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New York

President: Mr. Yamazaki (Japan)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
Sierra Leone	Mr. George
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
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

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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

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

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

I warmly welcome His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: Next month will mark one year since the outbreak of brutal fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The conflict has taken a devastating toll on the people of the Sudan, imperilling the unity of the country. There is now a serious risk that the conflict could ignite regional instability of dramatic proportions, from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea. Meanwhile, the fighting rages on. We are witnessing renewed offensives in Khartoum state, Al-Gazira state and elsewhere. The bloodshed recently forced us to suspend operations out of a critical humanitarian hub in Wad Madani, and there are growing fears of a further expansion of hostilities to the east. At the same time, we are deeply alarmed by calls for arming civilians and by popular mobilization activities in various states. Armed groups are entering the fray in Darfur and South Kordofan.

All those dangerous developments are pouring fuel on the fire for an even more serious fragmentation of the country, a deepening of intra- and inter-communal tensions and more ethnic violence. It is time to silence the guns and raise the volume for peace. In just days, the holy month of Ramadan will commence. Therefore, from this Chamber today, I am making an appeal. I call on all parties in the Sudan to honour the values of Ramadan by honouring a Ramadan cessation of hostilities. This cessation of hostilities must lead to a definitive silencing of the guns across the country and set out a firm path towards lasting peace for the Sudanese people. The values of Ramadan must prevail. Now is the time to lay down the weapons.

The humanitarian crisis in the Sudan is reaching colossal proportions. Fully half the population — some 25 million people — need life-saving assistance. Over 14,000 people have been killed, although that number is likely far higher. The Sudan is now home to the world's largest internal displacement crisis, with 6.3 million people seeking safety within the country since the beginning of the conflict. Another 1.7 million people have fled to neighbouring countries.

The conflict has destroyed civilian infrastructure and brought basic services to a standstill. More than 70 per cent of health facilities in conflict-affected areas are not functional. Millions of children are out of school. Water and sanitation systems are breaking down. Diseases are multiplying.

Hunger is stalking the Sudan. Some 18 million people are acutely food insecure. This is the highest number ever recorded during a harvest season, yet the numbers are expected to surge even higher in the coming months. We are already receiving reports of children dying from malnutrition. The United Nations and our humanitarian partners are doing everything we can to stem this suffering.

But we are facing major challenges as we try to reach millions of people in need. We welcome recent decisions by the Sudanese authorities to facilitate cross-line access from eastern Sudan and the use of three airports for humanitarian flights, as well as allowing the use of cross-border points into areas controlled by Sudanese authorities, including one border point from Chad, which we urge be sustained beyond the movement of pre-positioned supplies. It is critical to address the chronic food insecurity crisis in parts of Darfur and other hard-to-reach areas. Countless lives are at stake, and time is of the essence.

In accordance with the Jeddah declaration, authorities must allow full and immediate humanitarian access to all vulnerable populations regardless of where they are and who controls the area. All routes must be utilized, including both road and air corridors, to maximize the aid response and save lives. And all routes must remain open to allow a steady and sustainable flow of assistance and not be subject to burdensome and unreasonable restrictions or impediments.

We encourage the Sudanese authorities to ensure the swift implementation of those measures and to continue efforts to facilitate humanitarian access, including across conflict lines. Recent procedures to expedite visas for

humanitarian staff are another step in the right direction. I also urge the international community to provide financial support to the 2024 Sudan humanitarian response plan, which remains significantly underfunded.

The human rights situation continues to spiral out of control throughout the Sudan. Protection concerns are growing by the hour. Indiscriminate attacks by the RSF and the SAF have killed or injured a significant number of civilians, and we see continuing and widespread looting, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture and the recruitment and detention of children, alongside the shrinking of civic space. We are also receiving troubling reports of systematic conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, as well as abduction and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. I call on the parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, to protect civilians and to facilitate safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, as they have committed to do.

We welcome regional and international efforts to resolve the conflict, including through the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The Jeddah platform constitutes a critical and promising forum for dialogue, and African participation remains indispensable. I recognize the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, who has appointed a high-level panel to lead African Union efforts to support a solution to the conflict in the Sudan.

We must continue working to empower civilians, including women's rights groups, youth and others mobilizing for peace, all of whom are critical to an inclusive political process enabling the resumption of the Sudan's democratic transition.

The United Nations stands ready to intensify its engagement with our multilateral partners, including the African Union, IGAD, the League of Arab States and key Member States, to take urgent action towards a durable cessation of hostilities and inclusive, coherent, complementary and effective international mediation. Those efforts must draw in States of the region with tangible leverage on the warring parties to end the fighting.

My Personal Envoy, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, has met with the leaders of the RSF and the SAF, criss-crossed the Horn of Africa and the Gulf and visited numerous capitals for discussions on the way forward. I count on him to continue leading the political efforts of the United

Nations and to promote the coordination of international mediation initiatives. I call upon the Council to signal its strong and clear support for that critical effort.

(spoke in French)

Following the drawdown of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) last week, the technical liquidation period has commenced. I am deeply grateful to all of the Mission's national and international personnel for their dedication and distinguished service under extremely difficult circumstances. I also thank all partners who contributed to the implementation of the UNITAMS mandate. While that Mission has drawn down, our collective work for peace must ramp up. A cessation of hostilities during Ramadan can help to stem the suffering and open up the path to sustainable peace. Let us spare no effort to support the people of the Sudan in their legitimate aspirations for a peaceful and secure future.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his detailed and sobering briefing with important recommendations.

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

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General for his sobering update.

The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) bear responsibility for the horrendous situation in the Sudan. Shelling and attacks from both sides on heavily populated urban areas and across the entire western region of the Sudan continue to kill and terrorize civilians.

The situation for children is particularly unbearable. Four million have been displaced. Over 700,000 will suffer from the deadliest form of malnutrition this year. Sudanese children have missed a year of school and face the fear of not knowing when they will receive their next meal.

The Sudanese Armed Forces withdrawal of permission for cross-border deliveries of humanitarian aid from Adré, Chad, is indefensible. We call on the Sudanese authorities to honour their commitments to facilitate cross-line and other cross-border routes for the delivery of life-saving assistance for the Sudanese people. They need to remove the red tape and deliberate obstructionism that has prevented meaningful cross-line assistance in recent months.

I wish to tell the people of the Sudan, who for nearly a year have been made to witness their country's descent into near collapse, that they have not been forgotten. The situation in the Sudan warrants a robust response from the Council and increased attention from the international community. Therefore, as we approach the holy month of Ramadan, we echo the Secretary-General's call for an immediate ceasefire and urge all parties to allow for unhindered cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access.

