



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on Abyei

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 27 of Security Council resolution 2230 (2015), in which the Council requested me to continue to inform it of progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and to bring to its immediate attention any serious violations of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, of 20 June 2011 (S/2011/384, annex). It provides an update on the situation in Abyei and on the deployment and operations of UNISFA since the issuance of my previous report, of 16 June 2015 (S/2015/439), as well as on progress made in the implementation of the additional tasks mandated to UNISFA under Council resolution 2024 (2011) relating to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism.

II. Security situation

2. The overall security situation in the Abyei Area remained stable but unpredictable during the reporting period, with no major clashes between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. The Government of the Sudan continued to maintain between 120 and 150 oil police personnel inside the Diffra oil complex in northern Abyei, in violation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and multiple Security Council resolutions. In addition, the presence of small numbers of suspected armed personnel of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and armed Sudanese police personnel was observed, in contravention of the same Agreement and Council resolutions. UNISFA continued to implement its multifaceted conflict prevention and mitigation strategy aimed at preventing intercommunal clashes during the rainy season.

3. Reverse migration continued in most parts of the northern and central sectors of Abyei, with the Awlad Umran, Awlad Kamil and Mizaqina Misseriya subclans migrating northwards with their livestock and properties. The migration has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of Misseriya migrants present in the Abyei Area. During the year 2014-2015, approximately 12,980 Misseriya migrants entered the Abyei Area, and the remaining balance of about 3,300 migrants is mostly located in the vicinity of Diffra.



4. UNISFA facilitated 36 Joint Security Committee meetings with traditional and community leaders in the Abyei Area, conducted 3,752 day, night and special patrols and undertook 599 escorts. Company Operating Bases remained deployed in Dokura and Abyei in the central sector; Marial Achak, Athony, Banton, Tajalei and Agog in the southern sector; and Farouk, Diffra and Todach in the northern sector.

5. A number of violations of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 occurred during the reporting period. On 10 June 2015, UNISFA troops on patrol in the general area of Mabil heard gunfire originating from Dare, about 4 km away. On reaching the area, the patrol observed a group of armed men, suspected to be SPLA soldiers, who immediately fled upon sight of the patrol. While conducting a detailed search of the area, the patrol found one Dinka fatality.

6. On 10 August, UNISFA received information that four men had been killed and two injured in Shegeg, approximately 70 km east of Diffra. A patrol was launched to verify the information and, on reaching the Shegeg area, found one PG-7 anti-tank rocket, two small light vehicles and one damaged motorcycle. The rocket was taken into the temporary custody of UNISFA in the Diffra Company Operating Base, and an investigation into the incident is under way.

7. On 23 August, a UNISFA patrol observed excavation work being carried out with 20 excavators and four bulldozers in the general area between Kabdud and Mekines. Thirty-one armed Sudanese police personnel were also present in the area. On further enquiry, UNISFA was informed that the work was being conducted on instructions from the Government of the Sudan in order to fortify defences for the protection of the Diffra oil facility from armed groups. UNISFA requested that construction be stopped, but it continues, however. Further investigations are in progress.

8. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to clear, survey and dispose of explosive hazards throughout the Abyei Area, facilitating freedom of movement for United Nations personnel, humanitarian actors and local communities. The Service carried out non-technical surveys in various communities within Abyei, resulting in the removal of one anti-tank mine and 12 items of abandoned unexploded ordnance. During the period under review, one anti-tank mine, six mortars, two rocket-propelled grenades, one hand grenade, three rockets (various), one rocket motor, two mortar fuses and 22 rounds of small arms ammunitions were destroyed. The United Nations Mine Action Service also completed the construction of a weapons and ammunition management storage facility in Dokura. It contains weapons storage facilities and weapon-cutting shears.

9. Despite the total vacuum in law and order institutions, the crime rate in Abyei has fallen 11 per cent compared to the previous reporting period, with 62 criminal incidents reported, compared to a monthly average from January to June 2015 of 74 criminal incidents reported. Major criminal incidents during the reporting period include theft, assault, fraud and public disturbance.

