

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 30 December 2020 from the representatives of the Dominican Republic, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

Germany and the Dominican Republic, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, would like to share the summary note of the meeting of the Informal Expert Group on the situation in the Sudan (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* José **Singer Weisinger**  
Ambassador

Special Envoy of the Dominican Republic to the Security Council

*(Signed)* Christoph **Heusgen**  
Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations

*(Signed)* Barbara **Woodward**  
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland to the United Nations



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**Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council**

**Summary of the meeting on the situation in the Sudan, held on 14 December 2020**

On 14 December 2020, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in the Sudan. The members received a briefing from the Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Sudan and the Director of the Office of Support to the Political Transition and Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS). The briefings were followed by an overview of key recommendations, delivered by a representative of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and additional observations shared by a representative of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Members of the Security Council asked questions about obstacles to women's participation in the peace process, the commitment of the transitional Government of the Sudan to implementing the gender-related provisions of the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan, and measures to ensure greater participation by women in the upcoming elections and in the security sector. Many questions focused on the imminent drawdown of UNAMID and the consequences for the protection of civilians in Darfur, including protection from sexual and gender-based violence. Council members asked about the capacity of the transitional Government to assume full responsibility for the protection of civilians in Darfur and the capacity of the United Nations country team to take over the work of UNAMID with regard to women and peace and security. Council members also asked questions about initiatives to promote women's participation in economic recovery, together with measures to ensure that women had economic opportunities and access to land, property and financial resources. In addition, Council members asked why the transitional Government had not yet signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as it had previously announced that it would, and what the potential impact would be of clashes in neighbouring Ethiopia, including concerning the influx of refugees.

Below are the main points raised during the meeting:

- Only 10 per cent of the negotiators of the Juba Agreement were women and all the mediators were men. UNAMID had organized a consultative conference attended by 120 women from the five Darfur states to deliberate on and prepare a position paper, which was presented to the negotiating parties during the peace talks in Juba. The Juba Agreement has some gender-related provisions but also significant gaps that should not be replicated in the upcoming peace processes with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/North and the Sudan Liberation Movement. The United Nations supported a high-level dialogue for women activists, the transitional Government of the Sudan and signatories to the Juba Agreement, at which the peace negotiators committed themselves to supporting

the implementation of the gender-related provisions of the Agreement and to addressing identified gaps.

- Sudanese women who were on the front lines of the protests that led to the transition have expressed frustration about the fulfilment of their aspirations for full gender equality and the advancement of their rights in line with what was promised in the Constitutional Declaration. The Council of Partners for the Transitional Period consists of 28 men and only 1 woman, and there are only 2 women among the 18 interim governors. The Constitutional Declaration stipulates a 40 per cent quota for women's representation in the Transitional Legislative Council, but one year on from the adoption of the Constitutional Declaration, this body has still not been formed, and it is likely that the deadline of 31 December 2020 for its establishment will be deferred. That leaves the responsibility for delivering on key legislative milestones with the Sovereign Council. The establishment of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, another body provided for in the Constitutional Declaration, has also been delayed.
- A mapping exercise to promote women's participation in the Transitional Legislative Council and in the 2022 elections identified 1,070 women willing to represent their communities. These women have now been registered for future training and capacity development. The fact that women do not have an active role in political parties poses a major challenge to their participation in the elections. UNITAMS plans to strengthen women's participation in political parties and in the elections, including through capacity-building, technical advice and advocacy for legal reforms, such as the introduction of special temporary measures for women's participation as candidates and voters.
- The transitional Government has adopted a national action plan on women and peace and security, a first for the country, and has undertaken significant legal reforms concerning the protection of human rights and gender equality. The reforms include the revision of provisions of the Penal Code referring to "immodest attire", the introduction of life imprisonment for rape, the criminalization of female genital mutilation and cutting, and the elimination of the requirement that a guardian must give permission for mothers to travel with their children. The transitional Government has announced its intention to sign and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but this has not happened yet because of political obstacles. The transitional Government reportedly plans to accede to the treaty with two reservations, related to inheritance and testimony in courts.
- The national independent investigation committee established by the transitional Government to investigate the attacks against civilian protesters on 3 June 2019 is composed of nine men, but no women. Despite advocacy by women's organizations, the committee's work does not seem to cover allegations of sexual violence against women protesters and women medical personnel.
- In 2020, UNAMID documented 191 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, in 95 per cent of which women were the targets. Lockdown and confinement measures in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have made monitoring and reporting such cases more difficult. The transitional Government signed a framework of cooperation with the United Nations to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. The framework covers issues related to the broader political transition, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reforms and transitional justice, including the protection of survivors. Measures in response to the

COVID-19 pandemic have also led to an increase in domestic violence and had a negative impact on the implementation of sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response services, which were already in short supply. Many survivors have been left without legal, health and psychosocial services and remedies.

