



SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMAL EXPERTS GROUP ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Summary of the meeting on Sudan held on December 16th 2019

On 16 December 2019, the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in Sudan. The members were briefed by the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Sudan, the Deputy Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan.

Members of the Security Council asked questions about women's participation in peace negotiations about Darfur and in the political transition in Sudan, and sought clarification on whether these challenges were political, financial, or logistical. As UNAMID is providing coordination and technical support to the peace talks in Juba, Council Members asked whether this support included any gender expertise or capacity and whether it was drawing from existing women-led platforms and initiatives, such as the Darfur Women's Taskforce. As the mission is expected to withdraw, there were several questions about key aspects related to women, peace and security to consider in the establishment of a follow-up mission to UNAMID, the continuity of women protection networks in a post-UNAMID setting, and arrangements for human rights monitoring and data collection and analysis after the withdrawal of the mission. Other questions included how to foster long-term cultural change with regards to gender equality, the role of local community leaders and religious leaders, and patterns of conflict-related sexual violence. Finally, Council members expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to engage with a delegation of Sudanese women representing civil society when they attended the annual open debate on women, peace and security in October.

Below are the main points raised during the meeting:

- The role of women in the revolution that sparked political change in Sudan cannot be overstated and has already led to extraordinary normative progress, as evidenced by the extensive references to gender equality, women's rights, and resolution 1325 in the new Constitutional Declaration, the commitment to adopt a national action plan on 1325, or the repeal of the discriminatory public order laws. However, the signing and ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is still pending, several laws still need to be reformed, and the transitional legislative council, where women are set to occupy at least 40 percent of seats, will only be established upon completion of the peace process. Political actors are mobilizing to frame the intended signing of CEDAW as an assault on the Islamic values of Sudan, and there are already signs that women are not being fairly included in key negotiations and political processes.
- The peace process in Juba between the government forces and the Darfuri armed groups lacks women's representation. This is, *inter alia*, due to logistical and financial challenges, not least the location of the talks. The technical secretariat of the talks is supported by UNAMID staff. UNAMID assisted the Peace Commission to ensure that women's voices are heard in the process, but the Peace Commission suffers from a lack of funding and adequate resources. 120 women deliberated on issues such as security, economic empowerment and the promotion of gender equality in government and consolidated their views into recommendations for advocacy during peace negotiations. Participants also established a database of 50 Darfuri women leaders and negotiators who could serve as advocates at the peace talks. The UN has also supported consultations of women across the five states in Darfur to help the women's movement in its organization and coordination efforts.

- Support to strengthening the government's institutional capacity on gender equality is essential. The government of Sweden is providing exemplary support on this matter through the recruitment of several gender experts to strengthen the women's machinery, sector ministries, and the prime minister's office, but more is needed, as support for gender equality is often not followed up by specific actions, mechanisms, and budgetary allocations. The creation of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, which is provided for in the Constitutional Declaration, is still pending.
- The UN's transition action plan commits, *inter alia*, to supporting gender parity in all governance and constitutional structures, women's participation in peace negotiations, prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, and legal reforms. The United Nations Country Team, through the gender thematic group, is supporting the transition process in integrating gender throughout the planning.
- The State Liaison Functions are an innovative tool to address conflict drivers in areas of the four Darfur States where UNAMID has withdrawn its physical presence, and they have been crucial in facilitating the collaboration between the mission and UN Women. UNAMID's withdrawal will create a gap in terms of data collection and analysis to inform decision making and programming in protection issues. The State Liaison Functions have a mobile monitoring team working in areas from which UNAMID has withdrawn.
- UNAMID continues to work on strengthening the rule of law and the criminal justice chain, together with Sudan's first female Chief Justice, the recently appointed Minister of Justice and the new Attorney General. In 2019, in partnership, UNAMID has organized programs for 350 rural court judges to mediate inter-communal conflicts and address issues of sexual violence. 200 members of civil society and 31 women lawyers and Bar Association members were trained in trial monitoring with a special focus on sexual and gender-based violence. Through its transitional justice and human rights mandate, UNAMID continues to provide technical assistance to Sudan's National Commission for Human Rights which includes enhancing their capacity to investigate sexual violence as well as developing sensitization strategies about women's human rights.
- Between February and November 2019, UNAMID documented 69 cases of sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, involving 128 survivors in central Darfur alone. There is substantial underreporting of cases due to UNAMID's physical withdrawal from West and East Darfur, fear of stigma, fear of repeated attacks and rare successful prosecution of alleged perpetrators. Conflict-related sexual violence impedes women from exercising vital economic activities, such as farming and the collecting of firewood and fuel. It is also used as a means to exclude women from public life. On 3 June 2019, security forces, including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) allegedly attacked civilian protestors and committed rapes and gang rapes, and women's groups have already raised the alarm about the absence of women from the independent committee investigating these atrocities.
- The annex of the report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence lists two state actors, the Rapid Support Forces and Sudanese Armed Forces, and two non-state armed groups, the Justice and Equality Movement and the Abdul Wahid faction of the Sudan Liberation Army, as credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence in conflict in Sudan. The completion of the proposed framework of cooperation with the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict still pending.
- Specialized lifesaving services for survivors of gender-based violence are unavailable in over 80 per cent of affected localities. UNAMID established women protection networks which are an early warning mechanism for sexual and gender-based violence. In 2019 alone, UNAMID launched nine new women protection networks in the Jebel Marra area, making a total of 49 networks in Darfur. The networks support and connect people facing protection challenges with access to justice service providers, civil society, human rights advocates and UNAMID. This partnership also helps identifying vulnerable community 'hot spots' and other areas of concern. Supporting these protection networks requires a significant investment of resources. If the mission transfers this area

