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New York

President: Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2023/305)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2023/305)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; and Ms. Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/305, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei.

I now give the floor to Ms. Pobee.

Ms. Pobee: I thank members for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and the mission's support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). I take this opportunity to update the Council on some of the most recent developments since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/305), including those related to the outbreak of hostilities in the Sudan.

The outbreak of fighting in the Sudan on 15 April capped off a reporting period marked by encouraging signs of engagement between the Sudan and South Sudan on the Abyei issue. Of significance in that regard was a meeting between the President of South Sudan and the Chairperson of the Sovereign Council of the Sudan in Juba in January, at which they discussed Abyei and possible cooperation on their shared border. At a meeting between the chairpersons of the national committees of the two countries, convened on 9 and

10 April in Khartoum, the parties agreed to continue discussing issues related to Abyei, including the final status. I welcome those positive developments and commend the parties for their willingness to engage.

Despite the positive momentum created earlier in the reporting period, the outbreak of violence in the Sudan may deeply impact the chance for political progress on Abyei and border issues. With fighting ongoing and mediation efforts under way, the United Nations will continue to support the Sudan and South Sudan when dialogue on Abyei resumes. Special Envoy Tetteh, who will brief the Council today, will provide members with a more comprehensive update on developments related to the Sudan and South Sudan.

In Abyei, UNISFA is monitoring the potential impact of the fighting in the Sudan, such as an influx of displaced persons, the entry of armed groups into the Area or the emboldening of spoilers in local intercommunal relations. While none of those risks have materialized in a major way so far, the mission remains alert to their possibility. More immediately, UNISFA has already taken steps to protect the safety of its personnel in the Sudan, with the evacuation of 33 personnel from Khartoum on 23 April. On 2 and 3 May, 58 United Nations civilian personnel were evacuated from Kadugli, following a decision by the designated official for the Sudan.

Despite the cessation of hostilities agreement signed between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka in April 2022, intermittent clashes continued to take place in southern Abyei, with reports of incidents on the opposite side of the southern boundary. The tensions also led to protests within the UNISFA headquarters demanding the removal of Twic Dinka contracted staff, compelling the mission to provide physical security for those individuals.

UNISFA continued to support efforts led by the Government of South Sudan to reduce tensions between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities, in close coordination with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Those efforts included a civil-society-led dialogue conducted in Wau in April. Although the dialogue did not result in a formal agreement being signed, it did produce agreement in principle on a cessation of hostilities. The outbreaks of violence between the two communities in Abyei have since become less frequent. A related concern is the proliferation of weapons, particularly in southern

Abyei, which has coincided with the emergence of the Ngok Dinka youth self-defence group known as Tit Baai, which was formed after clashes began between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka in February 2022. UNISFA continues to confiscate weapons and ammunition, in keeping with Abyei's weapon-free status.

Despite the continued trust deficit between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, the violence between them declined overall. UNISFA and its partners were able to convene a seasonal peace conference in Todach, inside the Abyei Area, in March. In an agreement signed at the meeting, the communities agreed on a cessation of hostilities and on ensuring freedom of movement, among other measures aimed at peaceful coexistence. Women from both communities participated and presented recommendations that helped inform the agreement.

The humanitarian environment in Abyei remained challenging, with United Nations and non-governmental organizations aiding some 212,000 vulnerable people in Abyei, including roughly 30,000 internally displaced. Intercommunal violence affected humanitarian efforts, with some organizations withdrawing from the Agok area in February and two aid workers killed in an attack in Rumamier on 2 January. The recent outbreak of fighting in the Sudan risks further complicating the humanitarian situation in Abyei. As of 8 May, a total of 535 people from the Sudan have been recorded as arriving in the Area. Humanitarian partners are anticipating and preparing for more population movements.

The reconfiguration of UNISFA into a United Nations multinational peacekeeping force is in its final stages. Of the 3,250 military personnel authorized, 3,078 have deployed. Again, the fighting in the Sudan has disrupted deployment routes, meaning that the scheduled arrival of additional personnel and equipment will have to be postponed, which will affect force capacity. Planning is currently under way on alternative arrangements that can minimize the delay while safeguarding the security of personnel and equipment. The situation in the Sudan has also impacted UNISFA's logistics. Our mission support colleagues are working to secure the reliable resupply of goods. That includes logistics for the headquarters of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Kadugli, in the Sudan, and its two team sites, where restrictions on air and ground movement have created additional

challenges for resupply as well as the implementation of mandates.

UNISFA continues to face challenges related to force mobility, particularly during the rainy season, which severely restricts ground movement. At the same time, no progress has been made regarding the re-operationalization of the Verification and Monitoring Mechanism's Sector 1 headquarters in Gok Machar, South Sudan, and its two team sites, following its forced withdrawal in 2021. We note the call of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism on 18 January for a strategy to sensitize the communities along the border, including in Gok Machar, and urge the Government of South Sudan to take the necessary steps to enable the re-establishment of those locations as soon as possible. Due to the non-issuance of visas, there has been no progress on the deployment of the three formed police units and additional individual police officers mandated by the Security Council. In the meantime, United Nations police continued to assist and monitor the community protection and joint protection committees. Needless to say, it is now more critical than ever to provide rule-of-law support to the people of Abyei, and we count on the Security Council to lend its valuable support on that issue.

During the period under review, UNISFA reported the deployment of South Sudanese military and police personnel in Agok, in southern Abyei, and Sudanese national police in Farouk, in northern Abyei. The mission sent notes verbales to both Governments requesting them to remove their security personnel in line with Abyei's demilitarized status.

I am pleased to report that the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan, in collaboration with UNISFA, finalized the administrative arrangements for the Abyei joint programme and began the implementation of projects to create an environment conducive to peaceful coexistence. The first projects include the establishment of a nutrition centre in Amiet market for women and children and the provision of vocational training for young people.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Major General Benjamin Sawyerr and the women and men of UNISFA for their work in the service of peace in Abyei, particularly at a time marked by additional challenges and uncertainty. I would also like to express our appreciation to the troop- and police-contributing countries for their close collaboration and to the

members of the Security Council for their continued support to UNISFA.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Pobee for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Tetteh.

Ms. Tetteh: I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the progress in implementing resolution 2046 (2012), which relates to outstanding bilateral issues between the Sudan and South Sudan, and the situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

The unprecedented conflict that erupted in the Sudan on 15 April between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), in addition to its devastating impact on the Sudanese population, is also having a profound effect on the bilateral relationship between the Sudan and South Sudan. The humanitarian, security, economic and political consequences of the developments in the Sudan have raised concerns among the South Sudanese political leadership. The unstable situation has already seen the return of South Sudanese refugees being hosted by the Sudan, as my colleague Assistant Secretary-General Pobee mentioned, and we could potentially see more than 200,000 South Sudanese refugees hosted by the Sudan returning if stability is not restored soon. That would be a challenge for a country where two thirds of the population already require humanitarian assistance. As the Sudanese authorities are not currently in a position to protect their borders effectively, the insecurity at the border between the Sudan and South Sudan could increase with the cross-border movements of armed and criminal groups. The fighting in the Sudan is also affecting the daily commercial activities and delivery of food and other basic goods from the Sudan to South Sudan and could potentially put oil exports from South Sudan through Port Sudan at risk.

