

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

H.E. Ms Karen Van Vlierberge, Ambassador,
Deputy Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the United Nations

**UNISFA Debate
at the Security Council**

New York, 30/04/2019

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga, for their informative presentations.

We are aware of the political situation in Sudan, and the Abyei issue cannot be isolated from this. Belgium continues to monitor developments very closely. We encourage the parties to continue the dialogue to find a solution that restores power to a civilian-led transitional political authority, in accordance with the will of the people of Sudan.

We welcome the fact that the security situation in the Abyei area has remained relatively calm. However, it remains tense and unpredictable, due to the remaining political, humanitarian and economic challenges. The situation can deteriorate rapidly and, in such an event, have unacceptable consequences for civilians. We therefore fully agree with the Secretary-General that the continued presence of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) remains crucial.

I would like to highlight two points: (1) the need for a political solution, and (2) the role of UNISFA in this respect;

Mr President,

1.

The Council has a long-standing commitment to peace and security in the Abyei region and must continue to play a role in preventing violence. Stability in the region remains our main objective. The main responsibility for the implementation of the 2011 and 2012 agreements lies with the Governments of both countries. However, it must be noted that no progress has been made in fulfilling the commitments agreed by the parties last November. Nevertheless, increasingly bellicose political statements noted by UNISFA underline the necessity and urgency of revitalising the dialogue. The Security Council must encourage the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to quickly establish joint mechanisms, make progress on border demarcation and, in the longer term, develop a political solution that will allow the final status of the Abyei area and other border disputes to be resolved. We

call on the African Union High-Level Panel led by President Mbeki and the AU Commission to revitalise their support for political dialogue between the parties.

2.

Mr President,

As the name of the mission indicates, UNISFA was established as an interim security force in 2011. The environment in which it operates has since changed. In two weeks, the Council will have to renew the mission's mandate and adapt it to the situation. A lasting political solution is needed for Abyei. This Council must ensure that the dispute between Sudan and South Sudan over Abyei and the border region does not become another frozen conflict. We support the Secretary-General's recommendations, in particular the proposal to strengthen the civilian component of the mission, with a view to facilitating the revitalisation of the political process in order to develop a possible exit strategy.

The Council should also consider how to adapt the military and police components of the mission to provide an effective response to the challenge of rising crime in the region, in the absence of national security forces. We call on the parties to facilitate the mission's operations, including the issuing of visas.

Mr President, I would like to conclude by reiterating that there is no alternative to dialogue for resolving the Abyei issue. The presence of UNISFA remains crucial for the region's stability, but it cannot replace the role of the State. Only a political settlement can address the causes of the conflict and ensure long-term stability in both Sudan and South Sudan. The Council must therefore ensure that the mission has the resources it needs to support the achievement of this overarching objective.

Thank you, Mr President.