



Security Council

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Letter dated 28 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, and Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya (on behalf of the A3+1: Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Mexico, Norway, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan” convened on Monday, 26 April 2021. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Sudan.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Dang Dinh Quy**
President of the Security Council



Annex I

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix

I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on developments pertaining to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), including its support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) and the response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The six-month reporting period was marked by a continued rapprochement between the Sudan and South Sudan. On 23 November 2020, the Minister of East Africa Affairs of South Sudan, Deng Alor, met in Khartoum with Hassan Sheikh Idris Qadi, a member of the Transitional Sovereign Council, to discuss the implementation of the 3 October 2020 peace agreement, as well as the question of Abyei. On 25 February 2021, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, Mariam al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, chose Juba as her first visit upon assuming her duties in the new Sudanese cabinet. However, that rapprochement did not translate into significant improvements on the ground in the Abyei Area, where the security situation remains tense, as do relations between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. The inability of the parties to convene for Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meetings has also negatively affected political progress. Hopefully, the recent appointment by Khartoum of Major General Mohamed Alawi Koko as the new co-Chair of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee will help move the political process along.

The main political highlight of the reporting period was the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM) meeting hosted by the Government of the Sudan on 28 and 29 October 2020. During that meeting, several important issues were agreed upon, including the establishment of checkpoints in Abyei, the introduction of search-and-seize operations, the deployment of joint military observer teams throughout Abyei Area, the need for regular meetings of the JPSM and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, and the need for progress on JBVMM- and border-related benchmarks. The African Union Peace and Security Council held a meeting dedicated to the situation in Abyei on 24 November 2020 and subsequently issued a communiqué calling for community reconciliation.

The general security situation in the Abyei Area during the reporting period has been relatively calm, albeit volatile and unpredictable. The most prevalent threats to security were shooting incidents and the increased presence of unidentified armed groups. Out of 47 incidents recorded, 23 were attacks on civilians that resulted in five fatalities and serious injuries. The main supply route between Abyei town and Goli and the Amiet common market and its surrounding villages have been identified as the most volatile areas within UNISFA's area of responsibility, despite regular patrols and a constant presence along the route by UNISFA troops.

The reporting period was also marked by violent confrontations between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities, with one of the major incidents taking place at the Amiet common market on 30 December 2020. During the clash, several shops and properties were destroyed, with five Ngok Dinka and seven Misseriya sustaining injuries. On 15 February 2021, three armed men, suspected to be Ngok Dinka, opened fire on a civilian vehicle about 4 kilometres outside of Abyei town, along the Abyei-Banton road. Six civilians were severely injured in the attack and brought to the UNISFA level II Hospital for treatment.

In another worrisome development, between 18 and 21 December 2020, 49 World Food Programme (WFP) trucks with humanitarian supplies en route from the north towards Abyei town were denied access by a Misseriya crowd at Dari village.

The group demanded 50 per cent of the load as a precondition to grant passage to the south. After two days of negotiations, it was decided that the humanitarian convoy would return to Khartoum. Fifteen trucks were looted during the incident.

Despite the logistical constraints linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNISFA has remained fully engaged with both the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan. The Acting Head of Mission visited Khartoum to take part in the JPSM meeting hosted by the Government of the Sudan on 28 and 29 October 2020. That meeting was the first since the JPSM meeting hosted by Juba in February 2020. The Acting Head of Mission returned to Khartoum again in late 2020 and early 2021 for meetings with senior officials to discuss ways to move the Abyei peace process forward. On 23 November 2020, he also briefed the African Union Peace and Security Council on the situation in Abyei, together with the United Nations Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga.

The Acting Head of Mission had planned a visit to Juba in December 2020 to follow up on issues discussed during his previous visit in September 2020, when he briefed South Sudan officials on the situation in Abyei, and also to emphasize to interlocutors the need to hold an Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meeting in earnest. Unfortunately, the visit was cancelled as, in the meantime, agreement was reached that a Committee meeting would take place in late December. In the end, the meeting was not convened owing to the inability to agree on the moderator.

There has been modest progress towards the seven benchmarks set out in Security Council resolution 2550 (2020). All requested aerial monitoring missions and ground monitoring missions were approved by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan in October 2020, and most of them were conducted during the reporting period. JBVMM was granted freedom of movement within the Safe Demilitarized Buffer Zone. With the exception of team site 22, in Abu Qussa/Wunkur, the parties have deployed national monitors to participate in JBVMM operational activities. While the team site in Abu Qussa/Wunkur is established, it has not yet been operationalized, as South Sudan refuses to deploy national monitors owing to the presence of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition in the area.

A 14 Mile Area ad hoc Committee meeting was conducted from 16 to 19 November 2020 in Gok Machar. In its report, the Committee recommended that the South Sudan People's Defence Forces Chief of Defence Force issue the orders necessary for the withdrawal of their units from within the 14 Mile Area. The reopening of border crossing corridors has been accomplished, including the reopening of the Meiram-Aweil crossing, which had been temporarily closed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Four of the 10 corridors are currently open and functioning.

The process of the deployment of the authorized formed police units (FPUs) from China and Tanzania was interrupted owing to the non-issuance of entry visas to the Sudan for the official delegation from Tanzania intending to visit the Mission for mandatory generation activities, as well as the denial of travel permits to visit Abyei for the delegation of China. The deployment of the advanced party of the Ethiopian FPU is subject to visa approval and clearances for contingent-owned equipment. Between December 2020 and January 2021, Sudanese visas were granted to 31 police officers, increasing the number from 16 to 47 police officers. Visas for 77 individual police officers, requested in a note verbale to Khartoum, are awaiting approval. In January 2021, the Sudanese authorities introduced a new policy according to which resident visas for UNISFA personnel are issued with a limited validity period, that is, until 31 May 2021, the end of the current Mission mandate, which further complicates matters.

As of March 2021, there had been 198 reported cases of COVID-19 in the local community, with 10 confirmed deaths. UNISFA currently has five active positive cases. All are asymptomatic; three cases relate to uniformed personnel, and two are among non-uniformed personnel. All necessary measures were put in place to ensure that all staff comply with the use of the personal infection preventive measures. The quarantine facility with 220 beds, where incoming troops are quarantined before being dispatched to their locations, is contributing to infection prevention, control and monitoring.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, in coordination with non-governmental organizations, continued to provide vital humanitarian and recovery assistance to vulnerable populations within the area. The Amiet common market, comprising more than 1,000 shops and stalls and 360 living shelters, was partially destroyed by fire on 8 February 2021 and 1 April 2021, resulting in a significant economic loss. The humanitarian and development agencies worked closely with local communities to address their immediate and long-term needs.

