PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1209TH MEETING

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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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BRIEFING NOTE

SITUATION IN SUDAN
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. 15 April 2024 marked one year since the outbreak of the war in Sudan. The war has continued to escalate and has now spread to many parts of the country. The consequences have been devastating not only for Sudan and its population, but also for the neighbouring countries and the region. It has negatively impacted on the political transition. The resultant humanitarian situation is also unprecedented, with an estimated 15,000 people killed and over 10 million internally displaced while more than 2 million have fled to neighbouring countries, including Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, South Sudan and Ethiopia. The food security situation has worsened with most of the productive farming communities in Gezira state, the erstwhile food basket of the country, having fled the war. A lack of credit, seeds, farm labour and the destruction of critical infrastructure have also devastated the agricultural system, and famine is expected to arrive throughout the country by May. In some parts of the country, children have already started to die from starvation. The country is facing severe food shortages and is in dire need of food aid. However, the continued fighting, means there is no safe access for humanitarian workers. The health services sector is virtually dysfunctional and the lack of humanitarian access is further compounding the situation.

2. This Briefing Note provides an update on the current situation in Sudan and efforts by the AU High-Level Panel towards finding a political solution. The Briefing Note also proposes recommendations for consideration by the Peace and Security Council.

II. THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SUDAN

a) Political Situation

3. Since the last meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held on 15 November 2023, the relentless efforts to find a negotiated solution to the crisis in Sudan have, so far, remained elusive. In part, this is due to the growing differences between the main belligerents who are defiantly seeking military solutions. Parallel initiatives are also to blame for the lack of success in the peace efforts. External interference is also compounding the situation, thereby undermining the regional efforts being spearheaded by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the AU, within the framework of the Expanded Mechanism and the Core Group. The Jedda Process is also yet to yield tangible results. It is, therefore, important to emphasize the critical importance of ensuring that the process is inclusive of all key stakeholders.

4. Furthermore, there is need for enhanced coordination and complementarity of efforts, under the leadership of the AU. The positive role of the neighbouring countries of Sudan will also significantly contribute to the successful search for a consensual and lasting political solution to the crisis. Equally critical will be the positive role of extra-Continental actors linked to the belligerents. There can be no viable military solution. Only a genuine, all-Sudanese inclusive political dialogue that brings on board all key stakeholders, among them, political parties, the various armed movements, civil society organizations, traditional leaders and leaders of various religious groups, the media, as well as the private sector, will result in the successful realization of a lasting solution to the current crisis.

b) Security Situation

5. The security situation in Sudan remains extremely volatile. When the war began one year ago, it was an initial conflict between two belligerents, namely, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by General Mohammed Hamdan Daglo (Hemedti). Today, the conflict has now attracted other armed groups,
which are now supporting and joining the two sides. Initially, the conflict was limited to Khartoum, but it has rapidly spread to other parts of the country, notably, the Darfur Region, which is considered as the traditional stronghold of the RSF. Except for parts of North Darfur, much of the region is now firmly under the control of the RSF.

6. Large parts of Khartoum are also under the control of the RSF. However, the SAF has made significant military gains in recent weeks, and has retaken control over parts of the city, in particular, Omdurman. In December 2023, the RSF also took control over the main agricultural production centre of Sudan, El Gezira state. El Gezira had become the place of refuge over many tens of thousands who had fled from Khartoum state, who were now forced to flee a second time. In recent months, the SAF has mounted a fight to regain some territory from the RSF and, in doing so, has mobilized private citizens as well as some of the armed groups, signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement, which had erstwhile remained neutral.

c) Humanitarian Situation

7. The humanitarian situation is catastrophic, and is expected to continue worsening unless urgent interventions are made. UN OCHA estimates that 24.8 million people in Sudan, more than half the population, need immediate humanitarian assistance. FEWS NET warns that catastrophe levels of food insecurity are expected in parts of West Darfur, Khartoum, and among the internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly in hard-to-reach areas of Darfur. Save the Children also warns that 230,000 children, pregnant women and new mothers could die in the coming months due to hunger unless urgent life-saving funding and aid reaches them. The humanitarian appeal for Sudan is at 6%. Even if it were to be fully funded, the lack of humanitarian access remains the most serious problem. The humanitarian agreement signed between the belligerent parties in May 2023, in which they committed to ensuring humanitarian access and protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, is yet to be implemented. Humanitarian agencies cannot access the most vulnerable populations inside Sudan.