Based on our consultations, the Government of South Sudan is wary of the consequences of the Sudanese conflict for South Sudan's stability and security and has been particularly proactive in engaging with the Sudanese parties. Juba has been at the forefront of mediation efforts between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces leaders, including as part of the 16 April regional proposal made by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for the Presidents of South Sudan, Kenya and Djibouti to urgently travel to Khartoum to engage with

the parties; as part of the joint South Sudanese-Egyptian call for a ceasefire and proposal of joint mediation; and in a standalone South Sudanese engagement which, we note, resulted in a commitment in principle by Sudanese military leaders to a seven-day cease fire, which was announced by South Sudan's Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The conflict in the Sudan is putting in jeopardy the incremental progress achieved by the two countries in addressing their outstanding bilateral issues. Before the fighting erupted, relations between Khartoum and Juba were stable, characterized by regular bilateral meetings, including at the highest level, with General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan visiting Juba in January and February. The countries also held a meeting of their Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM) in Juba in January, but no other joint mechanisms provided for in their 2012 cooperation agreements have so far been reactivated.

While the Sudan is experiencing this conflict, South Sudan is still grappling with a fragile security and political situation. President Salva Kiir Mayardit's decision on 3 March to dismiss the Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs, Angelina Teny, and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition appointees have sparked tensions, members of the international community have made engagements to seek to reduce the impact. As has been the case over the past few years, high-level engagements have featured prominently in the countries' bilateral relations.

In January, General Al-Burhan and President Kiir agreed to establish a joint security force along their countries' borders to prevent the infiltration of illegal weapons and combat negative forces and their activities. General Al-Burhan and President Kiir also agreed to deploy joint patrols to halt the uncontrolled flow of arms and ammunition across the border and to institute regular meetings between their respective national security agencies to share intelligence and coordinate actions to address potential threats.

On 19 February, they closed the workshop that evaluated the Juba Peace Agreement in the Sudan, ending with the signing of the third amendment to the implementation matrix. At the same workshop, President Kiir also urged the non-signatory rebel movements — the SPLM-North faction, led by Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, and the Sudan Liberation Army faction, led by Abdul Wahid Al-Nur — to join the

peace process in order to bring about sustainable peace within the Sudan and within the two countries. General Al-Burhan reiterated the commitment of his Government to working with the signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement to fully implement the matrix in view of the desire for sustainable peace in the Sudan.

In late February, a high-level South Sudanese delegation — comprised of Mr. Benjamin Bol Mel, presidential envoy on special programmes; Mr. Dier Tong Ngor, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning; Mr. Puot Kang Chol, the Minister of Petroleum; and Mr. Johnny Ohisa Damian, Governor of the Bank of South Sudan— travelled to Khartoum for negotiations on oil and other economic matters. The two countries signed agreements relating to economic and technical arrangements on oil, including arrangements concerning the transportation, processing and export of South Sudan's crude oil, as well as the arrangements for crude oil lifted by the Sudan to supply the Um-Dabakir power station and the Khartoum Refinery, in addition to dealing with other financial issues.

On 13 March, as guarantor of South Sudan's Peace Agreement, the Sudan dispatched to Juba a high-level delegation led by a member of the Sovereign Council, Lieutenant General Shams-Eddin Al-Kabashi, and accompanied by the Minister of Defence, Lieutenant General Yassin Ibrahim Yassin, as well as the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ali Elsadiq Ali, to help unblock the deadlock between President Kiir and First Vice-President Riek Machar.

Subsequent to that visit, there was also an announcement by South Sudan's Presidential Adviser on Security Affairs, General Tut Gatluak, of the readiness of the two sides to discuss the implementation of the previously negotiated four freedoms agreement. The efforts of the Sudanese as guarantors of the Peace Agreement have been complemented by the efforts deployed jointly by the African Union (AU), IGAD, the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), as well as by the engagement of Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, with both leaders.

Concerning the final status of Abyei, the two countries agreed during their meeting in Khartoum on 24 October 2022 to meet again every three or months on the issue. Meanwhile, a meeting of the JPSM, co-chaired by the Ministers of Defence of the two countries, took

place in Juba on 18 January. Among other decisions, the JPSM directed the Military Chiefs of Staff to form a joint committee to monitor the implementation of the resolution of the previous JPSM meeting regarding the redeployment of their respective forces outside the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and to develop a concept of operations to work on the decision by their Heads of State concerning the deployment of a joint force across the Sudan-South Sudan border. The meeting also urged the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) to resume its work within one month, including by holding regular meetings to ease tensions among communities in the Abyei box. It should be recalled that the AJOC last met in 2017.

Another meeting, previously referred to by my colleague, was held by the Abyei Committee chairpersons in Khartoum on 9 and 10 April, with the participation of Major General Benjamin Sawyerr, United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei Force Commander and Acting Head of Mission, and myself, which was the first time since I took on this role that the parties had met in that format to discuss the future of Abyei. They did not reach agreement on the prioritization of the issues to be discussed, with the Sudan emphasizing that the improvement of the security situation in the Area and the provision of humanitarian assistance and services should precede discussions on Abyei's final status, whereas South Sudan was at the time only interested in discussions on the final status. However, both agreed to continue their discussions and to better prepare for the next meeting, which was planned to take place in Juba before the end of April. However, in the light of the current developments, it will take time to recover the momentum that had been building in respect of the discussion of those issues.

I would now like to turn to the developments concerning the two areas of South Kordofan and the Blue Nile. Like most of the Sudan's states, Blue Nile and South Kordofan have been affected by the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, with deteriorating security and humanitarian situations. In Blue Nile, clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces have been reported, and the conflict has displaced some of the civilian population. In South Kordofan, humanitarian activities have been suspended or restricted due to the fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces.

The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces will only deepen the mistrust between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, led by Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, and the Sudanese military actors regarding the comprehensive peace negotiations on the two areas. In January, there was no concrete outcome from the meeting in Juba between General Al-Burhan and SPLM-North's Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, despite the call by President Kiir for the non-signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement to join the peace process in the Sudan.

The priority now obviously is to stop the fighting and to start constructive negotiations between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces that will hopefully lead to a permanent ceasefire and the return to a transitional civilian Government, however distant that prospect immediately seems. That would be the prerequisite for meaningful engagement to resume with the SPLM-North Al-Hilu faction, both for future engagement on Abyei and to address the outstanding bilateral issues between the Sudan and South Sudan.

My Office will continue to engage with the Governments of both countries, the AU and IGAD and work to create more fortuitous circumstances conducive to the return to regular dialogue towards the settlement of the issues provided for in the 2012 cooperation agreements. My Office will also continue to offer its support and work with colleagues in the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan and UNMISS on those issues, including the resolution of the issues pertaining to the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Tetteh for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Assistant-Secretary-General Pobee and Special Envoy Tetteh for sharing the progress of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) on mandate implementation and their updates on Abyei.

I would like to begin by thanking UNISFA's leadership personnel, who continue to provide stability and peace in Abyei, despite the ongoing challenges from the Sudan crisis. It is disappointing to learn that hostilities in Khartoum have further jeopardized the safety and security of UNISFA personnel, as well as

impeded UNISFA's ability to carry out its mandated tasks, including protecting civilians, assisting humanitarian efforts, supporting a peaceful settlement of the final status of Abyei and its border issues and establishing the Abyei police service.