In conclusion, UNISFA leadership will continue to engage with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to facilitate the implementation of the pending aspects of their previous agreements. In addition, although the consultations with the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, with the Governments of the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia to discuss UNISFA's exit strategy were inconclusive, as noted in the Secretary-General's letter dated 1 April, I would like to highlight that all parties continue to recognize the usefulness and relevance of UNISFA and the fact that the Mission has also been instrumental in addressing tensions between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya communities through community dialogue and reconciliation initiatives, despite operational constraints due to administrative bottlenecks. In view of the aforementioned, I would request that the Security Council consider a rollover mandate for UNISFA for six months, until 15 October 2021, in order to give the parties the space to discuss future arrangements and the way forward.

Annex II

Briefing by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga

I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the progress made in the implementation of resolution 2046 (2012), which concerns outstanding bilateral issues between the Sudan and South Sudan and the situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

While most of our work has become virtual, the daunting situations in the region as a whole affects real people. I thank the Security Council for its continued efforts to help alleviate those multifaceted challenges. Like in most countries in the region, the global coronavirus pandemic has continued to impact health, human and socioeconomic developments in South Sudan and Sudan and exacerbated the precarious living conditions of most of the populations in both countries. While I was able to engage with the Sudanese authorities in person during the review period, my engagements with the South Sudanese authorities were held remotely due to the severe impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in South Sudan. Though limited at present, the start of COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in both countries is a welcome development.

I visited the Sudan from 27 February to 2 March, as part of consultations with the Governments of the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia, to discuss an exit strategy for the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) pursuant to resolution 2550 (2020). While in Khartoum, I also discussed bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan.

I concur with Under-Secretary-General Lacroix's assessment that the Sudan and South Sudan are continuing to deepen their relationship, as exemplified by a visit to South Sudan on 25 February by Sudan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mariam al-Sadiq al-Mahdi. During the visit, which was the Minister's first foreign trip upon assuming her duties, the two countries agreed to form joint mechanisms for reactivating their border trade agreements. That will entail reopening trade corridors to benefit their two economies, thereby enabling the free movement of goods, services and people between both countries.

I therefore continue to be hopeful that both countries will continue to build on their improved relations. The Sudan and South Sudan have held limited bilateral engagements within the framework of their cooperation agreements. So far the Sudan and South Sudan have been focusing on their respective political transitions and the fast-moving broader regional dynamics. During my visit to Khartoum, the Sudanese authorities informed me of their recommitment to all bilateral agreements in view of addressing outstanding issues peacefully with South Sudan, including the final status of Abyei. They emphasized the need to reach a mutually beneficial solution where Abyei would become a "soft border" and an example of peaceful existence, development and shared prosperity for the two communities of the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya.

Meanwhile, there are noticeable differences in their approaches. The Sudan is focused on establishing the joint mechanisms provided for in the agreement of 20 June 2011 on temporary administrative and security arrangements. However, South Sudanese interlocutors expressed their preference for the solution proposed by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on the final status of Abyei that was adopted by the African Union Heads of State in 2013. Pending a final settlement, South Sudan has advocated continued collaboration between the Juba-appointed administration of Abyei and the Misseriya administration in Muglad, outside of

Abyei, and cooperation between the two administrations regarding the Misseriya grazing rights and other issues of mutual concern.

South Sudan continues also to seek accountability for the killing of the Ngok Dinka paramount chief of Abyei, reiterating its call for the release of the African Union investigation report. During my engagement on 16 March with the African Union on that matter, I was assured that following the election and inauguration of its new office holders, the African Union would hand over copies of the investigation report to the ambassadors of the two countries in Addis Ababa.

Undeniably, the current regional dynamics in the Horn of Africa, particularly the tense relationships between the Governments of Ethiopia and the Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the border area of Fashaqah, could have a direct impact on the configuration of UNISFA. The letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council — yourself, Mr. President — provides details on this evolving situation.

I urge both Governments to reach a swift and peaceful resolution to these disputes. Such an outcome will have a positive impact on preserving UNISFA's role in enhancing the security and stability of Abyei and the border area between the Sudan and South Sudan.

Regarding the resolution of the conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, I am pleased to report that significant progress has been achieved with the signing in Juba, on 28 March, of a declaration of principles by the Chairman of the Sovereign Council of the Sudan, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman Al-Burhan, and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-North), led by Abdelaziz Al-Hilu. The declaration of principles provides for the establishment of a civic, democratic, federal State where freedom of religion, belief, practices and worship shall be guaranteed, and for a process of integration and unification of forces aimed at establishing a single national army, which must be completed by the end of the transitional period. Those guiding principles, along with the first joint declaration of principles signed by Prime Minister Hamdok and Abdelaziz Al-Hilu on 3 September, will pave the way for formal and comprehensive negotiations between the transitional Government and the Al-Hilu faction of SPLM-North, scheduled to take place in Juba on 25 May.

I should highlight here that this important progress has been achieved with the mediation help of the Government of South Sudan and the parties' commitment to a political solution. Building on the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan, the Sudan Revolutionary Front alliance and the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi faction in October, Juba has continued to provide support and, in most cases, mediate between the Sudan and its remaining armed movements with the aim of reaching a comprehensive peace agreement that can help end the Sudan's multiple armed conflicts. President Salva Kiir, who witnessed the signing of the declaration of principles between the Sudanese Government and Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, promised to work relentlessly to persuade Abdul Wahid Al-Nur, leader of the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid, to join the peace process.

In the meantime, President Kiir held discussions on the Sudanese peace process separately with Abdul Wahid Al-Nur, on 19 March, and together with Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, on 26 March. While progress had already been achieved on the negotiation track between Abdelaziz Al-Hilu and the Government of the Sudan after their meeting in Juba on 3 March, Al-Nur, by contrast, stuck to his position that he would join a peace process only after security and stability returned to Darfur. Al-Nur nevertheless urged President Kiir to facilitate an intra-Sudanese dialogue process that would address the root causes of the conflicts in the Sudan.

To the extent possible, progress achieved so far on resolving the conflict in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states and the improvement of bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan should be shielded from the risks related to the deterioration of the regional environment. My Office will continue to engage with the authorities of both countries and, as appropriate, with key regional actors, including the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, so as to encourage them to defuse regional tensions, advance the implementation of all cooperation agreements and consolidate the improvement of their bilateral relations.

Annex III**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Dai Bing**

[Original: Chinese]

I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Onanga-Anyanga for their briefings and welcome the presence of the representatives of the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

At present, the situation in Abyei is generally stable thanks to the efforts of the Sudan, South Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations. Both the Sudan and South Sudan have made progress in their domestic political processes, creating a favourable atmosphere for the political settlement of the Abyei issue.

