AU Commission can provide support to Sudan;
- r) Call on Sudan and South Sudan to continue extending their cooperation to the African Union High Level Panel towards finding solution to the outstanding issues, including to resolve the status of Abyei Area;
- s) Encourage the Chairperson of the Commission to continue providing assistance to the Chairperson of the AU in addressing the issue of the GERD, and on the other hand to exert efforts aimed at deescalating the border tension between Sudan and Ethiopia, being two external challenges that have significant bearing on the transitional process in Sudan;
- t) Express gratitude to the Sudanese authorities for finding time to interact with the PSC Delegation during the field mission, as well as to all interlocutors, namely, African Group of Ambassadors, Permanent Members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States of America), European Union (EU) and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for UNITAMS, as well as UNAMID, and the representatives of the AbuShouk IDP camp;
- u) Express particular gratitude to the AU Liaison Office in Khartoum for facilitating the successful conduct of the field mission and commend the efforts of the Liaison Office in effectively promoting the visibility of the AU on the ground; and request the Chairperson of the Commission to take necessary measures to ensure that the Office is availed with all necessary human, material and financial resources, in order to enable it to more effectively discharge its mandate.