10. On 9 July, UNISFA was informed by a trader from the Sudan about an attack on a caravan of traders in the general area of Shegeg, approximately 70 km east of Diffra. A patrol was launched from Diffra to investigate and, on reaching the scene of the incident, found two fatalities and three wounded men. The wounded were given first aid and later transported to Diffra Local Hospital for further treatment. They stated that they were traders from El Muglad, located 150 km north of the

Abyei Area, and had been travelling to Mayom, Unity State, South Sudan, to sell their merchandise. They claimed that on reaching the general area of Shegeg, they were ambushed and attacked by unknown assailants, who robbed them of their money and merchandise. The Mission is investigating this incident. The identity of the assailants could not be ascertained.

11. On 22 July, UNISFA observed seven suspected thieves siphoning fuel from a storage tank in an oilfield in the general area of Baloom. On seeing the UNISFA patrol, the thieves fled, leaving their motorcycles and other belongings behind. UNISFA pursued and managed to arrest one suspected thief, who was handed over to the local community in Diffra together with five motorcycles and four empty barrels of fuel. On 27 July, 10 intruders were caught by the UNISFA Quick Reaction Force while trying to enter the UNISFA Force Headquarters compound to commit a theft. The individuals were handed over to the Community Protection Committee.

12. Currently, 24 UNISFA police personnel are deployed at three team sites in the towns of Abyei, Agok and Diffra, conducting daily patrols jointly with the military for security observation and community interaction. The UNISFA police component continues to train UNISFA military personnel in crowd-control management and in countering sexual and gender-based violence. A new concept of operations for the UNISFA police component, which focuses on its support to strengthening the capacity of the community protection committees in accordance with Security Council resolution 2205 (2015), has been developed, and an operational manual is being prepared.

13. During the reporting period, 130 new members of the Community Protection Committee in Agok, southern sector, were provided with basic training by the UNISFA police on statement-taking, the role of the community protection committees in crime prevention, beat and mobile patrols in local communities, arrest and search of persons, crime scene management, human rights during detention, station records management and sexual and gender-based violence issues. The training has been conducted through co-location and on-the-job mentoring in the areas of criminal investigation and public order management. The members provided safety and crime prevention awareness campaigns to the population and managed law and order issues. UNISFA police also trained 36 females in the Abyei Area on promoting awareness of sexual and gender-based violence, including the importance of reporting incidents of such violence. Currently, UNISFA is engaging with Diffra community leaders and the Government of the Sudan on the establishment and operationalization of the Community Protection Committee.

III. Political developments

14. Following the postponement of the traditional leaders' dialogue meeting from the last week of April and then to the second week of May, the meeting was rescheduled for 20 to 23 June in Addis Ababa. It was again cancelled, however, owing to differences between South Sudanese officials concerning the participation of the Ngok Dinka delegation, despite President Salva Kiir having given his approval for the delegation to attend the meeting. Regardless of the cancellation, the Misseriya delegation arrived in Addis Ababa to demonstrate its commitment to the dialogue and await the arrival of the Ngok Dinka delegation. UNISFA and

participants from the African Union also travelled to Addis Ababa for the planned meeting.

15. Further to the cancellation of the traditional leaders' dialogue meeting, the Head of the UNISFA Mission visited Juba on 29 and 30 June for meetings with influential Ngok Dinka political leaders to ascertain the reasons behind the Ngok Dinka delegation's failure to attend the Addis Ababa meeting. During the discussions, some of them argued that the meeting had not been prepared properly, and that the requisite prior coordination among political leaders in Juba and in Abyei had not been adequately carried out.

16. An alternative date for the traditional leaders' dialogue meeting is yet to be set. However, both the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities acknowledge the importance of the meeting as an opportunity to make progress on peace and reconciliation. UNISFA will focus its efforts on exploring ways to further expedite grass-roots-level dialogue at the end of the rainy season in preparation for a larger reconciliation conference at a future date.