In connection with the two briefings, I wish to highlight the following.

First, all parties should work together towards a political settlement. The Sudan and South Sudan must lead the efforts to resolve the Abyei issue, invest more in that regard and, we hope, make speedy progress in establishing a joint institution. China supports the African Union's mediation efforts. The peaceful coexistence of the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya is necessary for maintaining stability in Abyei and resolving its final status. It is imperative to safeguard the rights and interests of the two communities and promote dialogue, in accordance with historical traditions, the agreements between the two countries and the will of the two communities.

Secondly, humanitarian aid and development hold the key to solving the current crisis. Abyei has been plagued by weak infrastructure, harsh living conditions, population displacements by the tens of thousands and huge gaps in humanitarian needs — exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. The international community should provide targeted assistance to help strengthen local health and education capacity-building, increase investment in infrastructure and help the local people effectively fight the pandemic.

Thirdly, the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) is an important force for peace and stability in Abyei. China hopes that the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations will intensify consultations, resolve differences on the drawdown of UNISFA and continue to fully leverage the positive role of the United Nations. UNISFA faces considerable security risks, and medical evacuation is the weakest link. Both Member States and the Secretariat should provide adequate resources to strengthen the mission's medical capacity-building, and the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan are expected to provide the necessary facilities to that end.

Annex IV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I also join others in thanking the briefers for their insightful overviews.

Estonia warmly welcomes the continuing rapprochement between the Sudan and South Sudan. We recognize that the political transitions in both countries continue to require much of the attention of the respective Governments. However, we also urge the parties to use their newly strengthened relations to facilitate progress towards resolving the question of Abyei. This is especially important given the heightened tensions in the larger Horn of Africa region.

Estonia believes that there is no substitute for a meaningful political process between the parties. We therefore welcome all steps taken in that direction and call on the Sudan and South Sudan to continue to build a viable political process that leads to the implementation of security and administrative arrangements to which both sides can agree. The political process could be significantly aided by the appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission, and we call on the parties to help to make that a reality. We also call for regional actors to actively engage the parties on the Abyei question, as their support is crucial for making progress on that issue.

We are concerned about violence and criminality, the recent trend of attacks on United Nations troops and contractors, as well as the obstruction and looting of humanitarian convoys. This worrying trend requires decisive action. In that connection, I reiterate my call to first, expedite the deployment of the police component; secondly, conduct joint investigations into the deadly incidents of violence with the purpose of bringing the perpetrators to justice; and thirdly, deploy human-rights expertise to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), including enhanced child-protection capacities. While those asks have been repeatedly made in the Council, there has unfortunately been little progress, and we urge the relevant parties to heed those calls.

Estonia supports the extension of the mandate of UNISFA for the next six months. On that note, I would also like to express our gratitude to UNISFA for their invaluable contributions. However, moving forward, we need to have a discussion about how the United Nations can be most helpful given the current realities surrounding the Abyei question. We note that the Secretary-General's consultations about the future exit of UNISFA were inconclusive, yet we need to continue our work to find common ground on that issue.

In conclusion, the people of Abyei deserve better than the current status quo. We therefore call on the parties to capitalize on their improved relationship to push for progress on the question of Abyei. We also continue to call for the removal of any impediments to the implementation of UNISFA's mandate. Finally, I would like to underscore the importance of dialogue and cooperation in resolving the question of Abyei, as well as alleviate the heightened tensions in the wider region.

Annex V**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst Estival**

[Original: French]

I thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga for their briefings. I also welcome the presence here today of the representatives of the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

In that regard, I would like to emphasize four points.

First, only a resolution of the final status of Abyei is likely to lead to a change in the mandate or configuration of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) that is both acceptable to all parties and sustainable. We are aware of the challenges that all parties face. But the status quo is based on an extremely fragile balance; relying on its preservation is a risky bet.

In that regard, we welcome the rapprochement between the Sudan and South Sudan, and hope that it will lead to progress. We call on the African Union to push the parties in that direction through its political mediation efforts. We welcome all the efforts of UNISFA to maintain an open dialogue between the communities and to ensure the conditions for a lasting settlement of the conflict.

Nevertheless, France regrets the lack of progress in the political process. Despite a meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in October, the same issues remain unresolved. The absence of a local governance body prevents the resolution of disputes and UNISFA's work is hampered by the lack of cooperation from the parties.

The measures expected of the parties are well known and progress would be an important confidence-building measure. The resumption of dialogue at the local level to address security issues and to move towards the establishment of joint administrations in the area is essential. Specifically, that includes joint investigations into the violence in Nainai and Kolom in January 2020. The operationalization of Athony airport, the issuing of visas for the deployment of police units, the arrival of a deputy head of mission and the strengthening of human rights expertise are all envisaged.

Furthermore, the deteriorating humanitarian situation in South Sudan, where food insecurity is at an all-time high, and in Ethiopia is of great concern. It is essential to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need, including internally displaced persons and refugees. We cannot stress enough that international humanitarian law must be respected by all parties. We also call for the implementation of the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, adopted last March.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm France's full support for the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa at this unprecedented time in the region, which is dealing with the Abyei question, the peace process in Darfur, South Sudan and the conflict in Tigray. Dialogue and regional cooperation are more essential than ever to overcome these challenges. We support the efforts of the Special Envoy and the Secretary-General to foster dialogue and cooperation, with the support of African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and all relevant partners.

Annex VI

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative and Political Coordinator of India to the United Nations, Ravindra Ragutthalli

At the outset, let me begin by thanking Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, and Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, for their respective briefings on developments concerning the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and its support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) as well as progress in the implementation of resolution 2046 (2012).

During our previous tenure in the Council in 2011, India was closely involved in the efforts that created UNISFA in June 2011. It is a matter of concern that the status of Abyei remains unsettled. Peaceful resolution of the final status of Abyei, in conformity with the comprehensive peace agreement, remains fundamental to durable peace between the two countries.

There has been some progress made in recent months, including the continued rapprochement between the Sudan and South Sudan, which we welcome. The role played by South Sudan in the Juba accords is having a positive impact. The African Union has also continued its mediation efforts and has offered support to the parties to resume Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meetings. Other notable positive developments include the signing of a protocol on the resumption of oil production in the Unity and Toma South oil fields in South Sudan and the convening of joint bodies related to the management of the border, including the Joint Political and Security Mechanism.

The overall security situation in the Abyei Area has also remained relatively calm. Despite their tense relations, the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya communities have responded to UNISFA's efforts to resume the community grass-roots peace process. We need to be cognizant of the fact that these welcome developments have taken place amid coronavirus disease (COVID-19) challenges. We need to encourage both sides to continue efforts in the coming months. These efforts need to focus on the early convening of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and promoting intercommunity dialogue, which are essential to the peace process in Abyei.