We encourage international partners, including the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the States of the region, as well as the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, to prioritize the coordination of their efforts to end the conflict and to reject attempts by the warring parties to pit different mediation tracks against each other.

It should not be for the military leadership of both the SAF and the RSF to determine the political future of the Sudan. We call on them to give way to a civilian transitional Government that will fully respect the basic human rights of the Sudanese people.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank the Secretary-General for his sobering briefing.

After nearly a year of conflict, the Sudan has become home to the largest displacement crisis globally, with 7.6 million people — including 3.5 million children — displaced. In 2024, a staggering 24.8 million people require humanitarian assistance. The Sudan is on the brink of a grave food insecurity crisis — a catastrophe further compounded by the spread of preventable diseases such as cholera, dengue fever, malaria and measles. We urge both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to cease hostilities and to stop using starvation as a weapon of war.

In that regard, Malta welcomes the recent changes in aid delivery modalities announced by the Sudanese authorities. But we would also welcome more information on how those changes will enhance the rapid scale-up in humanitarian assistance for those areas of Darfur in most critical need. We are following those developments closely.

We commend France for hosting the upcoming humanitarian pledging conference for the Sudan alongside the European Union (EU) and Germany. The EU's pledge of €117 million to Chad and the Sudan underscores the urgency of addressing the humanitarian impacts of

the conflict. The conference presents an opportunity to mobilize funds for a rapid and scaled humanitarian response, to uphold international humanitarian law and to work to ensure that humanitarian diplomacy creates the space for unhindered humanitarian access.

Amid the brutal violence, warring factions are escalating their targeted attacks on health-care facilities and committing serious violations of international humanitarian law. Continued hostilities will result only in further devastation. The Sudanese population is enduring inhumane conditions, forced to take sides for survival as inter-ethnic violence escalates. We echo the Secretary-General's call on all parties to cease acts of sexual violence and other conflict related atrocities. Civilians, including women and children, continue to experience great suffering, both within their homes and in public spaces.

We remain supportive of ongoing regional and diplomatic initiatives, including the Jeddah talks, aimed at de-escalation and bringing warring factions to the negotiating table. However, we caution against the proliferation of initiatives that may delay effective conflict resolution. Coordination is paramount, and leaders must honour their commitments at the negotiating table.

Malta believes the Council must make every effort to secure an immediate ceasefire and create the conditions for the unhindered provision of humanitarian relief to those who need it most. We support and echo the Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire ahead of Ramadan. We advocate for the inclusion of civil society representatives in all diplomatic efforts, recognizing their pivotal role in addressing civilian needs amid conflict.

Malta also condemns the flow of arms into the Sudan. Such actions are in violation of the arms embargo, and we call on external actors to stop fuelling violence through weapons supply.

We also commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to navigate the closure of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) in this dire situation. We endorse the coordination mechanism led by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator to facilitate the transition process. Conflict prevention, peacemaking, the protection of civilians, human rights and women and youth empowerment are our shared priorities during this transition. We applaud Personal Envoy Lamamra's diplomatic endeavours and UNITAMS transfer of

expertise and contact. The 90-day reporting requirement has provided invaluable insights and shows that the Council must continue to monitor the Sudan closely.

In conclusion, we stand in solidarity with the Sudanese population enduring this war. All efforts must work towards one end alone: the immediate end to this horrendous conflict.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Guyana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and my own country, Algeria (A3+).

We extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing, through which we heard once again about the alarming situation in the Sudan. We also wish to welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of the Sudan at this meeting.

Almost a year has passed since the beginning of the crisis in the Sudan and the Sudanese people have yet to see any sign of a peaceful resolution, despite all the efforts deployed to bring the parties to dialogue. Civilians continue to pay the heavy toll of armed confrontation and all forms of violations, while international and regional peace efforts have yet to bear fruit.

On the humanitarian situation, as we speak, we have before us the largest displacement crisis in the world, with a high risk of acute food insecurity threatening millions of Sudanese, particularly in Darfur. In the face of this deteriorating situation, we wish to seize this occasion to make an urgent call upon all the Sudanese actors to declare an immediate ceasefire to ease the suffering of the innocent Sudanese men, women and children. Along with the Secretary-General, we call upon the Sudanese parties to put aside their differences and to consider the opportunity of the holy month of Ramadan — a month of peace — to embark on the path of peace and restraint, for a durable peace in the Sudan.

There is also a need to continue exploring ways to grant unhindered access to enable the flow of international humanitarian assistance to reach the affected Sudanese population, through close cooperation between the Sudanese Government and the humanitarian agencies deployed. In that regard, we welcome the announcement of the decision of the Sudanese authorities to facilitate humanitarian access through several border crossing points, such as the Al-Tina crossing from Chad to Darfur, and the facilitation of humanitarian flights, accessing airports in El Fasher, Kadugli and Al-Obeid.

We encourage further engagement between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Sudanese authorities.

We also welcome the announcement of a new round of talks, under the Jeddah process, and invite the Sudanese parties to engage in good faith during the talks. We wish to commend the facilitators of the process, namely, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United States and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which also represents the African Union (AU), for their continued efforts. The holding of an international humanitarian conference in Paris next April is also a commendable initiative that is expected to provide an opportunity to secure clear commitments from the Sudanese actors and the international community to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground.

As for the diplomatic efforts to end this tragic crisis, we have witnessed multiple initiatives and processes since its beginning, but we have not seen enough coordination between the different diplomatic tracks. It is important at this stage to prioritize the coordination of regional and international efforts, while taking stock of all the existing frameworks and to adopt a different approach in our common endeavour to end this crisis. Such an approach has to be based on inclusiveness, Sudanese ownership and adequate preparation. We believe, in that vein, that discussions on humanitarian aspects need to go hand in hand with political efforts to give shape to a comprehensive solution.

It is equally important that we put forward the role of regional organizations, particularly the AU, in resolving the Sudanese crisis. We welcome in that regard the establishment of an AU high-level panel on the Sudan as we believe that it will bring clear added value and support to the peace process. Our common efforts are needed to avoid further consequences of the Sudanese crisis on the region, where they are already heavily felt. Neighbouring countries, South Sudan in particular, are already witnessing the dire effects of humanitarian challenges, with more than half a million refugees and returnees having crossed the border as of February, fleeing the conflict in the Sudan. While we are exchanging views on how we can contribute to resolving the crisis in the Sudan, we are troubled by reports about the role of external actors in fuelling the crisis in the Sudan instead of helping to advance peace efforts. Let us be clear that external interference has to be publicly and firmly condemned.

