

AFRICAN UNION

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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 673rd MEETING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
29 MARCH 2017

PSC/PR/COMM.(DCLXII)

COMMUNIQUE

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 673rd meeting held on 29 March 2017, which was the continuation of its discussion of 24 February 2017, adopted the following decision on the situation in Darfur and the activities of the AU-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID):

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the statement made by Ambassador Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security, and the briefings provided by Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo, Acting Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator (AJSR/JCM) for UNAMID and the Force Commander Lt. Gen. Frank Mushyo Kamanzi. Council **also takes note** of the statements made by the representatives of the Government of Sudan, and Ethiopia, in its capacity as the Chair of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD);
2. **Recalls** its previous communiqués and press statements on the situation in Darfur, including communiqués [PSC/PR/COMM. (CDXXV)], [PSC/PR/COMM. (CDXLVI)], [PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLVI)], [PSC/PR/COMM.(DXVI)] and [PSC/PR/COMM.(DCV)] adopted at its 425th, 446th, 456th 516th and 605 meetings, held on 24 March 2014, 9 July 2014, 12 September 2014 and 22 June 2015, and 13 June 2016, respectively;
3. **Reiterates its appreciation** to the UNAMID leadership, in particular the Acting Joint Special Representative, the Force Commander and the Police Commissioner, as well as the Mission's personnel, for their dedication and contribution to the promotion of peace, security, stability and reconciliation in Darfur. Council **also pays tribute** to the former JSR/JCM for UNAMID, Ambassador Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoihi for his tireless efforts in leading the UNAMID mission in pursuit of peace and security in Darfur. Council **notes with appreciation** the continued efforts made in the implementation of UNAMID's mandate particularly with respect to the protection of civilians;
4. **Recognizes** that the security situation in Darfur has commendably improved, thus bringing the urgent necessity to undertake assessment on the ground and to review UNAMID deployment in the context of the improved environment in Darfur. Council **Commends** the Government of Sudan for enhanced working relations with UNAMID and in improving and alleviating logistical constraints including, inter alia, the issuance of visas, the issue of access to affected areas, as well as allowing UNAMID equipment and food rations into the country, given that these are essential for the operation of the Mission. Council, **urges** the Government of Sudan to expedite the processing of the pending UNAMID shipments from Port Sudan;
5. **Welcomes** the easing of sanctions imposed against Sudan by the United States (US) Government, in January 2017, a move which helps to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable citizens of the Sudan and boosts the country's economy. In this regard, Council **urges** the Government of the Sudan to continue to implement the conditions set out by the US, which would result in the total lifting of the sanctions;
6. **Further welcomes** the unilateral extension of the six months ceasefire announced in January

2017, by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Council therefore **calls** on all armed movements to also declare and maintain a ceasefire, while a peaceful solution is being pursued with the assistance of the African Union High Level Panel for Sudan and South Sudan (AUHIP) and UNAMID. Council **also welcomes** reports that there has been considerable reduction in armed confrontation in Darfur between the Government forces and the armed movements as well as fewer inter-communal conflicts in the previous year, while equally noting that the security situation remains rather unpredictable;

7. **Urges** the Strategic Tripartite Mechanism to urgently convene a meeting to address the strategic issues affecting UNAMID, particularly as it relates to the exit strategy and **reiterates its appeal** to the Mechanism to continue working in a collegial spirit towards addressing this pertinent issue. At the same time, Council **commends** the Government of Sudan for supporting the deployment of a Joint Strategic Review Mission of the AU and the UN, undertaken from 5 to 17 March 2017. Council **looks forward** to the final report of the Joint Strategic Review Mission, as well as the outcomes of the planned Tripartite Meeting during the month of May 2017, whose outcomes would be presented to the PSC and the UN Security Council to facilitate determination of the next steps on the UNAMID exit strategy;

8. **Notes with concern** the figures of people in need of humanitarian assistance. Council thus **calls** for the Government of Sudan to ease its access restrictions to allow humanitarian assistance to reach people in need in Darfur. Council **appeals** to the AU Member States and the larger international community to continue to provide the much-needed support, with a view to alleviating the dire situation faced by the vulnerable and affected populations in Darfur. Council **calls further** for the provision of an environment conducive for the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees to their areas of origin or any other agreed settlements;

9. **Expresses** concern over the proliferation of illegal small arms and weapons amongst armed groups and the population in Darfur and **welcomes** the efforts of the Government towards the disarmament process to remove illegally held small arms and weapons in Darfur, and **calls** on UNAMID and international partners to support the process;

10. **Appeals** to all the parties to the conflict to cease all acts of violence in Darfur and to recommit themselves to the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the region. In this respect, Council **calls** on the Government of Sudan and the armed movements that remain out of the peace process to commit to direct political talks on cessation of hostilities. Council **reiterates its full support** to the AUHIP for its efforts to facilitate a cessation of hostilities between the Government of Sudan and the Darfur armed movements. In this context, Council **commends** the efforts of the AUHIP and the JSR/JCM to facilitate negotiations between the Government of Sudan and the Darfur armed movements to end all violent conflicts in Sudan;

11. **Regrets** that no progress has been made on the implementation of the Roadmap Agreement of March 2016 facilitated by the AUHIP particularly the negotiations to conclude a cessation of hostilities between the Government of Sudan and the Darfur armed movements. Council **encourages** the AUHIP to pursue its efforts to ensure the early resumption of the negotiations between the parties on the basis of the Roadmap Agreement. Council **deplores** the continued refusal by the Sudan Liberation

Movement/Army-Wahid (SLM/A-Wahid) to join the mediation process in order to give impetus to the peace process. Council **urges** the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), to conclude discussions relating to humanitarian access in the two areas of Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan in order to alleviate the suffering of citizens and create a conducive environment for the implementation of the Roadmap Agreement;

12. **Commends** President al-Bashir for issuing a decree on 8 March 2017 pardoning 259 armed movement personnel who were captured fighting government forces, including 66 fighters who had been sentenced to death. Council **notes with appreciation** that such magnanimous endeavours by the Government will help in building confidence and trust within all movements and facilitate improved engagement to end the conflict in Sudan;

13. Recalling the invitations from the Government of Sudan, as well as from UNAMID, Council **decides** to undertake a mission to Darfur, as soon as possible;

14. **Requests** the AU Commission to undertake post conflict reconstruction and development assessment mission to Darfur, in order to determine what areas of assistance could be offered to the Darfur region to avoid relapse into conflict;

15. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.