17. Following the cancellation of the traditional leaders' dialogue meeting, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union met on 31 July to discuss the Abyei situation. The Government of the Sudan reaffirmed its commitment to previously signed agreements and to cooperating with UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The representative of the Sudan noted his country's satisfaction with the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee as an effective mechanism, and reiterated the Sudan's commitment to the dialogue of traditional leaders. The representative, however, insisted in his remarks that construction work at Athony airport must not continue.

18. The representative of South Sudan expressed appreciation for the work of UNISFA, but rejected any discussion on matters concerning the joint administration of Abyei, claiming that in a summit meeting in November 2014 President Omar al-Bashir and President Salva Kiir had agreed to abolish the joint administration. The representative informed the Council that the South Sudanese delegation did not participate in the planned June traditional leaders' dialogue meeting because it had not been coordinated with the Government of South Sudan. He stated that the investigation report into the killing of the Paramount Chief should be released before any such meeting, and that there had been ongoing violence in Abyei in May, and therefore a meeting immediately afterwards in June would have been premature. He further reaffirmed the right of the people of Abyei to self-determination. He called on the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to assume its responsibility with regard to Abyei more seriously, including by taking measures to expedite agreements on the proposal to determine the final status of Abyei put forward by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on 21 September 2013.

IV. Humanitarian situation

19. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations continued to provide humanitarian and recovery assistance to some 88,000 internally displaced persons and returnees in central and southern areas of Abyei, including 6,840 people displaced from Unity State in South Sudan. Meanwhile, the delivery of humanitarian and recovery assistance was extended to

some 15,000 vulnerable agro-pastoralist Misseriyas and around 35,000 seasonal migrants in the northern areas of Abyei in the health, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, nutrition, and food security and livelihoods sectors. Planning for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need during the rainy season has been completed, and food rations have been pre-positioned in warehouses. Planning is under way to move from general food distribution to more recovery-oriented intervention through conditional support with food for assets projects throughout the Abyei Area.

20. Owing to the ongoing conflict in South Sudan, more displaced persons are expected in Abyei. Since early June 2015, around 1,000 conflict-affected displaced South Sudanese persons from Unity State used Diffra in the north of Abyei as a transit point before proceeding to their final destinations in the Sudan. As the influx of displaced populations continues, the humanitarian community has provided them with basic food and non-food assistance through a local partner on the ground during their stay.

21. Internally displaced persons also arrived from Warrap State, fleeing intercommunal violence. The intercommunal clashes and cattle raids since the signing of the Reconciliation Agreement two months ago between the Dinka Apuk and Dinka Aguok have increased tensions in Gogrial County of Warrap State in South Sudan, triggering ongoing population movements. As a result of the clashes, approximately 1,200 displaced persons have arrived in Abyei with more displacements anticipated in the coming weeks. Although the population comprises members of both the Aguok and Apuk clans, the displaced people have assured authorities they intend to live together in peace. Urgent needs of the displaced persons include temporary shelters, emergency household supplies, mosquito nets, water, food and health services. Humanitarian actors on the ground are currently providing assistance to the displaced from their contingency stocks in Abyei.

22. Efforts to support livelihoods continued alongside the provision of food aid. Key activities included vocational training and the provision of agricultural inputs and equipment. During the reporting period, a total of 290 people were trained in skills such as best agricultural practices, food processing, carpentry, masonry and tailoring. The graduates have started businesses within Abyei and there are at least eight new stalls in the Abyei town market operating successfully. Meanwhile, at least 7,200 households received agricultural inputs, including hand tools and an early maturity variety of seeds.

23. In the health and nutrition sectors, 19 health facilities, including two hospitals, continued to provide basic health and nutrition support services throughout the Abyei Area. The Agok hospital received approximately 900 cartons of medicine, and drugs are being pre-positioned in Mayon Ngok, Awal, Rumamier and Mijak public health clinics. Health personnel are also running various health education classes in the southern part of Abyei in an attempt to prevent the current outbreak of cholera in Juba from gaining a foothold in Abyei.

24. In the south of Abyei, 340 vulnerable families, particularly widows, disabled and elderly persons, received kits of non-food items. In the meantime, five boreholes were rehabilitated, and hand-washing facilities were installed in 16 child-friendly spaces and four primary schools. Funding shortfalls, floods caused by heavy rains, and delays in the issuance of security, route and travel clearances by

the Government of the Sudan remain key operational challenges to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in northern Abyei.

