

**A3+1 Statement delivered by
Ambassador Jerry Matjila
Permanent Representative of South Africa to the UN
During the Security Council VTC meeting on the
Transition of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
(UNAMID)**

24 April 2020

Mr President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the A3+1 member states of the Council namely Niger, Tunisia, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr President,

I would like to thank you for convening this timely meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on UNAMID's continued activities for the maintenance of peace in Darfur. We commend the efforts of the United Nations working jointly with the African Union over the past 12 years.

I would also like to thank our briefers today, Ms DiCarlo and Mr Lacroix for their comprehensive briefings, and also thank them for the continued collaboration with Commissioner of PSC of the AU Mr I Chergui and the AU Commission.

The collaboration and cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations has contributed immensely to the stabilization of the security situation in Darfur, thus resulting in our consideration of the withdrawal of UNAMID and subsequent transformation of the peacekeeping Mission into a political and peacebuilding support Mission despite the fact that Darfur continues to face residual protection challenges.

At the onset, we would like to express our full support to the current transitional process in Sudan including the role of Prime Minister Hamdok. We wish to also express our strongest condemnation of the attack on Prime Minister Hamdok in Sudan, on 9 March 2020. Attacks of this nature highlight continued risks that could considerably undermine the existing momentum towards restoring stability, development and prosperity in Sudan.

Mr President,

We have entered a critical juncture with regards to UNAMID and it is vital that we safeguard the gains that have been made in the past decade, whilst also continuing to place the needs of the Sudanese civilians at the forefront. The current environment and challenges presented by the COVID-19 requires us to adopt a pragmatic and contextualized approach to any further reconfiguration of UNAMID. The pandemic has significantly affected the Sudan Peace Talks in Juba as well as the operations of UNAMID.

In this respect, we reiterate the call made by the African Union Peace and Security Council that the Government of Sudan, working in collaboration with the AU and the UN, to agree on a comprehensive UNAMID withdrawal roadmap to ensure that the process is carefully managed and sequenced, conditions based, and aligned with the priorities and timelines of the Government of Sudan, in order to safeguard the gains registered to date and to maintain the current momentum in the Darfur peace process.

We would like to raise the following key issues.

1. Political Transition

On the political transition, we support the transition in Sudan under the leadership of Prime Minister Hamdok and call on all stakeholders to continue working for the success and respect of the transition period through the implementation of the provisions of the civilian-military transition agreement signed in Doha in July 2019, which should lead to the establishment of a democratically elected civilian government.

Moreover, we urge all parties to continue to be steadfast in their engagement in the Sudan Peace Talks in Juba, and to find resolve through continued political dialogue. Furthermore, we urge SLA leader Abdel Wahid El Nur to join the Juba talks, to ensure an inclusive process and success to the political dialogue. Only through an inclusion of Darfur and its relevant actors, will we have the baseline for sustainable and comprehensive peace and a real opportunity to address prevailing security and protection threats and risks, especially in the Greater Jebel Marra area.

We also applaud the efforts by South Sudan in facilitating the ongoing peace talks and encourage its leaders to continue their constructive role in mediating the process.

2. Economic Situation

On the economic situation, we recognise the economic and dire financial situation that the country continues to grapple with. This situation risks- collapsing good progress that has been registered in the political front. We thus reiterate the call made by the African Union Peace and Security Council for the lifting of all forms of sanctions imposed against Sudan, including the delisting as a State sponsor of terrorism, in order to boost the current momentum of the transitional process and to create conducive conditions for economic recovery, growth and stability in the country. In this regard, we urge the international community and financial institutions to assist in addressing these challenges, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the economic situation for Sudan and neighboring countries.

3. Security Situation

On the security situation, we remain concerned about the challenges that continue in Jebel Marra, but also other hotspot areas such as Kalma, and more recently Geneina that displaced over 50,000 people within and outside Sudan. We are particularly concerned regarding the status of and security threats faced by particularly the status of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) as well as inter communal violence, as highlighted in the Secretary General's Report.

Additionally, we are disturbed by the reported grave violations against groups made most vulnerable, including women and children. We welcome the signing of the Framework of Cooperation to Prevent and Respond to Conflict-related Sexual Violence between the Government of Sudan and the United Nations, in response to the high levels of violence against women, girls and boys in IDP camps, in particular, the use of rape at increasingly high levels in the fight against pastoralists and farmers for land in Darfur. We renew our call to strengthening institutions, guaranteeing the safety of the most vulnerable groups and prosecuting the perpetrators.

4. Humanitarian Situation

We are also concerned about the deteriorating **humanitarian situation** prevailing in Darfur. This grave situation is driven by a number of factors, including the hazards of Climate Change, such as flooding and drought, as well as intercommunal conflicts. These factors cause internal and external displacement, and serve to exacerbate and already challenging situation, especially at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge the Mission and other UN agencies working on the ground to coordinate their actions to support the government in containing and minimizing the impact of the disease in Darfur, as well as continuing to combat the desert locusts which constitute a real threat to Sudan's food security.

5. Withdrawal and Post UNAMID Mechanisms

On the drawdown and the post UNAMID mechanism, we are pleased that the government of Sudan has highlighted the needs on the ground, and support Prime Minister Hamdok's call for a UN Chapter 6 Mission post UNAMID's withdrawal. It is thus imperative that a follow-up Mission is fully aligned to the priorities and objectives of the government, to ensure a meaningful impact by the international and regional communities.

Moreover, as noted by Prime Minister Hamdok in his letter as well as the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission in their report, the role of the African Union should continue, in the transition period. Thus, there remains a need to ensure that the AU and the UN build on their excellent collaboration and continue working in unison.

As we deliberate a post UNAMID Mission, and given the current uncertain times due to the pandemic, there are some key questions we would like to raise:

- I. Given the impact of COVID-19 and the halt in operations of UNAMID as well as the impact of the rainy season, what is the feasibility of extending the deadline of UNAMID given the changed circumstances? Is the exit of UNAMID viable at this stage?
- II. Should the UN consider maintaining a police presence in Darfur; if the security situation deteriorates in Darfur, to what extent would the UN have the requisite capacity to respond? Would these limited police presence be creating false expectations and potentially undermine the UN's credibility if there is a weakened presence?

- III. Does the security situation, particularly in terms of the protection of civilian mandate, in the entire Darfur merit the total withdrawal of UNAMID by October 2020?
- IV. Given the broader political developments in Sudan, that require international support to ensure stability of the country, especially its recovery and economic development, should the new UN mission not specifically focus on political and peace building only, with the support of AU and IGAD?

Lastly Mr. President, we would like to express our gratitude to UNAMID through the invaluable efforts of the Joint Special Representative, Mr JK Mamabolo of the United Nations and the African Union and his team and urge them to continue to spare no effort until lasting peace is restored in the Darfur region.

Our continued engagement and collective support will be key in supporting the trajectory towards peace and stability in Sudan. Most importantly, Sudan's stability is critical to an already fragile region.

Furthermore, we recognize the key role played by Sudan in the political developments in South Sudan despite their own significant challenges. The A3+1 agrees with Prime Minister Hamdok that the overall security and protection of Sudanese is the responsibility of Sudan's government and its institutions.

The A3+1 equally agrees that the entire UN system in general, and the Security Council in particular, has immense responsibility in accompanying and ensuring that the Multi-Stakeholder Transitional Government in Sudan succeeds as it leads its people towards a hopeful future of a peaceful, unified, democratic, open and freer society.

Niger, Tunisia, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thank you.