With respect to the security situation, the attacks on UNISFA troops and World Food Programme convoys, as well as increasing violent incidents involving the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya communities, are a matter of concern. The mission must take adequate measures to ensure the safety of peacekeepers.

The humanitarian situation in the Abyei Area remains challenging, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the efforts of UNISFA and humanitarian agencies. UNISFA has carried out tasks related to the JBVMM in a commendable manner, despite operational challenges. We also welcome the innovative technological initiatives to improve the mission's performance.

Regarding operational issues concerning the mission, the early facilitation of visas for police personnel and agreement on a civilian deputy head of the mission will positively impact the mission's operations. So too will the upgrade of the Athony airstrip. These are long-standing pending issues and need to be resolved quickly.

We have taken note of the lack of consensus in the Secretary-General's "draw-down of UNISFA" report (S/2021/383) after intensive regional consultations with the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia. We concur with the Secretary-General's assessment that, pending consensus on this sensitive issue, a final decision should be deferred for the time being.

In conclusion, let me highlight that India has long-standing and mutually beneficial friendly relations with both the Sudan and South Sudan. We have contributed to the development of both countries by means of bilateral assistance and projects in sectors, such as energy, transportation and agriculture. Our capacity-building, training and scholarship programmes have been deeply appreciated by both countries. We are confident that both countries will successfully resolve all outstanding issues and continue to emerge stronger as major development success stories in Africa. India, as a long-standing partner, will continue to support Juba and Khartoum in this journey.

Annex VII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason

I want to thank you, Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for your briefings this morning.

Ireland welcomes the continued improvement in bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan. South Sudan's contribution to the conclusion of the Juba Peace Agreement was a welcome recent bright spot in a turbulent period for the region, and it is evidence also of how good relations between South Sudan and the Sudan can contribute to peace and security in the Horn of Africa.

I very much welcome that both representatives of both countries are at this meeting with us today. And I also want to welcome Ambassador Taye Atskeselassie Amde of Ethiopia among us.

However, this progress now needs to be felt in Abyei. A key aim for both parties must be to ensure the protection and security of the people of Abyei and their access to the basic public services. Political engagement on the establishment of joint interim institutions, such as the Abyei police, is critical.

We are worried about the incidents of local level violence and disruptions to humanitarian assistance, as set out this morning by Under-Secretary-General Lacroix. But there have been positive signs. That both the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities took part in the February 2021 peace conference shows that, on the ground, some progress is possible.

We strongly welcome the participation of women from both sides in the Aweil forum. It was powerful to see that they crossed community lines in order to stand together to denounce violence and call for peace. As those with experience in building peace know, peace is a process, not a moment. And I will never tire of saying that the participation of women is fundamental and critical. I also believe that the commitments by both communities to engaging further on peaceful transhumance is very important.

In the context of improving bilateral relations, it is regrettable that we have not seen a stronger engagement in the joint structures and mechanisms. These are key for an agreement on the final status for Abyei and the demarcation of the border. Steps, such as holding a meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and forming the joint team to investigate the attacks in Nainai and Kolom in January 2020, would help.

We thank Ethiopia for its contribution to the peacekeeping mission. Of course, we cannot simply view the situation in Abyei in a vacuum. Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan are at a sensitive moment. We urge calm and restraint and for Ethiopia and the Sudan to resolve their differences through dialogue.

As the Secretary-General has indicated, the security situation in Abyei is tense and unpredictable. The reports of intercommunal violence are troubling. In that context, any dramatic shift in the make-up of the force of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) would not be in the best interests of the people or stability of Abyei.

As always, the role of the region is crucial in Abyei, as it is on the Al-Fashaga border, in the disputes concerning the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and elsewhere. The communiqué of the African Union Peace and the Security Council of November 2020 on the situation in Abyei is a welcome one. Enhanced efforts by the African Union to promote political mediation will be very important.

Ireland echoes the three key calls of the Secretary-General. First, we call for the appointment of a civilian Deputy Head of Mission for UNISFA. Secondly, we call on the Sudan to grant outstanding visa requests for United Nations police personnel; the UNISFA police component is currently operating with less than 8 per cent of its authorized strength. While the recent granting of some visas is welcome, short of the setting up of the joint police force, more visas will need to be granted. Thirdly, we call for the operationalization of the Athony airstrip, which is crucial for medical evacuations. We also support the Secretary-General's recommendation to deploy more human rights expertise to UNISFA.

Finally, let me reiterate, a longer term, more sustainable solution in Abyei is needed, and we call on all parties to strive to continue to achieve that. We commend UNISFA for the work it is doing in extremely challenging circumstances, and we support the extension of UNISFA's mandate for a further six months.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Michael Kiboino

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council — namely, Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Abyei and also on the drawdown options for the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) (S/2021/383). We also thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for their briefings. In addition, we welcome the participation of South Sudan, the Sudan and Ethiopia in this briefing.

The A3+1 commends the continued efforts of the African Union, neighbouring States and leaders, the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei and the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa in advancing the quest for peace and security in Abyei.

We pay tribute to the UNISFA personnel who continue to faithfully implement the mission's mandate of providing security, ensuring peaceful migration throughout the Abyei Area, supporting intercommunity peace efforts and facilitating stability and reconciliation in the Abyei Area. Indeed, UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism constitute an anchor of stability along the borders between South Sudan and the Sudan.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of UNISFA and the signing of the Agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of Abyei Area between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. It is also 16 years since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army was concluded in 2005. Today, however, much more progress remains to be made towards the determination of the final status of Abyei. In particular, much more remains to be done in the political process, such as the implementation of the interim measures agreed by the parties in June 2011.

The establishment of most of the temporary administration institutions for Abyei remains a work in progress, leaving the bulk of the responsibility for functional administration of the Area, including the maintenance of law and order, to UNISFA.

With the final status of Abyei still pending, the hopes of children, women, youth and men in the Area for a peaceful and secure future remain in limbo. However, not all is lost. The A3+1 therefore underscore the following five points on the way forward.

First, the improved relations between the Sudan and South Sudan and their efforts in facilitating and supporting their respective peace efforts are welcome. We urge the two countries to leverage these relations to take concrete steps towards the full and urgent implementation of the remaining political processes in the determination of the final status of Abyei, taking into account the need for soft borders and the advancement of the civic, political and economic rights of the communities in Abyei.