25. Activities to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable from violence, exploitation and other abuses also continued throughout the Area. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and a local partner maintained 36 child-friendly spaces, 22 community-based child protection networks, 26 community protection networks and a community policing mechanism; and trained 40 community caseworkers and 60 child-friendly spaces animators in family tracing and reunification, mine awareness and child protection and psychosocial data management. Some 100 members of the community-based child protection networks were trained in monitoring, reporting, follow-up and response against the abuse of children.

V. Status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

26. As a follow-up to the assessment of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and recommendations presented in my report of 16 June 2015, the Force Commander held consultations with the Government of the Sudan and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to consult the parties on the conclusions of the initial assessment and on a possible way forward.

27. The Force Commander visited Khartoum on 30 June. Sudanese officials called for the full operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism sectors, expressed their Government's general agreement on the findings of the assessment, and underscored the importance of operationalizing the Mechanism as well as the need for progress in resolving the dispute over the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and border demarcation. The officials also called for an early resumption of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, which has not met since May 2013. It is envisaged that the meeting, when held, will allow UNISFA to discuss recommendations of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism assessment with the Government of the Sudan.

28. On 3 August 2015, the Force Commander met with the Chairperson of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, President Thabo Mbeki, as well as with the Panel member, President Abdulsalami Abubakar. The Force Commander emphasized the need for the Panel to intensify its efforts in encouraging the parties to address the impediments that prevent the full realization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, and to make the necessary political commitment and investment for progress on the centreline and the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. At the request of the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, the African Union High-level Implementation Panel called for the convening of a meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in Addis Ababa on 24 August. On 20 August, however, the meeting was postponed to a later date at the request of the Government of South Sudan.

29. The Force Commander is awaiting confirmation of meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs of South Sudan for detailed discussions on Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

findings and other matters, including the way forward. Meetings have also been sought with the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

30. Meanwhile, the Government of South Sudan continues to deny UNISFA/Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism landing permissions, in violation of Security Council resolutions 1990 (2011) and 2024 (2011) and the Status of Forces Agreement signed with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan in 2012. On 14 July, the deployment of a force protection company from Kadugli to Gok Machar was suspended owing to the refusal of landing permission by the SPLA Brigade Commander in that area. The deployment had begun with the first group of 19 troops arriving safely in Gok Machar. The Local Commissioner and the Brigade Commander had both been informed of the deployment and the rotation schedule by the UNISFA Sector Commander a week earlier. During the reporting period, several other scheduled aerial monitoring missions of the Mechanism were cancelled for the same reason.

31. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued its support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. In preparation for planned ground patrols, the Service delivered various training modules on integrated ground patrols for Mechanism national monitors, international military observers, and elements of the UNISFA Force Protection Unit.

32. In my last report, of 16 June 2015 (S/2015/439), I indicated that I would provide more detailed findings of the Mechanism's assessment conducted from 17 to 29 May 2015. Further to the preliminary conclusions of the assessment, UNISFA and the Secretariat reviewed in further detail the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism concept of operations and operating procedures. Following are a number of adjustments that I would propose to make in order to increase the operational effectiveness of the Mechanism. It should be noted that some of these improvements should only be undertaken if the parties make genuine progress in demonstrating their political investment in the Mechanism, along the lines outlined in my last report, as such progress should be a sine qua non for any improvement in the Mechanism's efficiency.

33. First, Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism monitoring should be conducted with an improved capability to conduct aerial patrolling. The United Nations should explore the procurement of appropriate surveillance aircraft for Mechanism operations. These aircraft would be capable of accommodating a six-person Mechanism monitoring team and would be equipped with high-resolution digital cameras capable of capturing images for subsequent analysis. Improved imagery would assist in determining the need for follow-up verification and investigation patrols, and would help to avoid disagreements between the parties resulting from unclear imagery of personnel and hardware on the ground. In addition, satellite imagery should be used to enhance information-driven Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations, giving the Mechanism a greater ability to conduct operations on the basis of analytical data, rather than relying solely on planned aerial patrol routes. Past utilization of satellite imagery by the Mechanism has been extremely useful in assessing the situation on the ground.