8. In the absence of humanitarian access, the affected Sudanese people have been forced to rely on themselves to support each other, through the establishment of “Emergency Response Rooms” (ERRs), which have provided much of the support to local communities through the provision of mutual aid and solidarity. Therefore, it is important to strongly urge the belligerents to honour their commitments and obligations in terms of international law, and that humanitarian agencies and international organizations support the ERRs that have emerged as an innovative way to support the population in need.

d) Socio-Economic Situation

9. The conflict has had a devastating impact on the Sudanese economy. The destruction of the capital city, Khartoum, has also resulted in the destruction of a highly centralized Sudanese economy that is largely centered on Khartoum. Much of the infrastructure has been indiscriminately destroyed, including power and water purification plants, factories, government and private sector buildings, telecommunications, banking, hospitals, schools and universities. This has led to the loss of millions of jobs, forcing civilians into penury.

10. The biggest loss has been the disruption of the agricultural sector. The spread of the war to Gezira state in December led to the loss of productivity in the country’s “bread basket.” The war has also entailed a lack of cash (credit) for agricultural inputs, including seeds and fertilizer, seasonal agricultural labour, and the destruction of transport infrastructure and markets. In addition, the war in Darfur and Kordofan has also led to the collapse of subsistence agriculture. The food security system in Sudan has collapsed.
III. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AU HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON SUDAN AND ITS EFFORTS

11. In January 2024, pursuant to Communique [PSC/PR/COMM.1185 (2023), adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 1185th meeting held on 15 November 2023, the Chairperson of the AU Commission appointed the High-Level Panel on Sudan (HLP-Sudan), comprising the following members, namely: Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, the AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns as Chairperson; H.E. Madame Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe, former Vice President of the Republic of Uganda; and H.E. Ambassador Francisco Caetano Madeira, former Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for Somalia and Head of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

12. The mandate of the Panel to engage the Sudanese actors, including the belligerents but also other civilian stakeholders and armed groups, to implement the AU Roadmap for Conflict Resolution in Sudan as approved by the AU PSC at its 1156th meeting, held on 27 May 2023. This entails focusing on the pillars identified in the Roadmap, namely, putting in place a process that will lead to a ceasefire and an inclusive, civilian-led government that will address the rebuilding of the country; working with the international, regional and Sudanese partners to ensure the effective and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to all affected areas; working with all relevant partners to ensure the effective protection of civilians; and engaging with international and regional actors to ensure common approaches to the conflict in Sudan that can expedite its end and an inclusive and sustainable peace.

13. The Panel commenced its work on the margins of the 37th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa, in February 2024. The main focus of the Panel has been to bring an end to the war in Sudan by convening an all-inclusive inter-Sudanese dialogue. This involves meeting with all stakeholders and key regional and international actors for effective coordination and complementarity of efforts. To this end, the Panel has held a series of meetings with regional and international stakeholders in Sudan, with a view to deepening the understanding of its Members about the key issues at the core of the current crisis and the state of progress in efforts to find a political consensual political solution. One major outcome of the meetings was the emphasis on the urgent need for harmonization and coordination, as well as complementarity of efforts to end the crisis.

14. The Panel has developed a three-pronged approach to address the situation in Sudan. The first approach is to embark on shuttle diplomacy to Sudan and to the neighboring and regional countries to consult with critical stakeholders, including the belligerents, civil society groups, political parties, and coalitions in Sudan and in other countries where the Sudanese people have fled to following the outbreak of the war. The second is to enhance coordination with partners and regional organizations to prevent duplication of efforts and ensure coordination, harmonization, and complementarity of efforts. The third is to prepare for an inclusive inter-Sudanese political dialogue focusing on ending the current war and the future of the country.

IV. SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY IN THE REGION

15. The HLP began its work in February 2024 by conducting consultations with key regional and international actors with a view to soliciting views on the possibility of urgently ending the war, understanding existing initiatives and seeking practical means and ways of ensuring that the Panel discharges its mandate effectively. In March 2024, the Panel embarked on two rounds of shuttle diplomacy to Sudan and to the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Ethiopia and Djibouti, where consultations were held with the respective authorities of these countries. The Panel held meetings with the head of the Transitional Sovereign Council, General Abdul Fattah Burhan, and other Sudanese officials in Port Sudan. General Burhan provided his version of the root causes of the current war, his assessment of current efforts to end the war, the conditions to be met before the Government of Sudan returns to the negotiating table and efforts on humanitarian relief to the people of Sudan.
16. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Panel met with representatives of the leader of the RSF, Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), who also narrated their version of what led to the war and what should be in place for peace to reign. They expressed their readiness for negotiation anytime the other party was ready.