The United States condemns the ongoing fighting in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. We are deeply concerned about the killing of over 500 people, the internal displacement of 334,000 civilians and the safety and security of over 100,000 people fleeing to neighbouring countries. We are also deeply concerned about the protection of children and reports of conflict-related sexual violence towards women, children and men.

According to UNICEF, the fighting in the Sudan has led to a child-protection crisis, in which children are separated from their families, abducted and recruited. We gravely stress that child protection must be a priority and urge UNISFA, regional partners and international partners and Council members to follow good practices for child protection during the Sudan crisis.

We stand in solidarity with the people of the Sudan in their unshakable commitment to democracy and urgently call for the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to implement and uphold a permanent nationwide ceasefire. We urgently call on the parties to commit to ensuring the safety, security and protection of civilians and to return immediately to the process of resuming the Sudan's transition to civilian rule.

We are also gravely concerned for the millions of civilians in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance in the Sudan and the growing attacks on humanitarian aid workers. Armed actors are targeting humanitarian assets and facilities, looting field vehicles and damaging aircraft used to transport aid workers and supplies, limiting assistance to areas where it is needed most. The inability of humanitarian organizations to safely operate threatens to further impact millions of vulnerable Sudanese, especially those displaced by the ongoing fighting.

The United States reiterates its call to parties to ensure the safety and security of all United Nations staff, facilities and humanitarian and medical personnel. We strongly urge the parties to ensure UNISFA and humanitarian partners have immediate, full, safe and unhindered access and capacity to carry out their life-saving work throughout the Sudan.

We are deeply alarmed at the consistent presence of Sudanese and South Sudanese forces and police in Abyei — a clear violation of the demilitarization of the Abyei box. We stress that Abyei should remain demilitarized from any forces besides UNISFA.

We further stress the need for South Sudan to support the Joint Border Verification Monitoring Mechanism in re-establishing Sector 1, located in southern Abyei, given the ongoing fighting between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka, the influx of refugees and internally displaced people fleeing from the Sudan and the presence of armed forces.

We are pleased with UNISFA's continued engagement to resolve tensions between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka. We strongly encourage UNISFA to strengthen those efforts, and we reiterate the Secretary-General's call on both communities to uphold their ceasefire agreement and utilize the tools UNISFA offers to support and enable a safe and inclusive environment. We further call on the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka to utilize peaceful solutions during the seasonal migration period.

To that end, we also encourage UNISFA to continue to pursue gender parity at all levels and to incorporate the perspectives of women and youth within its important work.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and Special Envoy Tetteh for their briefings. I welcome the Permanent Representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan to the meeting today.

The Sudan and South Sudan are parties to the issues related to Abyei. As such, a political solution in that connection cannot be achieved without dialogue and cooperation between the two sides.

In the previous period, bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan improved. The leaders of the two countries maintained close communication on the situation in Abyei, considered the formation of a joint security force along the border and made positive remarks on addressing the final status of Abyei. That laid a good political foundation for the ultimate settlement of Abyei-related issues, which China considers very encouraging.

Regrettably, the current instability in the Sudan may have an impact on and complicate the resolution of the issues. We wish to see an early ceasefire in the

Sudan and believe that the Sudan and South Sudan can maintain the momentum of dialogue and cooperation and implement the consensus already reached. We hope that the Abyei-related issues will not be affected by the situation in the Sudan and that there will continue to be favourable conditions for the settlement of the final status of Abyei for the parties concerned.

China appreciates the sustained efforts by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel to resolve the related issues of Abyei and supports its continued role as the main channel of good offices.

Intercommunal relations are the key to achieving long-term peace and stability in Abyei. In the recent period, intercommunal conflicts in the region caused casualties, damages to houses and displacement. China is concerned about that and calls on relevant communities to cease hostilities and maintain dialogue and engagement to achieve harmonious coexistence. We welcome President Kiir's efforts to convene relevant community leaders to resolve disputes and encourage the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to continue to support the efforts of regional countries and organizations in promoting intercommunal reconciliation and maintaining security in the region.

While paying attention to the situation in the Sudan, the international community should continue to focus on addressing the humanitarian and development challenges faced by the people in Abyei; strengthen basic material assistance such as food and medicine; and provide development support such as education, vocational training and agricultural and pastoral guidance. China welcomes the development and implementation of joint programmes in Abyei by UNISFA and the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan and the implementation of a number of quick-impact projects related to people's livelihoods and well-being.

China commends UNISFA for its unremitting efforts to maintain peace and stability in Abyei and welcomes the upcoming completion of its reconfiguration and the efforts of relevant troop-contributing countries in that regard.

In order for UNISFA to make progress in its work, the close cooperation of the Sudan, South Sudan and other parties is needed. We encourage UNISFA to strengthen strategic communication with all relevant parties and deepen the local population's understanding

of and trust in peacekeeping operations. We also expect the Sudan, South Sudan and other relevant parties to facilitate the UNISFA's implementation of its mandate.

As a troop-contributing country to UNISFA, China will continue to resolutely fulfil its peace mission and support the work of UNISFA with concrete actions to contribute to security and stability in the region.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and Special Envoy Tetteh for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan in our meeting today.

Malta is committed to a stable, secure, peaceful and prosperous Abyei. Only a mutually acceptable permanent settlement can achieve that. We call on all parties to assume their respective responsibilities and to ensure that the region is free from hostilities and violence.

It is with regret that we hear that clashes in the Sudan are adversely impacting the situation in Abyei. As we continue to stand with the people of Abyei, we call on the Sudan and South Sudan to continue working towards a meaningful and lasting peace in the region. Malta is encouraged by the latest high-level engagements, including the Summit held in Juba in January. We also welcome the intercommunal dialogues, which we hope will translate into progress at the grass roots. We urge the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in these talks, as well as of local authorities, traditional leaders, civil society and youth. We stress that political will needs to be matched by implementation.

Violence continues to stall peace and security in Abyei, with civilians bearing the brunt. We strongly condemn the fighting and call on all sides to silence the guns and respect the demilitarized status of the Area. We support the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and the United Nations Mine Action Service for their work in addressing the dangerous proliferation of weapons and possession of firearms and ammunition in the region.

It is unacceptable that sexual and gender-based violence remains rampant, with impunity for perpetrators adding to the distress for women and girls. Malta commends the work of UNISFA as it strives to address and mitigate violence against women and girls through awareness campaigns and training. We also

support the establishment of a referral mechanism that survivors can use, without fear and stigma.

Malta is deeply concerned about the heightened risk of recruitment or use of children in armed conflict, and we acknowledge UNISFA's work in sensitizing interlocutors on these and other related violations.

In Abyei, more than 200,000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Access to basic services, such as water, sanitation, education and primary health care remains dire. Climate-induced flooding and water shortages are driving further displacement and leading to outbreaks of communicable diseases. That, in addition to the conflict, exacerbates hunger and severe food insecurity in the region.

Malta commends the work of local and international humanitarian partners on the ground and regrets that insecurity continues to impact their operations. We continue to call for unhindered, rapid and safe delivery of aid.