of work to UN Women when it withdraws, international partners must step up to provide the resources that are needed. Other results include the establishment of centers for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in three Darfuri states, where women can access medical attention and psychosocial support.

The following recommendations were made by UN Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Experts Group, and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict:

- In the forthcoming resolution on South Sudan, the Security Council should reiterate the extensive provisions on women, peace and security adopted in resolution 2429. In addition, the Security Council should consider including language on women's leadership and participation in the peace negotiations and the political transition; the appointment of a gender advisor by the African Union to support the peace negotiations; a context-specific strategy of the United Nations to ensure women's participation; the protection of women-led organizations and women's human rights defenders from gender-specific threats and attacks; the inclusion of gender analysis and dedicated gender expertise in the strategic planning decisions informing the drawdown of UNAMID; the repeal of discriminatory laws and ratification of international agreements, including CEDAW; and welcoming Sudan's efforts to advance women, peace and security, including through the adoption of a national action plan on resolution 1325 and a framework of cooperation to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, urging an increase of budgetary allocations to these matters and mandating that medical, psychosocial support, and legal services are available and accessible to survivors of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence.
- Council members should continue to engage in high-level direct political advocacy to ensure that women's participation and leadership informs all stages of the peace process, and provide political and financial support to women's civil society organizations to ensure their meaningful participation in the peace talks and post-conflict and recovery efforts.
- Council members and other international partners should urgently support the establishment and operationalization of the Commission on Women and Gender Equality and advocate for a strong mandate and adequate capacity, as well as considering earmarking at least 15 percent of their funding support to peacebuilding and political transition in Sudan for programmes whose main goal is to advance gender equality.
- Council members should ask for periodic updates from government interlocutors and the United Nations about plans to repeal discriminatory laws affecting women and girls and empower the Human Rights Commission to protect women's human rights defenders.
- Council members should provide flexible, multi-year, and core funding to women's rights organizations and women-led civil society organizations who address harmful gender norms and the prevention, mitigation and response to gender-based violence prevention response, and encourage the government to reform provisions in the Voluntary Work Act and the Humanitarian Aid Commission that restrict the work of civil society organizations.
- Council members should provide targeted assistance for the signing and ratification of CEDAW and Sudan's participation in the Universal Periodic Review as a way to raise women's rights issues.
- Council members should engage in direct advocacy with the government about the lack of women or a focus on sexual violence in the committee investigating the June 3rd violence.
- The Executive Director of UN Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence should consider a joint visit to Sudan to raise the visibility of the demands of women's groups and gender justice advocates.

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting, thanking the briefers for their participation and committed to follow-up on the important issues raised at the meeting.