- Gender dimensions should be better reflected in the ongoing economic reforms. For example, the Sudan Family Support Programme, designed by the World Bank, should increase its focus on female-headed households in order to ease livelihood burdens and reduce protection risks for women and girls. UN-Women intends to deploy a gender adviser to the Ministry of Finance to enhance gender mainstreaming in economic and financial policies.
- More than 49,000 refugees have crossed the border from Ethiopia since November 2020. The United Nations country team and humanitarian actors are continuing joint efforts to assess the risks for the refugees of sexual exploitation and abuse and to set up prevention and response mechanisms for front-line actors in the refugee camps.
- Women in Darfur are concerned that the withdrawal of UNAMID will create a protection vacuum and that women will be left vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. They warn that the joint forces that are currently being deployed to Darfur do not have the capacity to protect them and fear that the deployment could even lead to an increase in misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse. The United Nations country team has asked all United Nations agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, to increase their footprint in Darfur. Furthermore, UNITAMS and the United Nations country team have begun developing a detailed transition plan to support the transitional Government of the Sudan in its protection of civilians and mitigate gaps that will be created as a result of the withdrawal of UNAMID, including by supporting the transitional Government's efforts to protect civilians under its national plan on the protection of civilians. Country experts are currently assessing the protection situation on the ground and there will be technical discussions with the transitional Government on how to address any potential protection gaps. A second focus area of the transition plan is to prioritize the development of a peacebuilding programme that includes continued support for women's protection networks, which have been an important early warning mechanism for sexual and gender-based violence and a channel through which survivors have access to information and support. The third focus area of the transition plan covers support for the ongoing peace process, including implementation of the Juba Agreement. Support for the Darfur Women's Platform will be crucial to achieving the gender-related provisions on women's participation at all levels of decision-making and authority, as stipulated in the protocol on Darfur of the Juba Agreement.
- UNITAMS will fully integrate gender dimensions into its support for nationally led peacebuilding and rule-of-law institutions, paying close attention to and supporting legal and policy frameworks on preventing sexual and gender-based violence, ending impunity for perpetrators and ensuring that women and girls have access to justice and that the law promotes a protective environment for women's political and economic participation. UNITAMS will have protection advisers specifically focused on women and children and they will work closely with the United Nations country team. As part of its facilitation of international support for economic reforms, the Mission will also press for effective resource allocation to promote gender equality and to allow Sudanese women to fully participate in the decision-making process for the design and implementation of economic recovery and development plans. The Mission is also committed to

supporting women's participation in gender budgeting. The Officer-in-Charge of UNITAMS has emphasized that the support of the Security Council and the Friends of Sudan group is critical in that regard. The Mission will set up regular consultations with Sudanese women's rights activists and civil society leaders, so that women can directly articulate their demands and expectations and provide guidance on the best approach for supporting the aspirations of Sudanese women and their country. UNITAMS is committed to ensuring that the information on challenges and progress provided by the women is included in the briefings to the Security Council. Furthermore, UNITAMS will have dedicated gender capacity in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as in the political team and in the field offices in El Fasher and Kadugli.

The following recommendations<sup>1</sup> were made either by UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, or by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Joint Special Representative for UNAMID, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Sudan or the Director of the Office of Support to the Political Transition and Officer-in-Charge of UNITAMS:

- Security Council members should ensure that all assistance provided to the transitional Government takes into account women and peace and security considerations and that dedicated funding is allocated for the implementation of the gender-related provisions of the Juba Agreement and the implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security
- The Co-Chairs and other Security Council members should encourage the transitional Government to ensure that the gender-related provisions of the Juba Agreement are included in the implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the Agreement, and promote women's meaningful participation in its implementation, including by strengthening the participation of Darfuri women in post-conflict decision-making structures at all levels and in upcoming elections
- The Co-Chairs and other Security Council members should engage in high-level direct political advocacy for women's political representation and participation in all transition processes and structures in the transitional Government, including advocacy for women's 40 per cent representation in the Transitional Legislative Council and for the establishment of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, as set out in the Constitutional Declaration
- The Security Council should ensure that adequate protection is provided to civilians in Darfur after the withdrawal of UNAMID, including the protection of women from sexual violence, and that services for vulnerable women are available at the local level
- The Security Council should ensure that women's organizations are actively involved and meaningfully consulted with in the implementation of any protection initiatives in the context of the withdrawal of UNAMID and the roll-out of UNITAMS
- Security Council members should encourage the transitional Government to reform the legal system and bring it into compliance with the milestones set out in the Constitutional Declaration and with international standards on women's

<sup>1</sup> These recommendations are suggestions made by United Nations participants in the meeting or in the background note prepared by the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group ahead of the meeting, and not recommendations by the Informal Expert Group as a whole or members of the Security Council.

rights, starting with the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the adoption of legislation on the protection of women from sexual violence and harassment

- Security Council members should encourage the development of laws and programmes on reparations for survivors of sexual violence, the strengthening of codes of conduct for security sector actors and improvements in the process for investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, including the protection of victims and witnesses
- Security Council members should encourage the transitional Government of the Sudan to include women in the national independent investigation committee established to investigate the events of 3 June 2019, and ensure that the Committee has the capacity to investigate any cases of sexual and gender-based violence reported in connection with those events
- Security Council members should encourage the transitional Government to ensure that economic reforms are responsive to women in all their diversity
- The Security Council should support and maintain the presence of gender advisers and women protection advisers in UNITAMS

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting, thanking the briefers for their participation and committing themselves to following up on the important issues raised at the meeting.

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