We call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law. In that regard, we condemn — in the strongest terms — the murder of two aid workers in Rumamier in January and express our condolences to their families. We remind all parties that humanitarian workers are not targets.

Furthermore, it is imperative that UNISFA's mandate is implemented without hindrance. Parties must respect the freedom of movement of mission personnel, and visas must be issued in a timely manner. We support the ongoing reconfiguration of UNISFA into a multinational force, which is now at its last stages.

As we commend the deployment of an all-woman platoon, Malta continues to support the recruitment of women peacekeepers through the Elsie Initiative Fund, as well as the appointment of gender-based violence officers in the mission.

In conclusion, Malta reiterates the importance of a peaceful and secure Abyei. UNISFA's role is crucial and effective but needs to be complemented by the support of all parties. As the situation in the Sudan enters a chapter of direct talks, we call on all parties to utilize this momentum to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation in Abyei. We can be successful only if political will is translated into action.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Pobe and Special Envoy Tetteh for their briefings.

I will make three brief points.

First, the United Kingdom commends the tireless efforts of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to help maintain peace and security in Abyei under challenging circumstances. A year since the mission began its transition from having a single troop-contributing country to becoming a multinational force, it is clear that this process has been a success and that the newly configured force is making a tangible difference to the security situation in Abyei.

Secondly, despite the positive role played by UNISFA, the local population continues to suffer from an absence of basic services. The United Kingdom urges all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law and protect and enable humanitarian staff, assets and operations to deliver aid to those in need in all parts of Abyei, without hindrance.

We remain concerned about the ongoing intercommunal violence and increasing tensions within the Dinka community. We welcome the recent efforts by South Sudan to stop the violence between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka.

We are, however, concerned by the positioning of the South Sudanese People's Defence Forces and national police service personnel in Abyei, in violation of the 2011 agreement. The presence of those forces is exacerbating tensions and hindering peace. We call upon the Government of South Sudan to withdraw its forces without delay.

Thirdly, we echo the Secretary's General concern over the effect on Abyei of the military clashes across the Sudan. We note the offer by President Kiir to facilitate talks between the Sudanese armed forces and rapid support forces. The United Kingdom underlines its support for regional efforts to promote a ceasefire, including through the trilateral mechanism. We echo calls for a lasting ceasefire and for humanitarian needs to be urgently addressed.

In conclusion, the conflict in the Sudan is a tragedy. It also presents a significant impediment to agreeing a peaceful settlement to the final status of Abyei, which remains key to enabling long-term peace and development in the territory. We urge the parties not to lose sight of this vital issue and stress

the importance of resuming talks on the final status as soon as is practicable.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobe and Special Envoy Hanna Tetteh for their informative briefings. I also welcome the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan to this meeting.

Today's meeting is taking place at a very critical time where, despite the extension of the declared ceasefire, we are witnessing continuing clashes in the Sudan, heavy loss of life and worsening security, economic and humanitarian situations. This could jeopardize the fragile stability that the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) has supported in the Abyei Area.

In view of the current situation in the Sudan and cognizant of its close link to the stability of the Abyei Area and to UNISFA's ability to carry out its mandate, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its call for the parties to put an immediate end to hostilities, commit to the ceasefire, ensure the protection of civilians and promote rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access in the Sudan. In that context, we appreciate the vigorous efforts of Saudi Arabia and the United States in facilitating the ongoing talks between the parties in Jeddah.

The United Arab Emirates continues to provide daily assistance to the Sudanese people and to help evacuate individuals from more than 20 countries and provide them with care throughout their stay in the United Arab Emirates, pending their return to their countries.

We maintain our strong belief that there is no substitute for dialogue and constructive engagement to return the Sudan to the path of a peaceful transition. We will therefore continue to support the initiatives in that regard, such as those led by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the League of Arab States, as well as other initiatives, given their central role in helping the Sudan overcome this crisis.

With regard to the developments in the Abyei Area, we note the need to maintain cooperation between the Sudan and South Sudan on the Abyei Area, including through high-level engagements, such as bilateral talks and meetings on the Abyei Area, the parties' commitment to engage constructively and discuss the

issue of the final status of Abyei in future rounds of talks and their agreement to resume the meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. Again, we believe that regional organizations have an important role in supporting and consolidating those relationships in order to achieve the desired results, especially given the potential impact of the current situation in the Sudan and the ongoing developments in South Sudan.

While efforts continue with regard to paving the way for discussion on the final status of the Abyei Area, nevertheless, we remain concerned about the ongoing intercommunal clashes, violence and incidents hindering UNISFA's operations, which serve only to further exacerbate the already precarious security and humanitarian situation in the Abyei Area. Therefore, the United Arab Emirates calls for a cessation of violence and condemns the killing of civilians and humanitarian workers, as well as incidents of harassment and acts of sexual and gender-based violence.

We commend UNISFA's leadership in advocating for the participation of women from various communities in the Abyei peace and security processes, including the establishment of a joint female peace committee in the Amiet area. We reiterate the critical importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation to ensure sustainable peace processes and prevent the spread of conflict.

Given the difficult living conditions in Abyei and challenges in the wider region, it is encouraging to see the joint efforts of the Resident Coordinators in the Sudan and South Sudan to implement the Abyei joint programme, which is crucial in supporting the livelihoods of the people in the Area. As we have mentioned several times, peaceful coexistence, tolerance and dialogue are essential pillars for building peaceful and prosperous societies. In that context, we commend UNISFA's continued engagement with all stakeholders, including traditional leaders, youth and women, to promote dialogue between communities, in particular ahead of the transhumance period. We call on all parties to abide by their obligations under existing agreements.

Lastly, the United Arab Emirates encourages UNISFA to continue strengthening its efforts in the Abyei Area and coordinating with United Nations agencies to reduce current tensions among communities.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and Special Envoy Tetteh for

their valuable briefings. I would also like to welcome the delegations of the Sudan and South Sudan to today's meeting.

Brazil is proud to contribute to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). It would be remiss of us not to commend UNISFA for its work and show our gratitude to all troop- and police-contributing countries that enable vital activities to be carried out on the border between the Sudan and South Sudan under these dire circumstances. We sincerely appreciate the tireless efforts to protect civilians and sustain the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Abyei.

Brazil echoes the concerns of the Secretary-General in his most recent report (S/2023/305) about the impact of the military clashes in the Sudan on issues relevant to the Abyei situation. Displaced Sudanese civilians, who fled to Abyei in recent weeks, have dealt with spiking food prices affecting the local population since clashes began on 15 April. The fragile security situation in and around the box may deteriorate even more under the new, evolving circumstances. We urge the parties to the conflict in the Sudan to resolve their differences through dialogue. We commend the active role played by the United Nations, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Arab League, the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and all partners of the Sudan that have pushed for a negotiated resolution to the ongoing conflict.

Dialogue is also vital to the dynamics in Abyei and the bilateral links between the Sudan and South Sudan. The January summit in Juba was a timely development, given the increasing need to revitalize the Abyei political process. We sincerely hope that trust between the Sudan and South Sudan will continue to grow. Their commitment to shared understanding and a fair implementation of agreed measures underpins any viable and sustainable solution to the status of Abyei.