In conclusion, we call on our Sudanese brothers and sisters to put the interests and the unity of their nation above all other considerations. We encourage them to translate the commitment that they have expressed on several occasions into concrete action on the ground. Peace must prevail in the Sudan.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I am making this statement on behalf of Guyana and Switzerland in our capacities as informal focal points on conflict and hunger, in response to the increasing warnings of famine in the Sudan and repeated calls for urgent action. Acute malnutrition and hunger have soared since the conflict broke out in April 2023. The recent figures are appalling, with 18 million Sudanese acutely food insecure, including 5 million who are at risk of dying of malnutrition. That is the worst hunger level ever recorded during the Sudan's harvest season. The conflict is driving hunger, as many of those at risk of starvation are either trapped in areas of active fighting, displaced in South Sudan or being forced across borders, mainly into Chad and South Sudan, exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in both countries. A total of 3.8 million children are suffering from acute malnutrition in the Sudan, and tens of thousands will likely die if there is no action. Reports already suggest that in Zamzam camp in North Darfur alone, a child is dying every two hours due to malnutrition.

The latest report produced by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) concludes that the acute food insecurity may be even more severe and of greater magnitude than current forecasts suggest, owing to the intensification and expansion of the conflict. Since December 2023, as has been highlighted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme, the conflict has spread into the country's breadbasket, jeopardizing the harvest and destroying critical food systems and agricultural infrastructure. Likely scenarios indicate that the severity and scale of hunger in the coming lean season will be devastating. A shocking 7 million people may be facing famine by June, with mass starvation expected.

The situation in the Sudan is nothing short of catastrophic. The window of opportunity for significantly reducing the impact of potentially the largest hunger crisis in decades is rapidly closing. The situation became even more alarming last month when the Sudanese authorities withdrew their authorization for cross-border operations from Chad into the Sudan. We welcome the current engagement between the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Sudanese authorities to address that issue and to ensure access to people in need across borders and conflict lines. Cross-border humanitarian aid is currently the main way to deliver life-saving aid to the Darfur region, which is one of the worst affected areas and is already estimated to be in IPC phase 4.

Conflict hotspots such as Khartoum, the Darfurs, the Kordofans and now El Gezira state remain mostly inaccessible due to heavy fighting, insecurity, restrictions, threats, roadblocks and bureaucratic obstacles. Rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access across the Sudan must be allowed and facilitated by all parties in order to enable life-saving interventions. That must include cross-border and cross-line access. The bureaucratic and administrative obstacles to humanitarian actors must be removed. The protection of objects indispensable to the survival of civilians, including foodstuffs, crops, livestock, agricultural assets, drinking-water installations and irrigation works, must be ensured, as international humanitarian law requires.

With its adoption nearly six years ago of resolution 2417 (2018), the Council demonstrated its determination to address conflict-induced food insecurity, including famine, and stressed the importance of respect for international humanitarian law by all parties. Resolution 2417 (2018) is clear in condemning the unlawful denial of humanitarian access and depriving civilians of objects indispensable to civilian survival, as well as the use of the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. We must not remain silent in the face of such a grave humanitarian catastrophe. More must be done. As the informal co-focal points, Guyana and Switzerland call on the members of the Council to give full attention to the catastrophic situation in the Sudan. We call on the warring parties to urgently stop the fighting and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and sobering briefing today. I also welcome the participation of the representative of the Republic of the Sudan in this meeting.

As the Secretary-General highlighted in his remarks, the security and humanitarian situation in the Sudan is extremely dire. Given the gravity and urgency of the situation, the Security Council must renew its interest in the situation and redouble its efforts to address it. The Republic of Korea is deeply concerned about the fact

that the warring parties have continued their relentless war for power and control. We urge both sides to immediately institute a ceasefire and create a path to a negotiated solution. In that regard, we strongly support the Secretary-General's call for an immediate cessation of hostilities before Ramadan. In the context, I would like to underline the following points.

First, regarding the humanitarian catastrophe and egregious human rights abuses, the Sudan is experiencing the largest displacement crisis in the world, and 1.7 million people are facing acute food insecurity at Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 3 or worse. In order to respond to that catastrophic humanitarian crisis, it will be crucial to ensure safe, rapid and unfettered humanitarian access. While we are relieved that the Sudanese authorities have reversed their decision to block cross-border aid, we urge the warring parties to live up to their commitments under the Jeddah Declaration.

We are alarmed that both warring parties are continuing to commit serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. The final report (S/2024/65) of the Panel of Experts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan documented graphic examples of ethnically targeted violence in El Geneina, West Darfur. In that regard, the Committee, which the Republic of Korea chaired in January, highlighted that those who commit violations of international humanitarian law may be subject to targeted sanctions measures. We also note that pursuant to resolution 1593 (2005), the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court is investigating alleged war crimes committed in Darfur during the current conflict. We believe that those efforts will send an unequivocal message that the perpetrators will be held accountable.

Secondly, with regard to external interference in the conflict, we call on regional and international players to use their influence and resources to play a constructive role in ending the hostilities rather than fuelling them. We are seeing a broad range of weapons entering Darfur, in flagrant violation of the arms embargo established by the relevant Security Council resolutions. They are being widely used in the conflict and causing countless civilian casualties. The Council should ensure that the current sanctions regime is in line with the situation on the ground. In that regard, the Sanctions Committee reiterated that those who violate the arms embargo may be designated for targeted sanctions measures.

Thirdly, with a view to finding a coordinated approach to ending the conflict, we commend all regional and international partners for their tireless efforts to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict. However, those mediation efforts, including the Jeddah talks, have yet to achieve meaningful progress, partly owing to competing interests. In that regard, we will look forward to the role of the newly appointed Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and the African Union High-level panel. A harmonized platform will demonstrate collective political will and discourage forum-shopping by the warring parties. We would also like to highlight the importance of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and local communities throughout the political process.

My final point concerns the role of the United Nations in the Sudan. In the midst of a devastating humanitarian crisis and an intensifying war, a robust United Nations presence in the Sudan is needed more than ever. We reiterate our support for the remaining United Nations country team to continue its essential work, including humanitarian assistance. We also encourage the Sudanese authorities to continue to cooperate with the team's work. We also underline the need to consider a United Nations presence following the withdrawal of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing and welcome the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to today's meeting.

The conflict in the Sudan has raged on, causing many civilian casualties and a grave humanitarian crisis. It is deplorable. The international community should join hands to seek a political settlement of the Sudanese issue and to bring about peace at an early date.

I would like to make three points.