17. Following the meetings with the representatives of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Addis Ababa, and meetings with civil society organizations in Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia, the Panel returned to Port Sudan in late March 2024 to further consult with General Burhan and his government on issues raised by other stakeholders and how the Panel intended to move forward with its efforts to end the crisis.

18. During the visits to Egypt, Ethiopia and Djibouti, the Panel met with the authorities in those countries. In both Sudan and Djibouti, the Panel met with Heads of Government, while in Egypt and Ethiopia, it met with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, who all promised to support the work of the Panel. In all the countries visited by the Panel, except in Djibouti, the Panel also held consultations with a wide range of Sudanese stakeholders, including civil society organizations and political groups/parties, as well as with the youth and women groups regarding the war and how it could be resolved. They all expressed their readiness to work with the Panel towards the convening of the all-inclusive inter-Sudanese dialogue to kick-start the political process towards finding a lasting solution to the current crisis. They requested the Panel to push the Jeddah process to implement the May 2023 Agreement on the need for the soldiers and armed groups to evacuate private homes in Khartoum and elsewhere in the country. The mobilization of Sudanese stakeholders for the envisaged inclusive inter-Sudanese dialogue was one of the major achievements recorded by the Panel.

19. A third round of shuttle diplomacy is scheduled for 23 April to 5 May 2024. The Panel will visit South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda in a bid to further solicit the support of these countries for the mediation efforts of the Panel.

V. COORDINATION WITH PARTNERS AND OTHER INITIATIVES

20. In order to enhance coordination and complementarity of efforts towards ending the current crisis in Sudan, which is a pillar in the AU Roadmap, the Panel held consultations with critical stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels. The Panel also held a consultation with members of the Expanded Mechanism, which included the neighbouring countries of Sudan and several international partners. They agreed to work together and to meet regularly to ensure effective coordination of efforts and support to the efforts of the Panel.

21. The consultations with stakeholders, particularly, with the regional organisations and international partners have set the stage for further enhancing the coordination of efforts. More specifically, the consultations held in Cairo and Djibouti with heads of both, the League of Arab States and IGAD, respectively, were geared toward achieving this goal. Both organisations also agreed to work with the Panel and to lend support where they enjoyed comparative advantage. The Panel met with IGAD on three different occasions and at different levels, including at the level of head of State, when the Panel had an audience with the President of Djibouti, who is the current Chair of the Assembly Heads of States and Government of IGAD.

22. IGAD indicated that it was planning to start a political process of its own on Sudan. However, following discussions, the newly appointed IGAD Special Envoy for Sudan, Honorable Lawrence Korbandy, will work with the Panel.

23. Similarly, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States also agreed to work with the Panel as the main mediating body to pool together all mediation initiatives on Sudan, in order to ensure effective coordination.
24. On 19 February 2024, in Addis Ababa, the Panel also held a consultation with the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, who equally expressed his willingness to support and work with the Panel.

25. Furthermore, and within the context of enhancing coordination of efforts, the Panel also held consultations with the United States of America (US) Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, H.E. Ambassador Mike Hammer and also with the newly appointed US Special Envoy for Sudan, H.E. Ambassador Tom Perriello. Ambassador Perriello expressed support for the convening of the political dialogue and also promised to encourage Saudi Arabia to urgently resume the ceasefire negotiations, in Jeddah. He also promised to appeal to the Saudis to allow for a more inclusive process that brings on board the AU, as well as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). On its part, the Panel expressed its readiness to play a key role in the process, possibly including the deployment of African experts for monitoring and verification of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement once it is signed. In the same context, the Panel also held consultations with the Ambassadors of the United Kingdom (UK) and France to Sudan, as well as with the European Union (EU) Envoy for the Horn of Africa.

VI. PREPARATION FOR AN INCLUSIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE

26. As a result of the shuttle diplomacy and the sensitization of Sudanese stakeholders on the visits, the Panel is of the opinion that it has covered sufficient ground in terms of mobilizing relevant Sudanese stakeholders to organize the all-inclusive political dialogue that is Sudanese-owned and Sudanese-led. The political dialogue would be complementary to the Jeddah Process.