Aside from acknowledging the crucial stabilizing factor played by neighbouring countries thus far, we commend the manner in which regional and subregional arrangements have stimulated convergence between the two countries. We particularly support South Sudan's leadership role, alongside Djibouti and Kenya, in their ongoing IGAD engagements with the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. If South Sudan and the Sudan become more prominent stakeholders in

each other's peace, the chances of reaching a deal on their shared border issues will increase.

UNISFA has dealt remarkably well with the challenge of troop reconfiguration. It has largely succeeded in the delicate transition from being a single troop-contributing country mission to a multinational one. We also believe that UNISFA's one-year mandate, established by resolution 2660 (2022), has been an improvement. It enhances the mission's ability to properly implement its fundamental tenets and responsibilities. A more extended authorization entails the mission's leadership and peacekeepers establishing deeper networks with local communities and stakeholders. However, we are concerned that UNISFA will probably face even more stern tests ahead.

Fighting and displacement in the Sudan may cause unpredictable effects in Abyei. Long-standing hindrances to UNISFA's activities, such as visa processing, remain unresolved. Those unnecessary tribulations impair the mission's pivot to additional peacebuilding, police and justice tasks.

We reiterate our full support for UNISFA. Even if today's most pressing issues for the Sudan and South Sudan lie elsewhere, security in Abyei depends on the peacekeeping mission's activities. The proper implementation of the mission's mandate benefits both parties.

In conclusion, we strongly encourage the Sudan and South Sudan to seize the essential support provided by the United Nations, through UNISFA, redouble their goodwill vis-à-vis the mission's personnel and solve the outstanding issues that affect UNISFA's activities.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and Special Envoy Tetteh for their insightful briefings.

Japan appreciates the recent report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) (S/2023/305), which elaborates on both the progress and the challenges in Abyei and highlights the continued relevance of the mission's mandate. Mindful of the observations made in the Secretary-General's report, I would like to make the following four points related to UNISFA's mandate.

First, Japan continues to closely follow the situation in the Sudan, where armed clashes continue unabated and have spread across the country. Once again, we call upon the parties to enact an immediate and permanent

ceasefire and return to peaceful dialogue. Japan also calls on the parties to protect civilians, international organizations and other aid agencies' personnel and medical staff, as well as their equipment and materiel. Humanitarian access must be maintained. Japan expresses its strong concern about the negative impact of the military fighting in the Sudan on the situation in Abyei. We therefore again call on the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces alike to uphold the ceasefire and return to peaceful dialogue and the political process. The Council must speak with one voice in that regard.

Secondly, amid all the challenges, efforts must continue to enhance cooperation among the relevant parties to resolve pending issues related to the final status of Abyei. We encourage both the Sudan and South Sudan to renew their participation in the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. Those bodies are crucial for ensuring effective administration and realizing a peaceful and mutually acceptable resolution.

Thirdly, the immediate security and humanitarian challenges on the ground in Abyei must be addressed. The ongoing intercommunal violence — particularly the increase in tensions between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka — has exacerbated insecurity. The humanitarian situation is worsening, especially owing to flooding and the lack of infrastructure. Japan urges all the relevant parties to promote intercommunal dialogue to tackle those challenges. We also call on both the Sudan and South Sudan to make progress on establishing the Abyei joint police service to ensure lasting security. We ask all the parties to cooperate with humanitarian staff and fully respect their assets and operations in order to ensure local people's access to necessary aid.

Fourthly, Japan calls on both the Sudan and South Sudan to address UNISFA's outstanding operational issues, such as freedom of movement, the deployment of the three formed police units and individual police officers, access to the Athony airstrip and the re-operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Sector 1, including the Sector headquarters in Gok Machar.

In conclusion, Japan would like to thank all UNISFA personnel for their service in protecting civilians and mitigating violence in a challenging environment. We

reiterate our full support for the efforts of the United Nations in the region.

Mr. Biang (Gabon): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely Ghana, Mozambique and my own country, Gabon.

At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2023/305), as well as Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and Special Envoy Tetteh for their insightful briefings on the situation in Abyei and the activities of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Our statement will focus on the political, security and humanitarian situations.

At the political level, the A3 notes the continued strengthening of relations between the Sudanese and South Sudanese authorities through the organization of several high-level meetings, particularly on border issues, with a view to finalizing the status of Abyei. We took positive note of the agreement between the Sudan and South Sudan on strengthening cooperation and resolving outstanding issues following the meeting on the final status of Abyei of the Chairpersons of the national committees of both countries in Khartoum on 24 October 2022. That political will was further demonstrated at the joint meeting between the Sudan and South Sudan on the Abyei region held in Khartoum on 9 April. That positive signal should, however, be translated into action by both countries to enable real progress on the ground towards the finalization of Abyei's status. However, we are concerned about the fact that the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee has not met since 2017, despite statements by the parties. Regrettably, in practice there has been no major progress in the implementation of the 2011 agreement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area for more than a decade.

(spoke in French)

The A3 notes with regret that the internal political situations and the continuing economic, security and humanitarian challenges in the Sudan and South Sudan are significantly slowing progress on finalizing the status of Abyei. The discussion of that final status naturally compels us to consider the current situation in the Sudan and the continuing deadly clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. The situation in the Sudan undoubtedly has repercussions for the situation in Abyei and the ongoing political discussions with South Sudan on

the management of that territory. In that regard, Ghana, Mozambique and Gabon echo the African Union's communiqué of 20 April 2023 and call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, a coordinated and unhindered humanitarian response and the protection of civilians and essential infrastructure in combat zones. We urge other border countries to mobilize to facilitate the repatriation of international personnel and receive refugees from the Sudan. We strongly believe that the current crisis in the Sudan cannot be resolved by military means. We urge all the parties concerned to resume dialogue and work to arrive at an urgent de-escalation plan.

We note that there are other efforts under way towards achieving a permanent ceasefire and creating corridors to allow humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of displaced persons. We reiterate that the trilateral mechanism of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations should play a crucial role in all of those efforts for a unified, coordinated and concerted response.

On the security front, the persistence of intercommunal clashes, armed violence, the destruction of property and sexual violence in Abyei are major sources of concern for the A3. We firmly condemn the intercommunal violence that has occurred, particularly between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka and the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. We call on all parties to refrain from any action that could exacerbate tensions. We note President Salva Kiir Mayardit's commitment to easing tensions between the communities through a meeting of the Governors of Warrap and Lakes states, the Chief Administrator of Abyei and the traditional leaders of the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka to discuss their differences. We hope that the creation of a buffer zone through the deployment of security forces in the disputed areas will lead to a de-escalation of the violence. We also welcome the actions of UNISFA aimed at promoting an intercommunal dialogue.

The A3 condemns the violation of the Abyei Area's demilitarized status by the continued presence in southern Abyei of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, intelligence officers and members of the South Sudan national police service, as well as the decision of the Government of the Sudan to deploy national police officers to the northern part of Abyei. It is important to keep in mind in that regard that the absence of

strong administrative institutions, particularly in terms of security and justice, is rendering the territory permanently fragile.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, the serious humanitarian crisis affecting the Horn of Africa due to climate change and the various ongoing conflicts has not spared the Abyei region. The A3 notes that the people of Abyei are experiencing significant difficulties in accessing basic services. The situation is expected to worsen with the humanitarian impact of the clashes in the Sudan, which are leading to the mass displacement of civilians. Given the impact of the situation in the Sudan on the humanitarian situation in Abyei, the A3 stress that it is crucial to strengthen humanitarian assistance and mobilize adequate funding to meet the growing needs of people already suffering in difficult living conditions, which it will be essential to improve by restoring the provision of services, including access to water, health, education, communications and basic infrastructure.