Secondly, both countries should avoid taking any unilateral actions that could undermine security and political stability in Abyei. The parties should engage constructively, including through regular meetings of the Joint Political and Security

Mechanism and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. The parties should also faithfully implement the decisions of these and other relevant mechanisms.

Thirdly, the safety and security of the people of Abyei must remain a priority. In this regard, any future decisions on the drawdown options for UNISFA should be informed by the views of the parties and be condition-based, including the determination of the final status of Abyei. We, however, underscore that, ultimately, a sustainable solution lies primarily on the urgent determination of the final status of Abyei as agreed upon by the two brotherly countries.

Fourthly, we commend local leaders in Abyei who have demonstrated commitment to promoting women's participation in local peace processes, including in the civic space. We emphasize the imperative of enhancing the role of women's participation in decision-making, including in leadership positions at all levels.

Fifthly, the Security Council and international partners should continue offering support to the Sudan and South Sudan in a manner that contributes meaningfully and sustainably to resolving the issues of Abyei. In this regard, the African Union and the United Nations are urged to continue to extend the required diplomatic and political support, as well as technical assistance that will help the parties in the implementation of the existing framework agreement. The A3+1 further calls for strengthened international capacity-building efforts, as well as enhanced projects to improve lives and livelihoods of the communities in Abyei.

In conclusion, I reiterate that Kenya, the Niger, Tunisia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines associate with the communities in Abyei Area in their dream to see Abyei become an oasis of peace and stability and a bridge between the people of the Sudan and South Sudan sooner rather than later. We stand ready to support the two brotherly countries in this endeavour.

Annex IX

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations

[Original: Spanish]

First of all, we thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Onanga-Anyanga for their briefings.

Political dialogue is the only way to resolve the situation in Abyei. We acknowledge the outreach efforts of the parties, including the recent visit of the Sudanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mariam Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi, to Juba on her first trip abroad after taking office. We hope that these efforts will translate into tangible progress in the establishment of temporary administrative and security arrangements and a political solution to the status of Abyei.

A key issue in resolving the conflict is the promotion of intercommunity dialogue. Unfortunately, despite the meetings held between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities in recent months, progress in the dialogue has not been made. We call for a redoubling of efforts to make progress on contentious issues, such as transhumance rights.

Mexico is concerned about the deterioration of security conditions in the Abyei region; crime doubled in the reporting period and there is no police service. The humanitarian challenge that this situation presents is particularly worrisome. The incident in which 49 World Food Programme trucks carrying humanitarian supplies en route to Abyei town were denied access is a case in point. It is regrettable that, despite the fact that the movement of the convoy had been authorized by both the Government of the Sudan and the Government of South Sudan, conditions for the safe and expeditious access of humanitarian assistance are not in place. We urgently call on the parties to guarantee such access.

This support is critical to more than 220,000 people, as access to the most basic health, water sanitation, education and protection services is very limited and shortages have multiplied owing to the pandemic. We recognize the work of the United Nations, in coordination with non-governmental organizations and local authorities, to address major humanitarian challenges, including the protection of women and children, and the reactivation of the Global Protection Cluster and its sexual and gender-based violence, child protection and mine action subclusters.

Undoubtedly, through work and initiatives at the community level, the progress in protecting the most vulnerable will be reinforced. In this regard, we welcome the decision of local Ngok Dinka authorities to support the needs and priorities of women in the community by relocating the Mul Mul market, as sexual violence was frequently reported in the vicinity.

It is also essential to maintain and redouble efforts at the community level to include women in decision-making processes and local peace processes, as well as to create positions to make gender issues more visible, such as the appointment of a gender adviser in the southern Abyei administration and the increase in participation from one to five women in the most recent round of the Aweil peace dialogue, in which two women from the Misseriya and three from the Ngok Dinka communities participated. It is noteworthy that, within the framework of the dialogue, those five women took a united stand, despite community divides. Mexico reiterates that the role of women in peace processes is essential.

The undeniable corollary of Abyei is to reach a mutually acceptable, peaceful solution to the status issue through political dialogue. In this regard, the work of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei is instrumental, and Mexico

reiterates its full support for the Force in fulfilling its mandate, and to the African Union, as well as to the crucial role played by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, and to the good offices of the Special Representative in promoting dialogue. We reiterate the importance of having a civilian Head of Mission in place as soon as possible and call on the parties to fully support and facilitate administratively the work of the Force.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

We think it is important to start by reminding ourselves that Abyei is a contested area with a very troubled past. In the light of that, the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), with its strong and clear mandate, is needed until the parties — the Sudan and South Sudan — agree on all pending issues. A sustainable solution must also take into account the views of the local populations.

Abyei has the potential to showcase the recent building up of relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, which has been marked by increased trade, development, peaceful coexistence and, most notably, the Juba Peace Agreement. However, these positive developments are unfortunately not reflected in the situation on the ground in Abyei. We see continued tensions between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya. There is also a risk that tensions between Ethiopia and the Sudan may have adverse effects on UNISFA and therefore on the security situation in Abyei and beyond.

The combination of the conflict potential in Abyei and a possible security vacuum owing to a sudden exit of Ethiopian troops, gives us cause for serious concern. It is therefore appropriate that we reconfirm our commitment to UNISFA at this critical time. There is no doubt that UNISFA plays an invaluable role in providing security and stability in Abyei. We also acknowledge UNISFA's efforts in building dialogue and trust between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities.

The inclusion of women in these efforts seems to have been particularly effective, as demonstrated in the meeting in Aweil in February this year, where, despite the failure of the conference to reach a formal agreement, the women of the two communities were able to find common ground. We strongly encourage the ongoing engagement of UNISFA in supporting women-led peace initiatives in Abyei.

For UNISFA to be able to deliver on its mandate effectively, it is critical that outstanding visas for the formed police units are issued, the Anthony airstrip is operationalized and the deployment of a civilian deputy head of mission is approved. We also urge the Sudanese and South Sudanese authorities to permit the deployment of human rights experts. Furthermore, we believe that the implementation of joint mechanisms — as stipulated in the June 2011 agreement — is important. It will strengthen cooperation and build trust between the communities on the ground. We call on the parties in particular to organize a meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee without delay.

Another significant step would be for South Sudan to nominate personnel to the joint police service. Protection of civilians and the rule of law are the basis for peaceful development. There can be no doubt that the people living in Abyei deserve a sustainable solution. The key to this rests with the Governments in Khartoum and Juba.

A long-term and sustainable solution to the status of Abyei cannot be found without the political will and courage of the parties. The leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan should seize the opportunity afforded by their close and friendly relations to craft an agreement on the final status of Abyei.

Annex XI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Anna Evstigneeva**

[Original: Russian]

We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Parfait Onanga-Anyanga for their substantive briefings.