27. However, to have a well-organized and truly inclusive political dialogue, the Panel plans to have a preparatory meeting, involving a cross-section of Sudanese society particularly women, youth, professionals, and the academia, to ensure their views are represented in the search for durable peace and stabilization efforts. The political dialogue will be geared towards realizing both the resolution of the conflict in Sudan and the subsequent swift return to a democratic civilian-led government.

28. The Dialogue will be organized in two (2) phases, namely: a planning phase and the actual political dialogue. The Planning phase will have a limited participation and will aim to consider technical issues such as the categories of entities/individuals to be invited, quota of representation, agenda, structure of management of the dialogue, venue, date, funding and logistics and the role of the international community. The second and main phase will be the convening of the actual political dialogue based on the recommended outcomes of the first phase. A tentative date of 6 to 10 May 2024 is fixed for the planning Phase.

VII. WAY FORWARD

29. While waiting for the promised inclusion of the AU in the Jeddah Process when it reconvenes, the Panel is continuing the shuttle diplomacy to South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda to further solicit for support of these countries for its mediation efforts and sensitize and mobilize Sudanese based in these countries towards the forthcoming Planning meeting for the political dialogue.

30. Coordination with regional organizations, the UN, and international partners will also continue. As part of this coordination, a meeting of the Panel with the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General, H.E. Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, is already scheduled for 22 April 2024.

31. The Expanded Mechanism and the Core Group will also be briefed soon on the efforts of the Panel.
VIII. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

32. In view of the foregoing, the PSC may wish to consider the following:

a) Reaffirm the AU commitment to respect the independence, territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Sudan;

b) Also reaffirm the AU solidarity with the people of Sudan and the continued commitment to accompany them in their relentless quest for lasting peace, security, stability, good governance and prosperity, which will significantly benefit the region and the Continent as whole;

c) Reiterate deep concern over the ongoing senseless war in Sudan and its adverse impact on the Sudanese people and the Region; strongly condemn the ongoing fighting, including the attendant violations of human rights, International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian law and warn the perpetrators that they will be held to account for their actions;

d) Express deep concern over cases of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls being committed in the conflict in Sudan;

e) Also express grave concern over the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sudan, which has brought the country to the brink of famine and, in this respect, appeal to all partners and Member States, in a position to do so, to provide humanitarian support to the people of Sudan;

f) Also reiterate that there is no viable military solution to the current crisis and that only an all-inclusive, Sudanese owned and led dialogue will lead to a sustainable solution; and in this regard, strongly urge the belligerents to set aside their parochial interests, prioritize the interests of Sudan and its people, as well as to immediately and unconditionally cease all hostilities;

g) Condemn all forms of external interference in the internal affairs of Sudan and in this context, strongly appeal to all actors currently providing military support to the belligerents to refrain from further fueling the conflict and to, instead, play a more positive and constructive role of supporting the peace process;

h) Welcome the establishment of the High-Level Panel on Sudan; commend it for the steps taken so far in mobilizing support for the AU strategy towards an all-Sudanese inclusive political dialogue that will provide the opportunity to end the current conflict and put in place a consensual civilian transitional government that will holistically address the fundamental root causes of the conflict in Sudan;

i) Express the full support of the PSC to the Panel and underscore the need to ensure that the Panel is availed with necessary resources to enable it to effectively discharge its mandate;

j) Encourage the Panel to continue with the consultations with all key Sudanese stakeholders, as well as with regional and international stakeholders, in order to ensure the successful organization of the all Sudanese inclusive dialogue and in this regard, urges all Sudanese and regional, as well as international stakeholders to support the efforts of the Panel.
k) Underline the importance of enhanced coordination and complementarity of efforts; reaffirm the continued validity of the AU Roadmap for the Resolution of the Conflict in Sudan; reaffirm the central role of the AU, through the Panel, in coordinating regional and international efforts to find a lasting solution to the current crisis in Sudan; and in the same vein, strongly urge all actors to refrain from pursuing parallel and exclusive initiatives and request the Chairperson of the Commission to urgently convene a meeting of the Expanded Mechanism, in order to facilitate enhanced coordination;

l) Commend all partners currently supporting the Sudan peace process and appeal for additional support, including towards addressing the worsening humanitarian situation;

m) Request the High-Level Panel, working in close coordination with IGAD, to expedite efforts towards the convening of all-inclusive inter-Sudanese Political Dialogue in the shortest possible time; and

n) Decide to remain actively seized of the matter.
Communiqué of the 1209th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 18 April 2024 on the Situation in Sudan.

Peace and Security Council
African Union Commission