The A3 condemns in the strongest terms the armed attacks on UNISFA staff and humanitarian personnel. We offer our sincere condolences to the families of the deceased aid workers in Abyei. It is imperative that every measure be taken to ensure the safety and protection of humanitarian workers, as well as unhindered humanitarian access. We further urge the Sudan and South Sudan to fully respect the status of forces agreement and to facilitate the implementation of UNISFA's mandate through the issuance of visas and necessary administrative documents for the deployment of troops, civilians and police units.

The A3 underscores that a solution on Abyei's final status can be achieved only if the Sudan and South Sudan stabilize their internal political situations and make concrete the discussions aimed at reaching an agreement on the management of the Area. In that regard, the A3 commends the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for their engagement in support of the bilateral discussions for peace in the region and on defining the status of the Abyei Area. We would also like to warmly commend the UNISFA staff, who are carrying out their mandate despite the difficult conditions.

In conclusion, we reiterate our full support to Special Envoy Tetteh and all the stakeholders for their tireless efforts on the ground to find a political solution to the issue of the final status of Abyei.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I too join others in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobee and Special Envoy Hanna Tetteh for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of the Permanent Representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan at today's meeting. I would like to emphasize four points.

First, the Abyei Area has once again been feeling the effects of the instability that its surrounding region has been experiencing since 15 April, when fighting began in the Sudan. The status quo that has existed in the Abyei Area since 2016 has exacerbated that vulnerability, which becomes worse each time a crisis occurs in the region. The situation is all the more regrettable because the conflict in the Sudan risks holding up the positive dialogue that had been under way for several months between Khartoum and Juba. We welcomed those efforts, which offered encouraging prospects, and urge the parties to continue them.

Only the parties themselves can bring about stability in Abyei. The current crisis should motivate them to get back to basics. Beyond resolving the territory's final-status issues, progress should also be made towards improving the living conditions of the local population and preventing intercommunal violence. We welcome the peacebuilding efforts of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), in conjunction with the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan, and we encourage the United Nations to adapt to the current challenges in order to preserve those significant gains. We also call on the communities of Abyei to stay out of the ongoing conflict in the Sudan. The parties to the conflict should refrain from any action that could add to the instability in Abyei, which should be a demilitarized zone.

UNISFA has a major role to play in protecting civilians, and in that regard, we welcome all the efforts it has made to encourage peace between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. We are deeply concerned about the violence between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities and call on the South Sudanese authorities to continue their efforts to bring about peace. UNISFA, which only recently completed a complex and costly reconfiguration, is already facing new logistical challenges. It must maintain its capacity to fulfil its mandate, and we are counting on the Secretariat, the troop-contributing countries and the countries of the region to ensure that.

In that context, we reiterate our full support for Special Envoy Hanna Tetteh and her teams. The United Nations has an essential role to play in coordinating peace efforts in the Horn of Africa, particularly with regard to the conflict in the Sudan, and France is playing its full part in those efforts. We encourage the States of the region to resolve their disputes through dialogue, whether they concern Abyei, other border disputes or the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Pobe and Special Envoy Tetteh for their briefings, and I commend the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for its efforts, especially in promoting dialogue and security in the Abyei Administrative Area even now, under more difficult conditions. In that context, we urge the parties to ensure unhindered access for UNISFA and see to the security of its staff.

At the outset, Albania expresses its concern about the situation in the Sudan, which represents a risk for the already fragile Abyei Area. We call on the Sudanese parties to cease hostilities and work to achieve a nationwide ceasefire, as well as supporting the regional efforts in that regard. I will make three brief points.

First, we want to commend the high-level engagement that was ongoing before the fighting started in the Sudan. The fighting is affecting the momentum that was reached previously in implementing the agreement on the administrative and political arrangements for Abyei. In that context, we urge the Sudan and South Sudan to focus on reconvening meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and to implement the agreement on administrative and political arrangements aimed at resolving border issues and community tensions. The parties should ensure that the meetings facilitate the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in order to strengthen their role.

Secondly, the security situation remains very difficult. We are concerned about the fact that the unresolved final status of the Abyei Area and the situation in the Sudan have increased the tensions. We condemn the continued armed clashes between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka communities, which are a major challenge for the protection of civilians and have resulted in an increase in the circulation of weapons among young people. We call on all stakeholders to implement the cessation of hostilities agreement and to work with UNISFA to strengthen dialogue and social

cohesion. In that regard, we call for the removal of all obstacles to the mission in its work and echo the Secretary-General's call for the Sudan and South Sudan to withdraw their military and police troops from the Abyei Area.

Thirdly, we remain concerned about the protection of civilians and the dire humanitarian situation, particularly as the ongoing violence has led to the displacement of thousands of people and has increased human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence. Civilians are being denied basic services and access to justice and are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. To that end, establishing joint border structures, including the Abyei police, is essential to enhancing the rule of law and strengthening accountability.

In conclusion, despite the challenging situation, the Sudan and South Sudan must continue to work to resolve the final status of Abyei through peaceful means. The fighting in the Sudan risks preventing further dialogue and impeding UNISFA's implementation of its mandate. We stress that a settlement on the final status of Abyei can be reached only through dialogue and compromise.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we would like to wish everyone in the Chamber a happy 9 May, which is Victory Day. On this momentous occasion, we pay our profound respects and extend our deepest recognition to all whose unparalleled feats on the battlefield and selfless labour on the home front enabled the defeat of Nazism. Were it not for this day, the founding of the United Nations would not have happened. We believe that the legacy of the great victory will continue to contribute to strengthening and building productive relations among nations and peoples on a basis of respect for the principles of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples.

We thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobe and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa Hanna Tetteh for their briefings. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Al-Harith Idriss Al-Harith Mohamed and Mr. Akuei Bona Malwal, the Permanent Representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan.

We very much appreciate the joint efforts deployed by the leadership of South Sudan and other regional players aimed at ensuring a swift cessation of the hostilities in the Sudan between the Sudanese Armed

Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. We note in particular the work of the South Sudan authorities in hosting Sudanese refugees on their territory and their willingness to assist in resolving the humanitarian crisis in the region. We believe that a settlement in the Sudan would also help to create conditions conducive to advancing cooperation on the Abyei issue, especially since both countries recently demonstrated earnest intentions to develop their dialogue on Abyei, including by establishing mutually beneficial cooperation on the joint exploitation of the disputed Area's potential oil resources. The summit of the leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan and the meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, both held in January in Juba, served to reaffirm their commitment to working together on border issues. We commend the determination of both countries to develop a strategy for working with local communities living along the common border to restore the normal functioning of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, including in Gok Machar.