34. Secondly, rather than conducting Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism verification operations using team sites as previously planned, monitoring should be conducted by air, and then followed by ground verification and investigation teams dispatched directly from the sector headquarters if required.

Undertaking verification and investigation from sector headquarters would be more operationally effective. Additionally, conducting verification and investigation patrols from the sector headquarters would obviate the requirement to build the majority of the 10 envisioned team sites. This adjustment would reduce the investment cost for the Mission and the requirement to maintain the sites during the rainy season, when no ground patrols would be possible. Ground patrols from the team sites, in a terrain devoid of tracks and that is potentially mined, would be extremely slow and would not meet the intent of the Mechanism. The monthly costs associated with their maintenance would contribute to a greater economy in Mechanism operations, despite the additional costs related to procuring satellite imagery and flying hours.

35. Thirdly, parties should end the practice of requiring the approval of monthly aerial patrol plans, which defeats the purpose and intent of monitoring and verification missions in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. Instead, notification of aerial patrols should be provided to the Parties 48 hours in advance. Similarly, the procedure for seeking confirmation from both sides to authorize ground patrols 72 hours in advance should be changed to a notification provided 24 hours in advance. This arrangement would allow sufficient time for the deployment of Force protection ahead of verification and investigation patrols that would need to be on the ground to conduct their work. Should the adjustments be endorsed by the parties, the Force protection requirement for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism may be reduced by one company.

VI. Personnel deployment and Mission support

36. During the reporting period, the UNISFA military component stood at 4,338 personnel (116 military observers/staff officers and 4,222 troops), of an authorized strength of 5,326. The strength of the UNISFA police component stood at 24 police officers (19 men and five women) from six police-contributing countries, of an authorized strength of 50. The total number of civilian staff stands at 226. The Government of the Sudan issued 118 visas for UNISFA personnel; 102 visas remain pending.

37. UNISFA, in support of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, provided logistical support to the rotation of Force protection companies as well as the deployment of its headquarters and two companies (total, 557 troops) from Ethiopia to Kadugli from 8 June to 3 July 2015. Although the refusal of landing permissions from the Government of South Sudan is likely to have an adverse effect on the provision of United Nations rations to the troops at Gok Machar, the newly inducted Force Protection Headquarters and Force Protection Company have been successfully deployed and accommodated at Kadugli. Necessary construction works, including office accommodation and voice and data communications, have already been provided for the Gok Machar Sector 1 Headquarters Force Protection Company. Temporary tent ablutions are to be utilized until hard-wall ablutions are prepared; the contract for this work has been awarded. The helipad at Gok Machar and the road from the town of Gok Machar to the UNISFA camp have been completed. However, the fuel tank and the associated fuel services distribution point, although constructed, are not yet operationalized.

38. In the southern sector, UNISFA completed the rotation of 969 troops for their deployment from five dry season camps at Um Khariet, Alal, Noong, Dungop and Agany Toak to the wet season camps. The transformation of Marial Achak dry season camp into a wet season camp with a capacity of 57 troops has been completed.

39. Meanwhile, the work at Athony airport remains suspended because of the opposition of the Government of the Sudan to having it continue.

VII. Financial aspects

40. The General Assembly, by its resolution 69/294 of 25 June 2015, appropriated the amount of \$268.3 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016. As at 25 August 2015, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNISFA amounted to \$83.5 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to \$4,404.2 million. Reimbursement to the contributing Government for troop and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the period up to 31 May 2015 and 31 March 2015, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VIII. Observations and recommendations

41. Tension in the border areas between the Sudan and South Sudan has risen in recent months, with both countries accusing the other of supporting, sponsoring and harbouring each other's rebel movements. In view of the internal conflicts within the Sudan and South Sudan, both Governments have paid limited attention to restoring their dialogue over the management of Abyei and implementing their border security agreements. The resolution of the dispute over the final status of Abyei and the implementation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and the agreements of September 2012 on border security remain, however, paramount to the consolidation of peace and stability between the Sudan and South Sudan. I hope that the regional unity displayed in recent weeks over the completion of the South Sudan negotiation process, led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the signing by Riek Machar, the former detainees and President Kiir of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan on 17 and 26 August 2015, respectively, will also have a positive impact on relations between the Sudan and South Sudan and lead to the resumption of their cooperation. UNISFA, in partnership with my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, will continue to encourage and support stable and peaceful relations between the two countries and engage with both Governments to encourage progress on outstanding bilateral issues.