First, efforts must be stepped up to find a political solution. Lately, conflict has repeatedly erupted in many parts of the Sudan, leading to incalculable losses and growing spillover effects. The most urgent task now is to end the fighting as soon as possible. China takes note of the contacts between the two parties to the conflict. We call on the relevant parties to work with each other to de-escalate the situation, sooner rather than later, and to create the necessary conditions for peace talks. In the meantime, as the Sudan's conflict has triggered a grievous humanitarian crisis, it is critical to ensure humanitarian access. China welcomes the Government of the Sudan's

recent decision to open some border crossings to United Nations humanitarian agencies to facilitate humanitarian assistance. We call on the international community, especially traditional donors, to continue to increase their assistance to the country and to help the Sudan and countries in the region with humanitarian relief. China is in favour of the Personal Envoy, Mr. Lamamra, playing a greater role in advancing peace talks and easing the humanitarian situation.

Secondly, we must support mediation efforts in the region. China welcomes the mediation efforts of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the neighbouring States on the Sudan crisis. China has taken note of the recent visit of the African Union High-level panel on the Sudan to the country and the positive statements made by the Sudanese authorities. The situation in the Sudan has a bearing on overall regional peace and stability. The international community should continue to support the African Union, IGAD and other regional organizations in playing a key role in the matter, while respecting the Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and not imposing solutions from outside. At the same time, the Security Council should strengthen coordination with the African Union and other regional organizations on the Sudan and work in synergy with mediators in the region. The Council is now discussing two Sudan-related draft resolutions — one on a Ramadan ceasefire and the other on renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1591 (2005). China believes that the Council's actions should be conducive to diplomacy and should avoid exacerbating tensions. China stands ready to participate actively in those discussions.

Thirdly, the United Nations should continue to play a constructive role. Recently, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) completed its withdrawal as mandated by resolution 2715 (2023) and has commenced a liquidation process. As the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2024/204), the withdrawal of UNITAMS does not mean the end of cooperation between the United Nations and the Sudan. China hopes that the United Nations and the Sudan can communicate candidly to explore cooperation that can meet the country's actual needs. It is also important to draw lessons from the experience of UNITAMS, with a view to furthering mutual trust in future cooperation with the Sudan and providing tangible support for its peace and development.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his informative briefing, and I acknowledge the presence of the representative of the Sudan in the Chamber.

Ecuador regrets the devastating consequences that the conflict in the Sudan has had on its people and the region. The armed violence and perverse effects that the war continues to bring about have been ongoing for almost a year, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, famine and the break-down of the country's social fabric. The spread of hostilities to new areas has led to a significant increase in the enormous humanitarian needs. My delegation condemns the attacks on essential civilian infrastructure and the restrictions on humanitarian personnel. We therefore reiterate the need for the parties to guarantee the protection of civilians and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and international norms. In that regard, we recognize the efforts to facilitate humanitarian access from Chad and through other border crossings and humanitarian flights.

My delegation highlights the work of Mr. Lamamra to reach a ceasefire agreement and a lasting political solution through dialogue. Those efforts require the support of regional and subregional partners, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and of initiatives such as the inclusion of three eminent persons as members of the African Union High-level panel on the Sudan. The full, equal and significant participation of Sudanese women and civil society is fundamental to any efforts towards de-escalation and rebuilding peace in the Sudan.

The ongoing reports of the rape, sexual exploitation, kidnappings and captivity of Sudanese women and girls are alarming. We are also concerned by the growing call of the parties to the conflict to arm civilians and the widespread campaigns for mobilization among the population. That all points to a dangerous path, which could lead to greater fragmentation in the country and deepen intercommunal tensions that further fuel ethnic violence. In that regard, we support the work of the International Criminal Court and the efforts being undertaken to achieve accountability and end impunity. We call on States to refrain from transferring weapons or any war resources that can be used by the parties to the conflict against the civilian population, that threaten stability in the region and that undermine Security Council resolutions. We appreciate the tireless work of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan in recent years. We hope that its

withdrawal will not leave a gap in the activities carried out by the United Nations country team, and we call for the country team to be given all the necessary guarantees to continue its work, including the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Lastly, in line with the call of the Secretary-General, Ecuador hopes that the beginning of Ramadan will pave the way for a cessation of hostilities and that we can find a peaceful solution that allows us to look to the development of the Sudan and its people. Peace cannot wait any longer. It is time for a revitalized, complementary and inclusive international effort in the Sudan.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and sobering briefing. I also want to thank him for his continuous leadership on the Sudan and on all other conflicts.

Let me begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to all the personnel of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan for their dedicated service to the people of the Sudan.

Nearly a year into the ongoing conflict in the Sudan, civilians continue to bear the greatest burden. The cost of conflict is already immense. The longer hostilities persist, the more challenging recovery and reconciliation become.

Allow me to make three points.

First, both parties must silence their guns, commit to a ceasefire and return to an inclusive political process. We call for the cessation of hostilities, the laying down of arms and a genuine commitment to a peaceful resolution. All parties must prioritize dialogue over conflict.

We strongly support the Secretary-General's plea today for a ceasefire during Ramadan. We agree that the holy month represents an opportunity to at least temporarily silence the guns and to use the time to speed up mediation and political processes.

We commend the endeavours undertaken by regional and international stakeholders. The urgency and scale of the conflict require the coordination of existing mediation mechanisms. All relevant actors, including civil society, must be included. Women's meaningful participation must be ensured in any negotiation about the ceasefire and the end of the conflict.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Lamamra, and we commend his efforts to help start the political process. We appreciate his engagement with both parties

to the conflict, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the League of Arab States, regional leaders, neighbouring countries and international partners. We express strong support for his efforts and his work.

Secondly, all parties to the conflict must fully respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. With the killing of thousands of civilians, the displacement of millions, looting and the destruction of essential infrastructure, a catastrophic humanitarian crisis has emerged, and that is the most real and tragic impact of this war. As we just heard from our colleagues from Guyana and Switzerland, the humanitarian crisis has reached alarming proportions, with nearly half the country's population facing food insecurity and a looming hunger catastrophe.

We remind both parties of the commitments they agreed to undertake in the Jeddah declaration, namely, to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian access and assistance and implement confidence-building measures. It is crucial to respect and implement that agreement. Humanitarian operations must be guaranteed rapid, safe, and unimpeded access across borders and across conflict lines. We welcome the much-needed step by the Sudanese authorities to partially re-authorize cross-border delivery through several border crossings and additional humanitarian flights for aid.

We extend deep appreciation to the United Nations country team and humanitarian actors who continue to perform critical work. We condemn the attacks on humanitarian and medical workers and the targeting of their facilities. We call on all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and to respect protections for United Nations, humanitarian and medical workers deriving from international humanitarian law.

And let me make one general conclusion on that point. We are alarmed by increasing and unsanctioned violence against civilians, including sexual violence, attacks on civilian infrastructure and attacks on United Nations, humanitarian and medical workers across all conflicts, and especially in the Sudan and Gaza. This is a dangerous trend. We therefore urge the Security Council to make a clear and forceful call against the unravelling of respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law, which have been in existence for 75 years.