We continue to believe that, in order to successfully advance an inter-Sudanese settlement that would determine Abyei's final status, joint efforts by both parties are needed. We consider unacceptable any unilateral attempts to alter the status of the disputed Area in violation of the existing international legal framework and the agreements signed by the two States. In that connection, it is important that both countries uphold their obligations to support Abyei's demilitarized status.

The state of intercommunal dialogue in the Area is a cause for concern, especially in the light of the ongoing conflict between the Twic Dinka and Ngok Dinka. At the same time, we note the significant steps taken by the South Sudanese authorities aimed at achieving reconciliation between the two communities.

The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) remains a key factor for ensuring stability in the region. We welcome the role the Blue Helmets are playing in resolving current security problems and the assistance that is being provided through the United Nations peacebuilding programme. The transformation of UNISFA into a multinational mission is almost complete. We expect the mission to continue to carry out its mandate with a clear focus on maintaining security and providing support to both States in their efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution to the border dispute.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I join other representatives in thanking the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Martha Pobe, and Special Envoy Hanna Serwaa Tetteh for their informative briefings. I also acknowledge the presence of the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan, whom we welcome. I also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2023/305) and on progress made towards the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), submitted pursuant to resolution 2660 (2022).

Ecuador underscores the extensive efforts of UNISFA to fulfil its mandate in complex circumstances and urges the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to provide vital support for the work of the United Nations Interim Force.

We share the Secretary-General's concern that efforts aimed at a peaceful resolution of the final status of Abyei and border issues, as well as the implementation of UNISFA's mandate, will be affected by the violent fighting in the Sudan. We encourage movement towards an inclusive political process to resolve the Abyei issue. In that regard, the role of the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, together with support from the United Nations, is central.

We further call on the parties to implement the conclusions of both the Juba summit and the Joint Political and Security Mechanism of 12 and 18 January, respectively. We urge unrestricted and unconditional respect for the demilitarized Area of Abyei, in which only UNISFA and the Abyei police service, once it is established, have legal authority.

The violence between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities, in addition to death and destruction, resulted in the displacement of people, a situation in which women and girls are the most affected. We reject any recruitment or use of minors or any violation of international law.

We reiterate that accountability is a central mechanism for reconciliation, reparations for victims, deterrence and a culture of prevention and respect for human rights.

We call on the parties to redouble their efforts to achieve a definitive cessation of intercommunal hostilities and to strengthen the agreements and objectives of the Wau peace conference of in April.

We underscore the contribution of the women and youth representatives who participated in that process and call on the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, Concordis International and the International Organization for Migration to continue to provide support and monitoring to transform the cessation of violence into a basis for sustainable peace, which is necessary for free movement, humanitarian access and peaceful coexistence.

We also recognize the contribution of women at the Todach conference, and we encourage the broadening of women's full, equal and substantive inclusion and participation in all social spheres as an essential step towards achieving sustainable peace and integral development.

Ecuador will continue to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes and pay special attention to that area. Since 2005, a total of 151 Ecuadorians have served as military observers or staff members of the missions in Abyei, the Sudan and South Sudan.

The fighting in the Sudan in April affected the capacity to provide essential supplies, including food, endangering peacekeeping personnel who were in Khartoum in the process of being transferred to assume their posts in Abyei. What better illustration could there be of the impact of violence on food security? In this case, I am referring to the risks faced by people with protection. But how many hundreds or thousands of civilians who are already facing malnourishment or shortages and are now seeing their situation further deteriorate owing to the link between hunger and conflict? In Abyei, internal and external factors are likely to deteriorate the degree of food insecurity. It is time to silence the guns once and for all and move towards a definitive solution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Switzerland.

I thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobe and Special Envoy Hanna Tetteh for their edifying briefings and all their work, as well as that of the mission. I also welcome the presence of the Permanent Representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan at this meeting.

We commend both Governments for their constructive engagement with a view to resolving the

dispute over the Abyei Area, both with respect to its final status and the border demarcation issue.

The conflict that erupted in the Sudan on 15 April calls into question that progress and threatens to put an end to that positive momentum. We are concerned about the impact that the fighting could have on the political process, the humanitarian situation and the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We reiterate our call on both Sudanese parties to immediately silence the weapons, respect international humanitarian law, commit to a lasting ceasefire, ensure humanitarian access and resume dialogue. Given the real risks of instability, we call on the Sudan and South Sudan to respect the 2011 agreement and relevant Security Council resolutions.

I would like to make three brief points.

First, more needs to be done to protect the local population from armed incidents and intercommunal clashes. We are concerned about the ongoing tensions between the Twic Dinka and Ngok Dinka communities. We call on them to de-escalate the situation and to continue joint efforts to find a solution through dialogue. We commend the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka on the success of the March conference and encourage them to build on that positive momentum, especially in view of the upcoming transhumance period. In the absence of the Abyei police service, the community protection committees and the joint protection committee are essential to strengthen the rule of law. In addition, Abyei must remain a demilitarized zone, free from all armed forces and elements.

Secondly, given the potential impact of the conflict in the Sudan, it is important to build trust and strengthen inclusive community engagement. We welcome the revitalization of the consultative forums on women and peace and security, as well as the activities of the joint women's peace committee in the Amiet region. Similarly, the increased involvement of youth networks in communicating early warnings illustrates the key potential of young people as agents of peace. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan to operationalize the Abyei joint programme.

Thirdly, UNISFA will continue to play a vital role in peace and security in Abyei in the months to come. We welcome its strong engagement with the communities in Abyei and hope that the troop reconfiguration

will provide the mission with additional operational capacity. We call on the Sudan and South Sudan to continue to respect the status-of-forces agreement.

In conclusion, we express our full support to UNISFA and the Special Envoy, as well as to the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. We affirm our commitment to work with all stakeholders to achieve peace and prosperity in the Abyei Area.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, for assuming the presidency of the Security Council during this month of April. We would like to thank Ms. Martha Pobe, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, for her valuable briefing on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We also wish to thank Ms. Hanna Tetteh, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, for her briefing and for her personal interest in the developments in the Sudan. In that regard, we take note of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Abyei (S/2023/305).

Bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan have steadily improved. That is manifest in the successful visit of the Chairperson of the Sudan's Transitional Sovereign Council, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, to Juba in January, where we agreed with the President of South Sudan, Mr. Salva Kiir Mayardit, on the deployment of joint forces on the borders in order to strengthen security and stability, prevent the infiltration of illegal weapons, combat negative forces on the joined borders and operationalize and revive joint engagement mechanisms between the two fraternal countries.

Among the most important results of this meeting is the call for the Abyei joint mechanisms to redouble efforts in order to define the final status of the Area and to promote economic development and social cooperation. The rapprochement between the two countries is also evident in the second round of the high-level committee between both countries in Khartoum, upon the invitation of the Sudan, as they met last month, with the participation of the United Nations, the African

Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Both parties addressed all issues of common interest, with due consideration to the needs of communities in the Abyei Area, including humanitarian assistance and the necessary development for delivering humanitarian assistance and services and creating development projects such as hospitals, schools and roads. Those projects must be jointly undertaken by both parties, with help from the international community and the United Nations in order to achieve the final status of Abyei.

Major General Benjamin Sawyerr, UNISFA's acting Head of Mission and Force Commander, presented a review of the security situation in Abyei, which included a number of recommendations. Both parties hailed the report and promised, during their meetings, to address the elements contained therein. They also agreed to hold the third round of the high-level committees in Juba, at a date to be set by both parties.

