

Statement delivered on behalf of the A3+1 by

Deputy permanent Representative of Tunisia Ali Cherif

**Security Council briefing on the
UN Interim Security Force for Abyei**

Sudan and South Sudan

New York, 27 October 2021

Mr President,

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

I thank the former President of South Africa and Chair of AU High-Level Implementation Panel, H.E Thabo Mbeki; Under-Secretary General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga for their comprehensive briefings. I also welcome the Representative of the Sudan to this meeting.

The A3+1 would like to begin by paying tribute to the UNISFA peacekeeper who lost his life on 14 September in Gok Machar pending medical evacuation.

This tragic loss highlights not only the often-non-permissive environment within which UNISFA operates, but also the continued relevance of its mandate, including its support for the Joint Border Verification and monitoring mechanism (JBVMM), in ensuring stability in the Abyei Area and along the Sudan-South Sudan border.

The African Union along with its High-level Implementation Panel remain engaged with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, as they further their political and economic ties, in order to promote a lasting resolution of the Abyei's final status and bring the region and its people on a resolute trajectory of comprehensive peace and sustainable development.

In this connection, we commend the Sudan and South Sudan for their willingness to inject a fresh impetus into the Abyei peace process, through the appointment in recent months of their respective national committees on the final status of Abyei.

Mr. President,

The increasing rapprochement between the Sudan and South Sudan, while commendable, has yet to be matched with perennial stability in the Abyei Area and along the border.

The A3+1 reiterates its concern at the growing communal tensions registered during the reporting period, which culminated with the forced relocation of UNISFA personnel and equipment from JBVMM team site 11 in Kiir Adem and team site 12 in War Abar and, subsequently, from JBVMM Sector 1 Headquarters in Gok Machar, amid threats to peacekeepers' lives and UN property.

We stress the critical importance that UNISFA and its component in support of the JBVMM be able to fully perform their security and protection tasks, unimpeded, undeterred; while safeguarding their safety, well-being and freedom of movement particularly in line with relevant security council resolutions.

Furthermore, we recall the Outcome document of the “Joint Political and Security Mechanism” meeting held from 8 to 09 September 2021 in Juba on the issue. We urge, in this respect, for consistent lever by the Government of South Sudan in sensitising and engaging the local government and community towards restraint, return to calm, and respect for the mandates of UNISFA/JBVMM in their areas of responsibility.

We further call on the Sudan and South Sudan to convene future meetings of the JPSM to iron out difficulties, facilitate the mandate of JBVMM and its re-deployment where appropriate, as well as to foster conditions enabling progress on the border demarcation process.

Mr. President,

I now turn to the developments in Abyei as set out in the Secretary-General’s report, alongside additional aspects on the UNISFA’s mandate going forward, pursuant to relevant security council resolutions.

In spite of persistent tensions along communal lines- owing also to economic mobility and livelihood motives, the A3+1 commends the encouraging prospects for peace, peacebuilding and trust-building processes- that are specially sensitive to the Abyei local, traditional and inter-communal realities.

In this connection, we express our appreciation for the steady engagement of the UN vis-à-vis local and traditional leaders and key communities, that enabled a consultative process to commence this month with a view to reaching a joint peace agreement in the sooner future.

We also appreciate UNISFA’s efforts aimed at advocating and empowering women participation in the civic space which is critical to promoting inclusive and lasting peace, local governance and decision-making, as well as gender issues.

On the humanitarian front, we note that significant challenges, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and economic stress, continue to impact daily lives of populations in the Area- particularly the most vulnerable- especially with respect to the access to basic needs and services.

We stress the importance of enhancing humanitarian assistance as well as recovery and resilience programmes for people and communities throughout the Area, and tailoring interventions in accordance with a needs-based, vulnerability-based, promotion-of-livelihoods approach.

Finally, revitalizing joint implementation mechanisms in Abyei remains a mutually agreed task that has yet to be fully materialised. We emphasise that progress in the establishment of joint governance institutions including police, and the courts would have a direct and positive impact on the reigning of the rule of law in the Area.

In this regard, we look forward to the re-energizing of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meetings and to the support of the AU high-level implementation panel towards this end.

Further, we stress the importance of organizing and appropriately endowing UNISFA's capacity, particularly as it relates to the law-and-order tasks, in light of the growing populations and economic activity in the main areas. It is of equal necessity that UNISFA relies on a reasonably stable environment on the way towards its re-design in the coming period.

Finally, on the way forward for the UN presence in Abyei and UNISFA's strategic review, the A3+1 would like to endorse the recommendation of the UN Secretary General in his report on the extension of UNISFA's mandate and its support to the JBVMM for a further period of six months.

I thank you.