Thirdly, we condemn in the strongest terms all violence against civilians. We are appalled by the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a tactic of warfare.

Reports documenting human rights violations and abuses by all parties to the conflict and accounts of thousands dead and millions displaced are beyond disturbing. We strongly condemn the recruitment of children and other grave violations committed against children. Particularly alarming are the ethnically targeted attacks in Darfur and the widespread sexual violence there. Violations must be investigated, and accountability must be ensured. We reiterate the responsibility of all parties to the conflict to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, including by issuing clear command orders prohibiting sexual violence.

We acknowledge the commendable efforts of neighbouring countries, which have shown remarkable solidarity in welcoming refugees from the Sudan and providing much-needed assistance.

The bloodshed in the Sudan must end. Slovenia remains steadfast in its commitment to provide support to alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people. Slovenia hopes that the holy month of Ramadan will bring with it the beginning of permanent peace for the Sudan. We therefore appeal to all parties to the conflict to respect the fundamental value of human life. The welfare and safety of all Sudanese, from the streets of Khartoum to the most remote villages, must be prioritized.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his assessment of the current situation in the Sudan, and we welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Sudan at this meeting.

We carefully read the report on the situation in the country and the withdrawal of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS). The bulk of the report is devoted to politics, security, economics, humanitarian and human rights aspects. Only two pages are devoted to the closure of the Mission. Instead, there are political assessments and a list of atrocities committed by the opposing parties in the Sudan. The Sudanese are just constantly being asked for something or blamed for something. We are convinced that, in the current difficult conditions, what they need is not criticism but good advice and useful recommendations. Such a tone would reflect the Council's stance aimed at constructive cooperation with the Sudan.

The Security Council and its members should remain above the parties to the conflict. Such a policy would help restore Sudanese trust in the United Nations

system. Regrettably, that trust was lost as a result of the inconsistent steps taken by the former leadership of the now-defunct UNITAMS. And now we are seeing that some members of the Security Council are pursuing their own goals, using, inter alia, United Nations entities for that.

It is important to find ways to resolve the acute phase of the conflict that are satisfactory to the Sudanese themselves. Of course, ending the armed confrontation and the suffering of civilians must remain priorities. That should be the focus of international and regional mediation efforts. We note the substantial potential of the negotiation platform in Jeddah, where, on 11 March 2023, the Sudanese signed the Jeddah declaration of commitment to protect the civilians of the Sudan. We welcome efforts to revive that format, first and foremost on the humanitarian track. We are convinced that committed and unbiased work done by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths can yield positive results.

We understand the concern of delegations and the Secretariat about the difficult humanitarian situation in the Sudan. The Council will recall that, already on 27 February, we received sobering signals pointing to the fact that the situation was verging on catastrophic, owing to the decision of the Sudanese authorities to suspend the delivery of humanitarian supplies on the Sudan-Chad border. Let me point out that that did not always coincide with our assessments from the field. Furthermore, on 5 March, the Sudanese authorities decided to allow the passage of humanitarian supplies through points on their borders with Chad, South Sudan and Egypt, as well as by air to a number of airports. We believe that that allays the concerns voiced earlier. As was said, and rightly so, by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Sudan, Ms. Clementine Nkweta-Salami,

“this is a welcome step that will greatly facilitate United Nations and partner efforts to reach people in dire need of life-saving assistance, and is in accordance with the Jeddah Declaration, which calls for safe and sustainable humanitarian corridors guaranteed by the parties to the conflict”.

We are convinced that it would be short-sighted to reduce the level of humanitarian cooperation with the current authorities. After all, they bear all the responsibility for rectifying the current humanitarian situation, assisting in the distribution of supplies and accountability. Rejecting that would exacerbate the

already dire situation of the Sudanese. The practice of recent months has shown that the delivery of supplies from Chad will not resolve all the issues; it is necessary to increase deliveries through various points under the control of the central authorities.

We believe that the attitude demonstrated by the Sudanese authorities towards a positive and constructive resolution of problems that arise is something we can build on to arrive at a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the country. To that end, it is equally important that the other party also compromise and be guided not by its own aspirations but by the national interests of the Sudan.

The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, could play, within the limits of his authority, a decisive role in unifying and channelling mediation efforts. He has already held initial meetings with various Sudanese players. It is encouraging that he will consult with us in a closed meeting. That will allow him to focus on quiet diplomacy, which is especially necessary under the current circumstances, and not to repeat the mistakes of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan, which was forced to leave the Sudan.

We would also welcome, under the current circumstances, certain initiatives by regional organizations to help the Sudan. I am referring, first and foremost, to the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Such steps should be based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Sudan and the inviolability of its State institutions.

We are convinced, however, that the Sudanese themselves must find ways to resolve their country's issues. If one reads the Western media, one would think that the Sudanese politicians are a narrow group of people who live outside their own country. That is not the case. The Sudan's political map is very diverse and active and has support among the population. Its consolidation on a national State basis could pave the way for the unity and stability of the Sudan.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I would like to underscore five points.

We condemn all the violence committed in the Sudan, regardless of the perpetrators. A recent report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the most recent report of the Secretary-

General denounced the massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in Darfur, Khartoum and Kordofan. The report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court have also publicly reported on the massive violations committed in Darfur. All those responsible for those crimes must be held accountable.

External actors must stop fuelling the conflict. France calls in particular for respect for the arms embargo on Darfur. A violation of those measures is grounds for inclusion on the list of individuals subject to sanctions pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005). The current conflict is spilling over from Darfur throughout the entire country. We must face the consequences.

Thirdly, there is no military solution. The conflict has lasted for more than a year and has triggered a humanitarian disaster in the Sudan. It threatens the unity of the country and the stability of the region, while at the same time reducing the prospect of a political solution. Only a cessation of hostilities and the resumption of talks will enable a settlement to be reached.

We support the Secretary-General's initiative for a ceasefire during the month of Ramadan, and we hope that the Security Council will quickly endorse the draft resolution put forward by the United Kingdom in support of that proposal. We encourage the two parties to the conflict to agree without delay on the modalities for resuming dialogue, setting aside the logic of preconditions and taking action against those who exacerbate tensions on both sides.

Fourthly, peace initiatives must be better coordinated. Twenty years ago, the United Nations and the African Union brought their full weight to bear, including by deploying missions for the protection of civilians. We must respond to the challenges of the current crisis by formalizing, in conjunction with the parties, a unique framework to facilitate the resolution of the conflict. In that respect, France supports the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, whom I would like to commend.