We are concerned at the assessment set forth in the recent report of the Secretary-General that the security situation in Abyei remained “tense and unpredictable” (S/2021/383, *para.* 7). The continuing intercommunal discord, the presence of armed groups, the precarious situation of criminality and the incidents that took place at the Amiet common market and along the so-called main supply route confirm that Blue Helmets are greatly needed in this area.

The sides need to make joint efforts to promote an inter-Sudanese settlement, which should determine the final status of Abyei. We are glad to see that the bilateral relations between Khartoum and Juba continue to improve. The fact that South Sudan acted as a mediator when the Government of the Sudan and the opposition were signing the Juba Peace Agreement on 3 October 2020 proves the efficacy of the principle “African solutions for African problems”. We hope that the sides will be guided by this principle when taking up the Abyei issue. Some of the prerequisites for its successful resolution are clearly in place. We call on Khartoum and Juba to make use of this positive momentum to achieve progress on this track. We expect the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to continue its relevant contacts with the Sudanese parties.

We attach great importance to the activity of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), especially with regard to maintaining constructive relations among the communities on the ground and promoting national reconciliation. UNISFA’s support allowed for the third meeting of traditional leaders in December 2020 and the Aweil peace conference in South Sudan in February 2021 to take place, which brought together representatives of the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. This instils some optimism. We must continue pursuing confidence-building measures, in particular within discussions of issues related to transhumance.

We consider the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism to be an integral part of the system for preventing incidents from erupting between the parties. We also believe that UNISFA’s support for the Mechanism is key for the security architecture. We have noted that, in his recent report (S/2021/383), the Secretary-General highlights the rather moderate results that the Mechanism produced in achieving its benchmarks. We believe that this has to do, in no small measure, with coronavirus-related restrictions. However, some progress was in fact made: Khartoum and Juba granted approval to the requested air and land patrols, the Joint Political and Security Mechanism convened a meeting, and the four border corridors are functioning. There is no question that the work to achieve the benchmarks must continue.

We thank the Secretary-General for convening consultations with the interested parties, the results of which were brought to the Security Council’s attention in his letter of 1 April (S/2021/322). We understand that it does not appear possible at this point to develop any realistic plans for the eventual drawdown of the mission. At the same time, we note that the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia have generally spoken out in favour of keeping the Blue Helmets in Abyei. The only logical step in this situation would be to extend the mandate of UNISFA, including

support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. We assume that the Secretariat's proposals regarding the civil component of the mission should be considered with due account for the opinions of Khartoum and Juba, as is required under the fundamental principles of peacekeeping.

Annex XII**Statement by the Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations**

I thank both briefers for their updates.

With regard to the political situation in Abyei, the United Kingdom welcomes the continued improvements in bilateral relations between the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, evidenced by the Sudanese Foreign Minister's first official visit being to Juba.

The recent agreement of a declaration of principles by the Government of the Sudan and the Al-Hilu faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, is also welcome. We commend the role that the Government of South Sudan has been playing in facilitating upcoming negotiations and continue to urge all parties to engage constructively in meaningful talks.

With regard to Abyei, however, it is disappointing that the high-level engagement of the Sudan and South Sudan over Abyei's final status and border demarcation, which we saw last October, has yet to be realized in any meaningful way in Abyei, where the security situation remains unpredictable, affecting the daily lives of ordinary people. We urge both countries to seize the opportunity of renewed engagement to reach a resolution on Abyei.

With regard to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), the United Kingdom commends the women and men of the Security Force for their ongoing efforts to support peace and security in Abyei, including through the removal of explosive hazards, the facilitation of intercommunal dialogue and the promotion of women's empowerment. We also welcome UNISFA's continued engagement with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, including the outcomes of the second meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, in October 2020. The United Kingdom calls for the parties to continue to engage regularly on the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and border-related benchmarks.

We remain of the view that UNISFA has an important role to play in supporting progress in Abyei. We note the observation of the Secretary-General in his letter of 1 April (S/2021/322) that regional consultations on an exit strategy for UNISFA were inconclusive. We hope that, in time, progress can be made between the parties to develop viable options.

However, it is regrettable that the mission continues to face operational challenges in fulfilling its mandate, particularly in terms of the obstruction of mandated tasks. Only limited progress has been made on the Council's repeated requests to make progress on the operationalization of Anthony airstrip, the granting of outstanding visa requests, and the appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission. We reiterate our call for both parties to facilitate the removal of these operational obstacles, which are severely impeding the stability and security of Abyei. We also urge all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law and allow humanitarian actors to deliver aid to those in need without hindrance.

Finally, with respect to regional tensions, the United Kingdom would like to note wider regional tensions and their potential impact upon Abyei. It is positive to have the participation of the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia at today's meeting. It is our sincere hope that any regional tensions can be resolved through dialogue and that regional partners and the United Nations are able to ensure that current disputes do not damage the effectiveness of UNISFA.

In closing, the United Kingdom commends the important role UNISFA continues to play in challenging circumstances and supports the renewal of its mandate.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

I want to thank the Under-Secretary-General and the Special Envoy for their briefings today. We appreciate their leadership and dedicated support for Abyei and for the resolution of outstanding border issues between the Sudan and South Sudan.

The United States wants to reiterate its commitment to supporting stability in Abyei, along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan, and in the broader region. The overall recent deterioration of the security situation within and between countries in the region is of deep concern to the United States. Several overlapping crises could further endanger the security of the people in Abyei, and we urge all parties to reinforce their efforts to find ways to reduce tensions and to refrain from any unilateral declarations or actions that could destabilize Abyei and endanger civilians.

We are disappointed that tensions in the region prevented the holding of joint consultations among the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia to discuss the future of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), as requested by the Security Council in accordance with the mission's current mandate. Nevertheless, we commend the Special Envoy's efforts aimed at conducting individual consultations with each country.

The United States welcomes continued cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Sudan and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to manage bilateral disputes by supporting peace, security and stability, and we encourage both countries to build on the commitments of the Juba Peace Agreement, prioritize safety and security of civilians living in Abyei, ensure stability in the region and determine the final status of Abyei.

We also encourage all parties to find a mutually acceptable resolution of Abyei's final status and the development of security arrangements to allow for a responsible exit of UNISFA. Until the two countries mutually agree on another arrangement, or Abyei's final status is resolved, the Sudan and South Sudan should abide by the 2011 agreement on Abyei, which led to the creation of UNISFA.

