BRIEFING NOTE

THE SITUATION IN SUDAN
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1. This briefing note has been prepared for the 1156th PSC meeting, to be held at the level of Heads of State and Government, on 27 May 2023, on the consideration of the situation in Sudan.

I. INTRODUCTION

2. On 15 April 2023, fighting erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Lt. Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, generally referred to as Hemeti, following weeks of tension.

3. The immediate trigger for the conflict between the two belligerents related to disputes over the implementation by the conflicting parties of the Political Framework Agreement of 05 December 2022. The contested aspect of the implementation of the Agreement related to the timeframe for the integration of the Rapid Support Forces into the Sudanese Armed Forces. The SAF proposed a timeframe of two years for integration, while the RSF proposed a 10-year timeline.

4. Following the outbreak of violence on 15 April 2023, the African Union has deployed a number of efforts to address the crisis and end the fighting.

II. SECURITY SITUATION

5. Despite at least 06 ceasefires to date, the conflict continues to rage in Khartoum, in Darfur, in parts of Kordofan, and elsewhere. The epicenter of the fighting has been in Khartoum. Of particular concern have been reports of an increase in reports of sexual violence against women and girls.

6. Talks convened in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on 6 May, by the USA and Saudi Arabia culminated to the signing of a Joint Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan, a commitment to humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law. Phase two of the Jeddah talks began on 14 May, and on 20 May the Parties signed an Agreement on a Short-Term Ceasefire and Humanitarian Arrangements. In terms of the Agreement, the Parties committed to a nationwide ceasefire beginning 48 hours after its signing. The ceasefire would guarantee freedom of movement for civilians throughout the country, and would moreover identify and respect humanitarian corridors for the movement of humanitarian supplies and personnel.

7. Importantly, the Ceasefire Agreement provides for a Monitoring and Coordination Committee, comprised of three representatives each from the Parties as well as from the facilitators, namely the USA and Saudi Arabia. Despite the signing of the ceasefire, fighting has continued in Khartoum and other parts of Sudan hampering humanitarian efforts.

III. HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

8. The conflict has had profound humanitarian consequences for the civilian population, which continue to worsen around the country. At least 15.8 million people were already in urgent need of humanitarian assistance before the crisis started. Civilians have been the most impacted: over 1000 deaths have been recorded to date, and thousands injured.

9. The speed at which the crisis has escalated is of grave concern. The number of people displaced inside Sudan more than doubled in a week, from 334,000 people on 01 May to about 736,000 people on 09 May, according to the International Organization for Migration. Women have been particularly hard hit by the collapse of the health system.
10. Shortages of food, water, fuel and cash in many parts of the country continue. In eastern Sudan - many parts which usually rely on essential supplies shipped in from Khartoum, which has become impossible with the ongoing crisis—the prices of goods have increased almost four-fold compared to prior 15 April, according to humanitarian partners on the ground.

11. The impact of the crisis on neighbouring states is noted with concern. Two hundred thousand refugees and asylum seekers have fled to neighbouring states, some of which are themselves countries in transition from conflict. Some of those fleeing to neighbouring states are in fact people who fled from violence in their own countries.

IV. **AU ENGAGEMENT**

12. AU has focused on putting in place an Expanded Mechanism for the Sudan Crisis, which brings together all interested stakeholders on a single platform, in order to avoid a proliferation of initiatives and prevent forum shopping by the belligerents. The Expanded Mechanism is coordinated by the Chairperson of the Commission and is comprised of: the members of the Trilateral Mechanism AU, IGAD and UN; the quadrilateral mechanism Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK and USA; the Troika (USA, UK and Norway), the League of Arab States and the European Union; the states bordering Sudan (Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad and Libya), the P5 (China, France, Russia, UK and USA), the A3 (Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique), and Djibouti and Kenya (whose Heads of State have been mandated, by the IGAD Summit, along with the President of South Sudan, to mediate between the belligerents).