Fifthly, we must respond to the humanitarian emergency. Together with the European Union and Germany, France will be organizing, in Paris on 15 April, a humanitarian conference for the Sudan and neighbouring countries. The European Union mobilized €500 million in 2023, representing a third of the international response to the crisis. France has

contributed €55 million in humanitarian aid to the Sudan and neighbouring countries. The parties must guarantee humanitarian access to all populations, including cross-border access and access across the front lines. Between now and 15 April and beyond, we will be paying particular attention to the fulfilment of the commitments made by the parties in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and to the progress that can be made in conjunction with the United Nations. France welcomes the initial commitments made by the Sudanese authorities to improve humanitarian access.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like, similarly to my colleagues, to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and to thank all the United Nations staff on the ground and in the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan, which is in the process of withdrawing. I also welcome the presence and efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra.

Almost a year after the start of the conflict, there is so much loss, destruction, suffering and trauma that the Sudan's very existence is under threat. As the fighting continues to rage without any sign of de-escalation, the cries of the Sudanese people are drowning in a conflict that seems to have sunk into the "fog of global amnesia", as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights put it.

Given the urgent need for action, I would like to reiterate three priorities.

First, we must protect civilians. Every day, we receive reports of unspeakable violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses. Horrifying testimonies indicate that, since the beginning of the conflict, women's bodies have become a heinous part of the battlefield. Ethnicity has once again become a matter of life and death. Many of those acts could constitute war crimes and other serious crimes under international law. Those crimes are taking place in a context of near-total impunity and a lack of accountability. Added to that is the fact that telecommunications have been interrupted for weeks, meaning that other atrocities are going unnoticed. We reiterate our urgent call on the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to cease hostilities immediately, respect their obligations under international law and protect civilians. We also urge them to cooperate with human rights mechanisms, including the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, to obtain justice for the victims.

Secondly, we must improve the humanitarian situation. The figures illustrating the catastrophic situation are well known. I am also referring to the joint statement read out by Guyana on behalf of our two delegations concerning the rapid deterioration in food security. And yet, the humanitarian response plan is only 4 per cent funded at this stage. There is every indication that the situation will continue to deteriorate and that humanitarian needs will continue to grow. The decision by the Sudanese authorities in February to revoke the authorization of cross-border humanitarian aid from Chad has only exacerbated the needs. We therefore welcome this week's announcement by the Sudanese authorities to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid from Chad and South Sudan, as well as through humanitarian flights, and press for its swift implementation. Cross-border delivery remains essential to reach more people. We continue to call on the parties to allow and facilitate safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access across borders and front lines and on the Sudanese authorities to reduce bureaucratic and administrative obstacles. Moreover, we call for the respect and protection of humanitarian personnel, including local organizations and volunteers who are demonstrating exceptional resilience.

Thirdly, we must reach a negotiated and lasting solution to the conflict. There are few indications that the parties are taking measures to stop the violence. We therefore reiterate the urgent call for a resumption of ceasefire negotiations and a credible and inclusive political process. In that respect, we welcome the efforts of civil actors to bring together diverse voices in order to set common objectives for the future of the country. Time is running out to ensure complementarity between the diplomatic initiatives of regional and international actors in working towards a peaceful solution. We continue to support such initiatives. Those who have influence over the parties to the conflict should play a significant role in bringing them back to the table. We fully support the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for the Sudan in his efforts to facilitate the achievement of that objective.

We cannot remain silent in the face of such a human tragedy. The Council must assume its responsibility to protect the Sudanese people, who desperately wish to live in peace. I recall once again the remarks of Mayada Adil (see S/PV.9417), the most recent civil society representative to brief the Council on this matter, who called on us to take urgent action on behalf of the people of the Sudan. As Ramadan approaches and echoing the Secretary-General's call today, we hope that

the Council can send a strong signal to the parties by adopting a resolution calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I want to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing to the Council on this grim and brutal conflict. Let me also welcome the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to this meeting.

As the Secretary-General notes, it has been 11 months and the conflict in the Sudan shows no sign of relenting, fuelling a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. The United States condemns in the strongest terms the atrocities committed by the warring parties in the Sudan, particularly the crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing by members of the Rapid Support Forces and allied militias in Darfur, as well as mass killings of black African minorities in places like Ardamata.

We demand the parties do more to protect — not target — civilians in all circumstances, respect human rights and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. We unequivocally condemn the continued and pervasive forcible recruitment of children, as well as rape, torture and other reprehensible violations committed against Sudanese civilians. We also urge regional Powers to immediately end the provision of weapons to the parties in the Sudan, in flagrant violation of the United Nations arms embargo, which is fuelling the fighting and massacres across the country, particularly in Darfur, and are reminiscent of the 2004 genocide.

Two weeks ago, Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths briefed the Council on the humanitarian impact from the Sudan's 21 February decision to close border crossings with Chad. We continue to demand that this decision be fully reversed. We acknowledge the Sudanese Government's announcement that it has agreed to several limited cross-border access routes by land from Chad and South Sudan and by air, but that is insufficient. More action is needed urgently to ensure life-saving aid reaches the Sudan's most vulnerable. Both parties must adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law and facilitate unhindered humanitarian access in order to avert catastrophe.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of this brutal conflict, the United States repeats its call for urgent action from the Security Council. We need to demand action to alleviate human suffering through the delivery of safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access

and drive the parties towards a ceasefire. We also urge the Council to renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005), concerning the Sudan.

Finally, the United States would like to thank the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) and all United Nations personnel for their dedication and support to the people of the Sudan. While we wish the Sudanese Government had reached a different decision on UNITAMS, we will continue to support the United Nations country team after the Mission's withdrawal.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. Japan shares his grave concern on the situation in the Sudan and echoes his call for a ceasefire to save the Sudanese people from further destruction and anguish. The Council must swiftly adopt the draft resolution presented by the United Kingdom.

Japan commends the efforts of the United Nations and welcomes the Sudan's cooperation in the orderly and safe transition of the work of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan to the country team. We are particularly encouraged by the Secretary-General's staunch determination for a continued United Nations presence in the Sudan.

Almost one year has passed since clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) erupted. The longer the war persists, the worse the humanitarian situation becomes. A vast proportion of the Sudan's civilian infrastructure has been destroyed. More than seventy per cent of hospitals are non-functional. The risk of famine is not an exaggeration. Daily life for ordinary Sudanese has been severely disrupted.

To avoid further devastation, the SAF and RSF must stop fighting and resume a peaceful and inclusive political transition process towards democratic elections. Japan welcomes various international, regional, subregional and national initiatives for peace. Those efforts must be implemented in a coordinated manner. In that vein, Japan supports the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, who is providing his good offices and supporting those political initiatives.