In that regard, the United States strongly encourages the Sudan and South Sudan to move forward in setting up the agreed joint institutions, particularly the joint police service. We urge South Sudan to name its 35 members of the joint police service in conjunction with the Sudan's increasing the number of visas for United Nations police. The joint police service would provide protection for areas of joint activity and interest. We once again reiterate our call for the Sudan to issue visas for United Nations personnel mandated by the Security Council and for a civilian deputy head of mission.

The United States also remains concerned about obstacles that hinder UNISFA's work to protect civilians and fully implement its mandate. The safety and security of peacekeepers is a priority for the United States. Denying access to the Anthony airfield is endangering peacekeepers, given that it restricts UNISFA's ability to provide medical or casualty evacuation in a timely manner. This issue must be addressed immediately.

We commend UNISFA's efforts aimed at continuing to promote women's meaningful participation in community decision-making and at protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/383) indicates that more women are participating in peace dialogues and that male traditional leaders in the Misseriya community have committed to promoting

women's participation in decision-making. This is welcome progress, and we look forward to hearing about further developments in this regard in the next report.

We call for the international community to support the additional and equitable provision of humanitarian assistance so as to ensure that crisis-affected people and vulnerable populations in both communities in Abyei can access life-saving humanitarian aid. We ask the Sudan and South Sudan to improve humanitarian access in order to allow humanitarian agencies to respond to emergencies. Threats to humanitarian staff providing life-saving assistance to civilians in the Abyei area are unacceptable.

Finally, we look forward to the leadership and engagement of the African Union in helping to facilitate developing mutually agreeable security arrangements for Abyei and the final resolution of its status. In recent years, the relative calm in Abyei is the result of dedicated work by UNISFA and warming relations between the Sudan and South Sudan. Now is the time to take advantage of the situation to develop longer-term solutions for the area, which can be sustained after the departure of United Nations peacekeepers. The United States stands ready to support South Sudan, the Sudan and the region as it pursues a lasting security architecture.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Parfait Onanga-Anyanga for their insightful briefings. I welcome the participation of the distinguished representatives of the Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia in our meeting today.

Over the past year, we have witnessed the active engagement of the Sudan and South Sudan in mutually facilitating the transition. The progress in the transitional period in both countries and their continued rapprochement has created a window of opportunity for the two sides to actively engage in addressing the Abyei issue, thereby contributing to long-term peace, stability and development in the Sudan and South Sudan. At today's meeting, I would like to emphasize the three following points.

First, it is critical to achieve a timely and peaceful solution to the Abyei issue. While it is encouraging that the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan have resumed dialogue and engagement on this matter, practical progress has remained very limited. In this regard, we call on the Sudan and South Sudan to promptly resolve the issue through peaceful means, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Further concrete progress must be made with regard to the benchmarks of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The continued efforts of the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA), the Special Envoy, regional organizations — namely, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development — and international partners, as well as friendly relations among neighbouring countries, will remain crucial in nurturing dialogue, trust and confidence between the Sudan and South Sudan and in reaching a sustainable solution to the Abyei issue.

We commend the efforts of UNISFA in promoting reconciliation among the various tribes as well as its efforts in promoting gender equality and the role of women on the ground.

Secondly, it is equally important to ensure security for the people in the Area. Even though the situation in Abyei has been relatively calm over recent months, continued incidents related to inter-communal violence, crime and unidentified armed groups are issues of concern.

In the light of the current situation, the presence of UNISFA will continue to be essential in maintaining stability in Abyei. Enhancing UNISFA's ability to fulfil its mandate in an effective, efficient, objective and impartial manner should remain one of our top priorities, including the need to ensure the safety and security of its personnel.

Viet Nam calls on both the Government of the Sudan and the Government of South Sudan to continue to support UNISFA in carrying out its mandate, as well as to support the appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission and the establishment of joint security institutions, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions.

We would also like to commend the contributions to UNISFA by countries of the region.

Thirdly, strengthened efforts are needed to address the humanitarian situation in Abyei due to the impact of the coronavirus disease, economic challenges and natural disasters. We call on the two Governments to continue ensuring unhindered access for humanitarian assistance in the Area.

We also commend the efforts of UNISFA, the United Nations Mine Action Service and partners in facilitating mine clearance and risk-education activities in Abyei over recent months. It is encouraging that 331,783 square metres of land and 674 kilometres of roads are now marked as safe.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to commend, and reiterate our support for, the work of UNISFA and the Special Envoy.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations, Taye Atskeselassie Amde**

Let me join others in congratulating you, Sir, on a successful presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We appreciated the opportunity to participate in the open debates. Thank you, also, for convening today's important briefing on the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA).

We thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for their briefings. I also wish to recognize our brothers from South Sudan and the Sudan. Allow me to make three brief remarks.

First, as we all know, the 2011 agreement that established UNISFA provided for the deployment of only Ethiopian contingents in Abyei. This makes UNISFA unique. It is one of the most challenging missions, especially given its location and difficult supply chains. However, UNISFA is one of the missions of which Ethiopia is most proud. Our contingents have, over the years, made huge sacrifices in discharging their mandate.

UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) have contributed enormously to preserving peace and stability in Abyei and along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan.

Ethiopia remains committed to the success of the mission and looks forward to continuing discussions with all stakeholders about its future. However, we wish to underline that any reduction of forces would jeopardize the safety of UNISFA personnel and lead to the deterioration of the security situation in Abyei. Ethiopia firmly believes the drawdown or exit of UNISFA should be based solely on the security situation on the ground and tangible progress towards the final status of Abyei.

Secondly, we welcome, and are much encouraged by, the rapprochement between the Sudan and South Sudan. It is not only the Sudanese and South Sudanese people who benefit from the improved bilateral relations between the two sisterly countries; the entire region benefits. The two parties must be encouraged and supported to persist in their joint pursuit of lasting peace through dialogue. The rapprochement also offers an opportunity for a negotiated settlement on the final status of Abyei.

Thirdly, as the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/383) makes it clear that, despite marked improvements in bilateral relations, the security situation in the box remains "tense and unpredictable". Communal clashes and tensions, including at the Amiet common market, persist. UNISFA continues to encourage and support grass-roots inter-community peace and reconciliation initiatives. In this regard, it is important to resume the stalled peace dialogue between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. We believe the deployment of formed police units will ease the patrolling burden on UNISFA and curb the increasing criminality in the box.

Finally, while our region is indeed facing temporary challenges, it should not in any way impact UNISFA and its mandate delivery. We must be mindful of the stabilizing role of UNISFA and the spirit of good-neighbourliness that has been in place since its deployment in 2011. We urge our Sudanese brothers to insulate UNISFA from other developments in the region. Ethiopia remains committed to addressing any differences with our Sudanese neighbours through dialogue and within existing mechanisms.

