



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

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**Briefing on Sudan/UNITAMS
UN Security Council**

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Mr President,

Thank you to the Under-Secretaries-General Ms DiCarlo and Mr Lacroix for their presentations. I will focus on three aspects: the protection of the most vulnerable, progress in the peace process and transition.

The establishment of a new mission is an important moment. The aim is to translate the decision taken by this Council into action on the ground, in order to achieve UNITAMS' objective to support the political transition and help the Sudan regain peace and security, with particular attention to Darfur and the Two Areas. Without wishing to go back over the entirety of the Mission's expected tasks, Belgium wants to reiterate the importance of support for protecting civilians and strengthening respect for human rights. We are outraged by the persistence of grave violations against children in the Sudan, in particular the frequency of sexual assaults, mutilations and killings. These violations are committed by all parties to the conflict. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, under the Belgian Presidency, is currently discussing this reality. We welcome the efforts of the Sudanese Government to incorporate the issue of children into its national plan for the protection of civilians. The amendments to the penal code, adopted in July, are also an encouraging sign; they improve the protection of vulnerable population groups, including children. These concerns should be considered in a balanced manner in UNITAMS' planning, including sufficient capacities dedicated to child protection.

Mr President,

The peace process in the Sudan has made significant progress in recent weeks, with agreements in Juba and Addis Ababa. Belgium calls on the parties to continue their commitment through constructive dialogue and to implement the agreements quickly once these are reached. We encourage

the groups that have been absent to return to the negotiating table: this is essential for lasting peace. Belgium is pleased that the talks do not sidestep difficult issues such as the return of displaced persons, land ownership and transitional justice. These elements are vital for laying the foundations for reconciliation between communities and their need is demonstrated by the current persistence of conflicts between these communities. Supporting reconciliation is one of UNITAMS' strategic priorities and we will closely monitor activities in this area. Since we are talking about justice, we have noted the intention of the Sudanese authorities to cooperate with the International Criminal Court, whose work we support. We also welcome the cooperative action of the authorities and UNAMID to defuse tensions in Darfur. Indeed, civilians there remain vulnerable to attack and we are concerned about the recent increase in violence in the region.

Mr President,

In addition to the peace process and restoring security in Darfur and the Two Areas, the Sudan is currently facing many challenges. The socio-economic situation is precarious and aggravated by the effects of the pandemic and major floods. There is a disproportionate impact on women, children and displaced persons. This situation may also be a source of political instability: it is a test for the maturity of the political class. We note with satisfaction the ambitious programme of political reforms undertaken by the transitional government and its commitment to improve the economic situation. UNITAMS, working with the country team, will partner the Sudan during this transition period. The Sudan can already count on the support of the international community, as demonstrated at the High-level Conference last June. Belgium, together with the European Union, stands by the Sudanese people.

Thank you.