



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

H.E. Marc Pecsteen, Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the United Nations

UNAMID debate and consultations at the Security Council

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Mr President,

Belgium would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his speech.

I will divide my statement into two parts: the first is dedicated to the general situation in Sudan, and the second to the impact of this situation on Darfur and on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Mr President,

We are shocked by the recent developments in Sudan. Since 3 June, the international community has witnessed deliberate attacks against a civilian population demonstrating peacefully. Belgium strongly condemns this violence, which has caused the death of more than 100 people and wounded many more, not to mention the cases of sexual violence.

The Transitional Military Council is responsible for the protection of civilians and the security of all Sudanese people. The members of this Council must respect the individual rights of the Sudanese people, including the freedom of assembly and expression, and must release all political detainees.

This unacceptable violence threatens the entire political process towards a civilian transition. Belgium welcomes the important AU decision of 6 June and calls on all Council members to respect the AU's ownership of the reaction to this crisis. Like the AU, Belgium calls for the immediate

resumption of negotiations, without preconditions, between all the Sudanese stakeholders, with a view to the creation of a civilian-led Transitional Authority, in strict compliance with the decisions of the Peace and Security Council. We also support this Council's call for an inquiry into the deadly events of 3 June. We support the efforts of the Envoy of the Secretary-General, the Special Envoy of the African Union and IGAD to help resolve the current crisis. In summary, a peaceful, orderly transition aimed at the transfer of political power to a civilian, democratic and representative authority, is the only lasting way out of the current crisis and a series of violent incidents before they become uncontrollable.

Mr President,

The situation in Darfur cannot be isolated from the situation in the rest of Sudan. There is a lot of evidence of this:

- a political process that has stalled since January;
- continuing human rights violations committed by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Darfur, including sexual violence;
- courts facing difficulties in operating due to the lack of clarity in Khartoum;
- and the unwieldy system of approvals and authorisations that hinders the delivery of humanitarian aid.

We are particularly concerned by the decree of the Transitional Military Council, which provides that all UNAMID bases must only be handed over to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), i.e. the same forces that are responsible for the violence in Khartoum and that, according to some reports, have burned down 62 villages in Jebel Marra since October 2018. How can we even consider handing UNAMID camps over to the very people who created the situation for which UNAMID was deployed in 2007? It is essential that the sites are handed over only to civilian end users, as is required by the AU Peace and Security Council communiqué of 13 June.

Darfur remains a fragile region, where the root causes of conflict, in particular access to land and the future of displaced people, have not been resolved.

The Council must therefore continue to closely monitor the situation and assess how developments in the rest of the country affect the UNAMID drawdown process, particularly in view of the renewal of the mandate

planned for this month. The current situation demands caution with regard to the UNAMID withdrawal schedule, taking into consideration circumstances on the ground. The exit benchmarks must be refined and clarified so that they can guide the withdrawal process.

Belgium calls on all Security Council members to put their differences aside and reach a unified vision and strategy concerning Darfur. The Council must take its time to consider all possible options. This is why we must envisage a *technical renewal lasting a few months*, so that we can better understand the implications of the developments on the ground and to give the region time to move towards a solution. The last thing we want is for Darfur to slip back into conflict once UNAMID has left.

Thank you, Mr President.