Let me conclude by reiterating that UNISFA has registered laudable progress in ensuring the safety and security of civilians and the general stability of Abyei. The gains achieved through all our sacrifices must be protected and consolidated.

Annex XVI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations, Akuei Bona Malwal

We are glad to be participating in this meeting under your able leadership, Sir. As this may be your last presidency of the Security Council, I would like to thank you and your staff for the way you treated our delegation over the past two years. We have greatly benefited from your country's experience and your wise advice. I and the members of our delegation are grateful, and we hope to carry on this mutual respect long after you successfully end your tenure on the Council.

Allow me to welcome the new Permanent Representatives who joined the Council earlier this year. Some of them I have known and worked with in the past. I would like to extend a special welcome to Ambassador Martin Kimani, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya. I would also like to congratulate and welcome the distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the United States, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who is an old friend of Africa and of South Sudan. We look forward to working closely with them all during their tenure.

I am participating in this meeting of the Security Council after a long hiatus because of the coronavirus disease. In my absence, I regretted not being here when Mr. David Shearer gave his last reporting to the Council (see S/2020/1237). I would like to take this opportunity to belatedly thank him for his service to the people of South Sudan over the preceding four years. During his leadership of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, South Sudan passed through historic and sensitive times, and David Shearer handled those times with the utmost professionalism and diligence. And, I can honestly say, he left South Sudan in a far better place than when he first started. The people of South Sudan are grateful for his service and friendship, and we wish him the best in his future endeavours.

Equally, Professor Nicholas Haysom was wisely appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to replace Mr. Shearer. We would like to applaud the Secretary-General for selecting Professor Haysom, who is not new to South Sudan or to the issues at hand. Our delegations would like to officially congratulate Professor Haysom for his appointment and to welcome him to South Sudan.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's interim report on Abyei (S/2021/383). However, I would like to make a few clarifications regarding the report.

In paragraph 10, it is reported that

“[o]n 20 January, a South Sudan People's Defence Forces team of eight armed members of the Special Forces entered the Abyei Area and proceeded north towards Athony village, before turning back south and leaving the Area.”

This sounds like a provocative act when, as I am informed by the South Sudanese Chief Administrator in Abyei, the driver of the Toyota pickup car simply took a wrong direction towards the north, when he was supposed to travel south to Mayen Abun, in Warap state. It was just an inadvertent mistake.

In paragraph 14, it is reported that the chiefs

“did however agree to reconvene a restructured Joint Community Peace Committee and to engage in localized pre-migration meetings in the three transhumance corridors”,

when what the chiefs agreed was to meet any time after 26 February 2021 in order to finalize discussion of issues that were not agreed to in the five-day Aweil meeting.

I thought I should clarify those two points in the report.

Although there are still problems here and there regarding peaceful community coexistence, there are positive signs that the two countries, with the help of the international community, can take advantage to improve the situation in Abyei. As the Secretary-General's report states, the newly improved relations between the Sudan and South Sudan are not yet reflected by positive change in Abyei. Nevertheless, since the change in Government in Khartoum, discussions have already taken place between the leadership of the two countries concerning Abyei. We are hopeful that those discussions and meetings will continue to narrow the gap of disagreement between both sides on how to resolve the Abyei situation.

In this regard, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa recently conducted consultations with many parties in the region on the Abyei exit strategy. My Government responded to this consultation with a letter in which it stated that there was still insecurity in the Abyei Area and that the Ethiopian troops under the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) were still very much needed. My Government's position is that any premature discussion of an exit strategy may be counterproductive. Therefore, we think UNISFA's mandate should be renewed for a longer period and that the presence of the Ethiopian troops in Abyei ought not to be linked to any other developments in the region.

In conclusion, the situation in Abyei currently may not be ideal but there is some stability, tense as it may be, according to the Secretary-General's report. Let us build on that and on the improved relations between the Sudan and South Sudan in the hope that, finally, we may be able to give the people of Abyei a lasting and peaceful resolution.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), and to Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, and to state that we have taken note of the Secretary-General's report on the issue published under the symbol S/2021/383.

The bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan have been improving steadily in recent months, as evidenced by, among other things, the regular exchange of visits between officials of the two countries at various levels and the agreement to open border crossings between the two countries in order to facilitate the cross-border movement of people, goods and services. In that regard, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Maryam Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi, chose Juba, the capital of South Sudan, for her first foreign trip upon assuming her duties, thus reflecting the depth of the historical and political ties between the two countries and the commitment of the Sudan to build on those ties for the benefit of the two brotherly peoples.

With regard to the situation in Abyei, the Minister of East Africa Affairs of the Republic of South Sudan paid a visit to the Sudan last November that lasted several days, during which he held discussions with various officials, with Abyei being at the top of the agenda. The capital Khartoum also hosted a Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting last October, and the Sudan affirms its readiness to implement all the issues agreed upon at that meeting and at previous meetings. The Sudan is also fully prepared to enter into joint arrangements that would ensure the convening and the effectiveness of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee.

This improved atmosphere of rapprochement between the two countries has created a positive environment for the negotiations on the final status of Abyei, something which the political leadership of the Sudan confirmed during the visit to Khartoum of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa last March. The Government of the Sudan is committed to building on the progress in the bilateral relations between the two brotherly neighbours in order to promote peaceful and social coexistence in Abyei, as well as to expediting discussions aimed at reaching an understanding on the final status of Abyei.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, the Government of the Sudan has great faith in its excellent relations with its sister State of South Sudan, which have created a positive environment for the settlement of all outstanding issues with South Sudan, including the situation in Abyei, starting with the establishment of the temporary administrative and security mechanisms stipulated in the agreement of 20 June 2011 signed between the two parties.

Secondly, with regard to the status of UNISFA, the mission is composed of Ethiopian forces, as had been agreed by both parties, on the premise that they are neutral forces. However, given the current course of events on the Sudan-Ethiopia border regions of Fashaqah Al-Kubra and Fashaqah Al-Sughra, the Ethiopian forces have lost all neutrality. It is therefore necessary to consider replacing them with

forces from different countries selected from the United Nations list of peacekeeping operations troop-contributing countries.

Thirdly, we wish to note that the issues related to the deployment of police personnel, the operation of the Anthony Airfield and the appointment of a civilian Deputy Head of Mission were discussed at the last meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, and an opinion was agreed upon with the accord of the two countries' leadership.

I wish to reiterate the commitment of the Government of the Sudan to strengthen its cooperation with the Government of South Sudan, in order to bolster the work of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. I also wish to reiterate the Government's commitment to establish joint mechanisms between the two countries based on the terms of the agreements signed between the two sides, in an effort to reach a settlement on the final status of Abyei in accordance with agreed terms of reference.