This rapprochement positively impacts the situation in Abyei, which runs counter to the doubts raised by certain representatives, who maintain that the current situation will undermine the rapprochement and, in turn, harm the situation in Abyei. However, stability in Abyei is definitely a goal of the Sudanese leadership, as the Government of the Sudan is committed to build on the bilateral relations between the two fraternal neighbourly countries in order to promote peaceful and communal coexistence in the Area and to accelerate consensus on the final status of Abyei.

In that regard, I would like to touch upon the following points.

First of all, the Government of the Sudan depends substantially on the amicable relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, as we are two spiritual fraternal countries, and we have to build on the positive momentum of those relations to solve the situation in Abyei, including by establishing interim administrative and security mechanisms, as provided for in the agreement of 20 June 2011, signed by both parties. We also stress the importance of border demarcation, non-infringement and non-transgression on lands and non-alteration of the demographic status quo.

In that regard, the conflict between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka has impacted the overall humanitarian and political situation in Abyei. In addition, the proliferation of weapons, the repeated attacks and the spread of crime require law enforcement and justice

institutions to put an end to insecurity and crime and to hold the perpetrators accountable. They also require the establishment of joint mechanisms, especially the joint police, in keeping with the 2011 agreement.

At the time when the Sudan stresses and maintains the importance of peace and stability and security in Abyei, we underscore the importance of refraining from all unilateral measures that threaten stability in the UNISFA area of operations. We also stress that Abyei should remain free of military manifestations and maintain a demilitarized buffer zone north and south of the zero line. Pursuant to the agreements signed by both countries, we call upon UNISFA to implement, expand and increase quick-impact projects, as they will positively impact the lives of people in Abyei, especially in the fields of ensuring education, health and potable water and maintaining security and order.

We fully commend the Secretary-General's focus, in his report, on young people. We believe that greater attention should be given to vocational training for youth, as well as to supporting veterinary services and improving our qualitative capacities for women and girls with a view to contributing to sustainable peace efforts and raising awareness among people working in the animal production sector. We stress the importance of activities related to peaceful coexistence, with the goal of bolstering stability among the Abyei communities and building local coordination mechanisms, with the support of civil society and the civilian administration.

The Secretary-General's report also refers to the presence of the Sudanese police in Diffra, the aim of which is to secure oil-production facilities and avoid insecure conditions that hinder the movement of technical teams within those facilities. That was addressed during our discussion of the extension of the UNISFA mandate last year. However, we note that the mission's efforts in unifying and providing logistic and technical support to community police were unequally distributed in the three areas of Abyei. There is a need for balanced attention by the mission to all three areas, and we commend its efforts to ensure peace and security in Abyei. We also noted an imbalance in the activities of the mission with regard to support for stability, peacebuilding and the provision of water and education. The Secretary-General's report attributed the shortcomings in the provision of those services to the absence of Government institutions. In that regard, we stress the importance of establishing a

joint administrative committee in accordance with the 2011 agreement.

We reiterate that the Government of the Sudan is committed to improving its cooperation with the Government of South Sudan in order to strengthen the work of the joint political and security mechanism and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, as well as to ensure the establishment of joint mechanisms between the two countries according to the provisions of their signed agreements, with a view to reaching a solution to all final status issues in Abyei based on the terms of reference agreed between both parties. The Sudan maintains, as the penholder stressed previously, that UNISFA's status should remain unchanged for the one-year extension of its mandate. UNISFA's mandate is therefore temporary, with very specific security tasks. We call for supporting and strengthening the existing joint mechanisms between the Sudan and South Sudan and for promoting the community administration until we agree on Abyei's final status.

Some members have talked about the current situation in the Sudan. We spoke at length about the issue in Security Council meetings last week. We want to stress that the situation in Abyei will not be affected by the current conflict in the Sudan and that has been underscored in recent meetings with representatives of both countries. We also stress that the Sudan is committed to a peaceful solution to the current conflict, which was started by a rebel group against the Sudanese Armed Forces. We want to emphasize the capacity of the Sudanese Armed Forces to maintain order in the Sudan and in Khartoum in particular. We therefore stress our readiness for full cooperation with the United Nations, as well as all humanitarian relief operations, and for the opening and oversight of humanitarian corridors and protection for relief workers by the Sudanese Armed Forces, which are highly and professionally trained in that area.

We also reiterate that we positively acknowledge the African initiative put forward by IGAD and the African Union. However, we note that the AU did not invite representatives of the Sudan to attend the meeting held in Addis Ababa, which left my country unable to voice its opinion. We wanted an exception to be made to invite the Sudanese delegation so that we could voice our opinion and forge ahead with the mediation efforts led and sponsored by the AU and IGAD. Besides that, a high-level Ambassador, an Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and a presidential envoy, has been appointed

and is conducting shuttle-diplomacy visits to the IGAD region and East Africa. He met yesterday with the authorities of South Sudan, having met previously with authorities in Djibouti, and is now on his way to meet with the Kenyan authorities to promote Africa's role.

The political leadership of the Sudan welcomes the role of the African Union and all other initiatives. Let us not forget that the Sudan is also a member of the League of Arab States. The Sudan will not ignore any positive initiatives. However, we support the African initiative and the efforts of IGAD, of which the Sudan is the current Chair, which is why we are now trying to clear the air around that initiative. The situation at the Khartoum airport did indeed affect the arrival of all three leaders, but three deputies of those leaders were then scheduled to meet with the Sudanese authorities. We are now ready to meet with any delegation from IGAD or the AU. As I said previously, we are a full-fledged partner of the AU, and the Sudan should be invited to all meetings held by the AU Peace and Security Council.

I would like to thank you, Madam President, and all the speakers who made moderate statements today. I am also grateful for your concern about the situation in the Sudan. We stand ready to cooperate with all who are helping the Sudan and providing relief efforts. We are ready to listen to all members in hopes that their efforts can help to contain the current situation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate you, Madam President, your delegation and your country on this historic opportunity to preside over the Security Council for the first time. My delegation will always support your presidency. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of our two briefers, Ms. Martha Pobee,

Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, and Ms. Hanna Tetteh, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa. We have taken note of their insightful briefings on the situation in Abyei.

South Sudan takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on Abyei (S/2023/305) for the reporting period. As the Council is aware, today's briefing comes at a time when the Sudan is going through very difficult circumstances. As stated in the report, relations between the two countries are cordial and will remain so despite the ongoing misunderstanding between the warring parties. We therefore call on the international community to respond to the growing demands on the humanitarian front in the Sudan and in its neighbouring countries, which received an influx of refugees, despite being unprepared to do so, in the space of a few days after the fighting ensued in Khartoum and other parts of the Sudan.

The Republic of South Sudan is seized with the unfolding crisis in the Sudan and is committed to assisting bilaterally and regionally, through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, where President Salva Kiir Mayardit has been given the lead to seek a solution to the crisis, through the African Union and within the international community, for the betterment of our countries and the region.

I would like to conclude by calling on the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei to remain vigilant and prevent any negative elements that may want to destabilize the Area while we seek a solution in our sister country of the Sudan.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I would like to thank all members for their constructive participation.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.