13. A high-level meeting comprising an array of various regional, continental and global actors was convened by the Chairperson of the Commission on 20 April 2023. This meeting adopted a communique requesting the AU Commission Chairperson to establish the Mechanism, and to develop a de-escalation plan for the resolution of the conflict in Sudan. The Commission developed a De-escalation plan which focused on the following six (6) elements:

   i. Establishment of a mechanism to ensure all efforts by international and regional stakeholders are coordinated to ensure no parallel initiatives that could be exploited by the belligerents;

   ii. Ceasefire: stopping the fighting is the number one priority, and is a necessary condition for all other processes;

   iii. Humanitarian engagement, to address the fast deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sudan;

   iv. Protection of civilians: to ensure that the belligerents respect International Humanitarian Law and protect civilians caught up in the fighting, and to ensure accountability for violators;

   v. Regional engagement: the crisis is not confined to Sudan- there are large numbers of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries, putting a strain on their capacities; it is also important that the countries of the region show solidarity, and also that they are also included in activities of humanitarian actors;

   vi. Resumption of a credible, inclusive political process towards a democratic civilian government.
14. On 16 May 2023, the PSC at its 1154th meeting, was briefed on the updates on the situation in Sudan, as well as on the draft De-escalation Plan. The PSC called on the Chairperson of the AU Commission to continue using his good offices to engage with the warring parties to facilitate a genuine and inclusive dialogue and peaceful resolution of the conflict held, received a Briefing on the Evolution of the Situation in Sudan.

15. The AUC has established an Interdepartmental Task Team on Sudan to ensure the activities of the various Departments are coordinated. The Task Team is coordinated by the CMD in PAPS, and includes Governance and Conflict Prevention, HHS, Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, and CDC. The Chief of Staff in the Office of the Chairperson is the Official Spokesperson for the AU efforts. The CDC has provided an amount of US$3 million for support to the health sector in Sudan, including provisions of emergency supplies and essential drugs. The AU PRC Sub-committee on Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons, has provided US$ 650,000 to supplement the support by CDC.

16. The AUC also convened a meeting with humanitarian agencies and organizations in Addis Ababa, to discuss how AU could assist them to secure guarantees from the Parties that would enable them to return to Sudan. The humanitarian community has agreed to share its perspectives and messages with the AUC on a regular basis, and agreed that the AUC should coordinate their activity to ensure that humanitarian perspectives are incorporated in the broader mediation work that will be coordinated by the Expanded Mechanism.

17. The AUC is planning consultations with countries of the region to solicit their views with regard to the sustainable solution to the crisis in Sudan, to enrich the de-escalation plan and the develop modalities for its implementation.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Council should stress to the Parties that there is no military solution to the crisis, and that the Parties must immediately and unconditionally stop the fighting and work to end the suffering of the Sudanese people.

19. Council should affirm the need for a single coordinated international effort to resolve the crisis in Sudan, under the auspices of the African Union and with the support of the other members of the Trilateral Mechanism (UN and IGAD), and discourage other states from launching or sustaining parallel initiatives.

20. Council should endorse the AU De-escalation plan as the blueprint for ending the fighting, and putting in place an inclusive political process that will address both the immediate and long-term causes of the conflict.

21. Council should urge the parties to ensure the full implementation of the Jeddah Agreement on a Short-Term Ceasefire and Humanitarian Arrangements, including through the identification and full respect for humanitarian and health workers, local humanitarian actors, and humanitarian corridors. Council should strongly urge the parties to respect provisions of International law, International Humanitarian Law, and International Human Rights Law.

22. Council should urge the signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement, as well as those parties that have remained outside the agreement to date, to refrain from entering the conflict, and to continue to work towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict in a holistic manner.
23. Council should request the AUC to take the lead in developing a roadmap for a political process that engages all sectors of Sudanese civil society and political actors, and to coordinate its actions with the membership of the Expanded Mechanism for the Sudan Crisis. Council should request the AUC to provide regular reports on the situation in Sudan and the implementation of the De-escalation plan.
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Communiqué of the 1156th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council, Held on 27 May 2023, on the Situation in Sudan.

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