Japan is also concerned about reports of Member States supplying the parties with arms and financing and urges those State actors to refrain from external interference seeking to foment conflict and instability.

Rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid is crucial for 24.8 million Sudanese in need. Japan strongly calls on both parties to properly engage in coordination efforts to allow such delivery. To scale up aid, cross-border and cross-line mechanisms are both important. Japan notes the recent decision by the Sudanese Government to facilitate additional cross-border humanitarian access routes, and we are concerned about the increasing difficulty of cross-line operations across the two parties' areas of control. Japan welcomes France's efforts to hold a conference in Paris next month on the Sudan's humanitarian situation and calls on both warring parties to participate.

The Sudan now faces one of the largest displacement crises in the world, with 7.6 million displaced people. We must continue to address the risk of regional spillover to the Sudan's neighbours, which are generously hosting refugees despite their own challenges.

The parties must uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law. Attacks against civilians, sexual and gender-based violence and campaigns that recruit children are clear violations of those obligations. The looting of warehouses of humanitarian aid and aggression against medical and aid staff must cease immediately.

In conclusion, I reiterate Japan's commitment to the Sudanese people and their aspiration for peace and democracy. Given their dire circumstances, there is not a moment to lose. The parties to the conflict, the United Nations and concerned regional and national actors have an imperative to collaborate on a viable strategy to pull the Sudan back from the brink.

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*): I would like, at the outset, to congratulate you, Sir, on your country's presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are prepared to work with you on issues of common interest.

We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive statement and his report to the Council. Among his other remarks, we were pleased with his commendation of the Government of the Sudan's decision to allow the entry of relief aid, as well as the measures taken recently, and which we have informed the Council about, to silence the guns, prevent the influx

of weapons into the country and promote the delivery of humanitarian relief and provide financial support for the humanitarian response plan. We also thank Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for the Sudan, for his diplomatic efforts in recent months. We look forward to positively engaging with him, given that he will undoubtedly play a leading role in the success of the diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the war in the Sudan. I also welcome the constructive proposals in the statement delivered on behalf of Guyana and the three African members of the Security Council by Ambassador Bendjama of Algeria.

Regarding the humanitarian situation and the protection of civilians, I believe firmly that the decisions made within the framework of the Jeddah platform — in particular, the Declaration of Principles of 11 May 2023, the May understanding and the statement of commitments of 7 November 2023 relating to humanitarian aid — constitute a practical framework for meeting the assistance needs of the people affected by the war.

In that regard, I would like to mention that the President of the Transitional Sovereign Council, Mr. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, has just sent me a message welcoming the Secretary-General's call for a cessation of hostilities during the month of Ramadan, pursuant to the commitment of the Government of the Sudan in the Jeddah decisions of April 2023. However, he is asking the Council how he should implement it, considering that the Rapid Support Forces are still in place and are continuing their relentless attacks on civilians in El Gezira. As the Council is aware, we would be very happy for anyone who wants to see that call translated into action to present a mechanism for implementing a cessation of hostilities, which we would welcome.

The Jeddah Declaration set out the commitments signed by the delegation of the Government of the Sudan on 7 November 2023 on how to provide and deliver humanitarian aid and how to protect humanitarian workers. The Sudan reiterates its full commitment to cooperating with the United Nations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need and affected by the war. The Government of the Sudan reiterates its commitment to alleviating the humanitarian situation caused by the war. It is an exceptional situation that has created many difficulties and security challenges that are well known to all. In practical terms, our commitment is reflected in specific

steps and mechanisms. We have established a high-level committee for addressing the humanitarian situation presided over by the Minister for Social Welfare, along with the Commissioner for Humanitarian Assistance and diplomats sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as members of the Committee.

The Government of the Sudan has also facilitated and expedited the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those affected. We have established measures and mechanisms to address many procedural obstacles, issued entry visas for medical personnel and humanitarian workers and facilitated the delivery of food and medical shipments. The measures facilitating the issuance of visas have been successful despite the circumstances of the war, the complex situation and the collapse of the bureaucracy. Humanitarian convoys have been delivered in an organized and secure manner from Port Sudan to the Darfur states, to Kosti, in southern White Nile, and to Al Fasher, the capital of Northern Darfur, for distribution of food and medical supplies to the rest of the Darfur states. The Sudanese Government has purchased foodstuffs such as rice, flour and oil from local markets in Southern Darfur to support Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad, and has also sent a group of doctors and health-care workers in various areas from the Darfur states to eastern Chad to deal with Sudanese refugees' medical needs, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and the Chadian authorities.

As part of the Government of the Sudan's efforts to facilitate humanitarian operations, and with the aim of ensuring the smooth delivery of aid, the movements of United Nations agencies and various voluntary humanitarian organizations were authorized on the same day. We have established coordination mechanisms facilitating the entry of humanitarian aid and its access to those affected, including a joint national committee for humanitarian emergencies chaired by a member of the Transitional Sovereign Council and whose membership includes most of our Ministers. We have also established a technical mechanism for following up on the implementation of field tasks and finding the solutions needed to ensure the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, which has gone a long way to addressing the obstacles to humanitarian efforts.

We have also adopted fast-track measures for customs clearance and tax measures so that aid is received and forwarded immediately to the intended recipient states as soon as it arrives at the ports or airports concerned.

Administrative procedures can be completed afterwards. We are also providing more information, statistics and data to donors with the aim of encouraging further aid. We are responsible for allocating and distributing that aid to the people affected and to the displaced.

At the meeting held in Port Sudan in December on humanitarian response operations, we discussed the current emergency situation and have continued to coordinate with the international humanitarian community to reach a common understanding on how to run the humanitarian operation in the Sudan and on proposals for facilitating and expediting the humanitarian operation and removing any obstacles and challenges.

We have worked within the framework of a series of measures involving all the relevant Government bodies as part of a unified approach to facilitating humanitarian measures for volunteer and humanitarian organizations and teams. In 2023 we completed more than 14,900 administrative and technical procedures designed to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid at the state and federal levels. We have also established a joint committee staffed by the relevant authorities to facilitate the entry of foreigners working with the various international organizations, United Nations agencies and volunteer organizations. The committee holds regular meetings and is now granting approximately 60 visas a week, having issued nearly 670 entry visas in 2023. Applications are often postponed for review owing to a lack of sufficient information, particularly regarding the residence of the people concerned, which is needed in order to send approvals to the Sudanese embassies concerned.

We provide the protection needed to ensure the safety and security of the humanitarian aid warehouses of relevant organizations from acts of looting and theft, through ongoing consultation and coordination with all the parties concerned. We have exempted humanitarian assistance from all customs duties and taxes, which as of November 2023 amounted to nearly \$360 million.