42. The Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan must do more to respect and implement their Abyei Agreement of 20 June 2011. Both countries have continued to violate the Agreement and related Security Council resolutions through the presence of their armed personnel within the Abyei Area. The Sudan has continued to deploy some 120 to 150 armed oil police around the Diffra oil complex. UNISFA continues to observe incursions by armed suspected SPLA personnel inside the southern parts of the Abyei Area. There is a need for both parties to the Agreement

of 20 June 2011 to respect their accord, related Security Council resolutions, and the resolution adopted at the 9th Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meeting on 30 March 2015, in which the meeting “reiterated the need that the Abyei Area be a weapons-free zone”.

43. With the extension, on 14 July, of the UNISFA mandate for a further five months (see Security Council resolution S/223 (2015)), I believe that the Mission will be able to build on what has been achieved so far. This includes enhancing engagement and dialogue with the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities, in close collaboration with the African Union, the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and other stakeholders to assist in the implementation of international agreements concerning Abyei.

44. There can be no substitute for dialogue. The Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan must allow the traditional leaders to meet and discuss their grievances face to face. Both Governments must ensure that the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meets regularly to work towards the full implementation of the Abyei Agreement of 20 June 2011. I continue to urge both parties to do everything possible to ensure that the Abyei Area is demilitarized and becomes weapons-free. I also call upon the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to intensify its efforts in engaging with the parties, together with UNISFA, in order to generate the necessary momentum to move forward. The ongoing conflicts in the Sudan and South Sudan also continue to have an impact on the peace and stability of the Abyei Area, as demonstrated by the influx of displaced persons into the area. UNISFA will continue to monitor the movement of displaced persons, ensure security in the Abyei Area and work closely with the various humanitarian and other actors to facilitate assistance to the most vulnerable.

45. The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism has been subject to frequent denials of freedom of movement by officials from the Government of South Sudan in relation to its mandated activities in the region of Gok Machar. This calls into question the Government of South Sudan’s commitment to implementing the Mechanism. In its latest resolution, 2230 (2015) of 14 July, the Security Council made continued investment in the Mechanism contingent on a set of conditions, which included the granting of full freedom of movement to the Mechanism and related personnel. I urge the Government of South Sudan to provide unrestricted freedom of movement without delay to UNISFA flights. I also urge the Government of South Sudan to meet with UNISFA at the earliest opportunity to discuss the Mechanism assessment and proposals.

46. The postponement of the planned Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting on 24 August is disappointing. UNISFA stands ready to attend the meeting when it is rescheduled and, as requested, to provide its assessment on the status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. I urge the parties to reconvene Joint Political and Security Mechanism meetings as soon as possible, and to find an agreement on the exact location of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone centreline. UNISFA is ready to formally present the outcome of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism assessment to the parties at its next meeting.

47. As I have done consistently, I continue to call on the Sudanese authorities in Khartoum to provide increased levels of support to UNISFA. This includes the

timely issuance of visas and the granting of necessary permissions to conclude construction work at the Athony airstrip.

48. Lastly, I wish to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Head of Mission, Haile Tilahun Gebremariam, and to the Force Commander, Lieutenant General Birhanu Jula Gelalcha, for their diligence and engagement in the search for peace and stability in the Abyei Area. I also wish to thank my Special Envoy, Haile Menkerios, the former President of South Africa and Chairperson of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, Thabo Mbeki, the African Union Commission and the Government of Ethiopia for their sustained engagement, support and diligence in the search for peace in the Abyei Area.