The humanitarian challenges in the Sudan are related in part to withdrawals of support and financing and to a reduction in the fulfilment of international commitments. The flow of humanitarian aid from the international community between the last few months of 2023 and the beginning of 2024 has been very limited, while the humanitarian crisis and the numbers of people displaced have been increasing since the brutal aggression launched by the militia of the Rapid Support Forces against the city of Wad Madani. The challenges include

a drop in humanitarian resources; poor coordination among various humanitarian partners; the difficulty of moving from rescue to recovery and reconstruction; the establishment of zones for the voluntary return of displaced persons and their provision with basic services; the difficulty of attracting local, regional and international support to strengthen mechanisms; and the organization of resources for humanitarian work based on the humanitarian needs. Since 15 April 2023, the humanitarian consequences, in terms of numbers of people and the geographic areas affected, have been worst in the central region, which is controlled by the Rapid Support Forces and from where they launch their consecutive attacks, and where the needs are 33 per cent greater. Of the population affected, 8 million people are in need of immediate and urgent humanitarian assistance. Of those, 7 million are displaced and 1.1 million are refugees. However, the gap between humanitarian needs and aid received is 68 per cent, which means that 12 million Sudanese will not receive humanitarian assistance, with a deficit of \$1.7 billion in the amended humanitarian response plan for 2023.

As I mentioned earlier, the Sudanese Government has made every effort to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. That includes eliminating customs duties on all humanitarian assistance, providing free transport of humanitarian aid to states in need, facilitating more than 12,000 logistical and technical measures and providing warehouses free of charge. We have also provided further facilities and expedited measures to immediately grant visas for officials and humanitarian workers, in close cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Since 15 April 2023 more than 7 million people have ended up in El Gezira state, with 4 million of them displaced in Khartoum itself. Local hosting communities are facing immense pressure in having to share resources, leading to shortages of basic services. In that context, a United Nations initiative to provide lasting solutions for the displaced was launched for 7 million displaced persons in both the Sudan and South Sudan. However, the current situation has rendered those numbers unrealistic. As of November 2023, the statistics on displacement in the affected states reported by the International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan indicated a total of 11 million displaced, with El Gezira, White Nile and Northern states receiving the largest numbers and El Gezira and White Nile states the worst affected.

It is clear that the financial commitments for humanitarian funding have fallen short by as much as \$1.5 billion, with only 30 per cent of pledges honoured. The donor conference to support the displaced and refugees held in Geneva in February is expected to collect \$4 billion, but the numbers of internally displaced have increased considerably owing to acts of terror and systematic violence by the Rapid Support Forces, as the representative of the United States and others mentioned earlier. Before it was attacked by the Rapid Support Forces, the population of the city of Wad Madani was 7 million. The Rapid Support Forces' repeated attacks and violations against villages in El Gezira in central Sudan, killing and terrorizing, have exacerbated the suffering of citizens and forced them to flee. The lasting solutions initiative needs to be reviewed.

The report does not address the issue of refugees. Despite some neighbours' allegations that an overwhelming majority of refugees had returned to their own countries, the reality and the official statistics confirm that the Sudan continues to shelter more than a million refugees, some of whom have participated in the war effort of the Rapid Support Forces. They are spread throughout the states of El Gezira, Sennar, White Nile, Blue Nile, Nile, Gedaref, Northern, Kassala and Red Sea. During his visit to the Sudan at the end of January, Mr. Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, noted that the Sudan is currently sheltering refugees from 20 different Arab, African and Asian States.

Turning to the concern expressed by some delegations about the closure of the border crossing between Chad and Darfur, for a long time before the start of the war our borders with Chad had been a conduit for smuggling arms and trafficking humans and mercenaries, along with all kinds of cross-border crime, which had previously led our two countries to create a joint force to handle the problems. Since the war began, however, those borders have become areas for the delivery of weapons, provisions and mercenaries to the Rapid Support Forces to enable them to continue their war and violations, as reports of United Nations experts, specialized organizations, international media and human rights organizations have confirmed. The Sudan is dealing with a war supported by multiple States, mercenaries and fighters from various continents, including neighbouring States. That has put huge pressure on the Sudan's national security, leading us to review the western crossing points between Chad and Darfur, including the possibility of finding an

alternative and opening new crossings and routes, in addition to those in Port Sudan and South Sudan. We have also been reflecting on the idea of mobile relief points and multi-shelter centres in other states, rather than a single relief centre that will be paralysed if it is attacked by outlaws. In fact, we have considered closing that crossing.

Repeated and systematic attacks deliberately targeting citizens have forced many of them to try to defend themselves collectively against that trend, based on their right to self-defence. That has been reflected in a spontaneous armed popular resistance that is not militarily, ethnically or politically motivated but simply an issue of upholding human rights and the right to life. The armed forces strictly oversee that move legally. Some countries have popular defence armies on standby in case of aggression.

The militia attack that took place on 18 December and targeted the city of Wad Madani and the Humanitarian Operations Centre, which housed the country's largest number of persons displaced by the war, resulted in the deaths of dozens of innocent civilians, threatened the lives of humanitarian workers and prevented them from carrying out their duties. The militia took control of the World Food Programme's biggest warehouses and looted food sufficient for more than 1.5 million citizens. It has continued to target 70 villages and cities in El Gezira, resulting in the deaths of thousands of unarmed villagers and a number of doctors and health-care workers. The result of the aggression is that the people of El Gezira state, who were the biggest providers of food in the Sudan, are now themselves in need of food assistance, a situation that has exacerbated the food gap, as many delegations noted.

In conclusion, I met with Mr. Martin Griffiths on Monday, 4 March and reviewed with him the new plan, which he accepted and was praised by the Secretary-General and other delegations. During Mr. Griffiths preparations to visit the Sudan, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs informed the United Nations Resident Humanitarian Coordinator on 5 March of the following steps: the opening of Port Sudan — Atbara-Dabbah-Mellit-El Fasher route; the temporary entry of relief aid at the border crossing between Chad and West Darfur via the Al-Tina crossing to bring in 237 trucks loaded with humanitarian assistance; the opening of a crossing from the Arab Republic of Egypt via the Red Sea road to Port Sudan through Wad Halfa-Dongola; the opening of a crossing from the state of South Sudan via the river and land route between Kosti, Jabalayn and Renk in the south of the White Nile; and the approval to use the airports of the city of El Fasher, El Obeid, and Kadugli when land transportation is not possible.

Full coordination is currently under way with the competent State authorities to implement those steps, and efforts are being made to ensure agreement with the neighbouring countries concerned. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs will have direct supervision over the work of humanitarian organizations and United Nations agencies to deliver humanitarian aid in accordance with relevant procedures and to ensure respect for the Sudan's sovereignty.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.