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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
966TH MEETING
24 NOVEMBER 2020
ADDIS ABABA

PSC/PR/COMM. (CMLXVI)

COMMUNIQUÉ

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 966th meeting held on 24 November 2020, on the situation in Abyei,

The Peace and Security Council,

Recalling its previous communiqués and press statements on the situation in the Abyei Area, in particular, Communiqué [PSC/AHG/ COMM/1.(CCCLIII)] adopted at its 353rd meeting held on 26 January 2013; Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(CCCLXXIV)] adopted at its 374th meeting held on 7 May 2013; Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(CDIII)] adopted at its 403rd meeting held on 26 October 2013; Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.(CDXCIV)] adopted at its 494th meeting held on 26 March 2015; Communiqués [PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLVI)] adopted at its 456th meeting held on 22 June 2015 and Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.2(DXXIX)] adopted at its 529th meeting held on 31 July 2015;

Taking note of the opening remarks made by the Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for November 2020, H.E Ambassador Tesfaye Yilma, and the statement of the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui, and the presentation by the Chairperson of the African Union High level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), former President Thabo Mbeki; **also taking note** of the statements made by the representative of the Republic of South Sudan, H.E. Ambassador James Morgan; the representative of the Republic of Sudan as the country concerned and also as Chair of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ambassador Jamal El Sheikh both, ; the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) Force Commander, Major General Kefyalew Made Tessema; and the UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Ambassador Parfait Onanga-Anyanga;

Reaffirming the AU solidarity with the Governments and people of both, South Sudan and Sudan in their aspirations and commitment to restore peace, stability and development in their countries, as well as to find a lasting solution to the situation in Abyei; and

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council;

1. **Commends** the efforts deployed by the Governments of South Sudan and Sudan towards addressing critical security and political issues relating to the Abyei Area in an amicable manner and for their commitment to the principle of good neighborliness, under the leadership of President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan ,Chairman of the Sudanese Sovereign Council Abdel Fattah Al Burhan and Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok of Sudan, and **underlines** the fact that the remarkable and unprecedented level of positive relations between the two countries avail an optimum opportunity for finding peaceful and durable solutions for all the pending issues including resolving the status of the Abyei Area;

2. **Welcomes** the outcomes of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM) convened in October 2020 which demonstrates the commitment of the two Governments to amicably solve the pending issues in Abyei, especially as they call for the reconvening of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC); **also calls** the AJOC Facilitator to initiate consultations with the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan with a view to agreeing on modalities for the reconvening of the AJOC, as soon as possible;
3. **Commends** UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) for ensuring the protection of civilians in the Abyei Area and for preserving peace and stability along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan; **also commends** the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the continued deployment of its peacekeeping contingent in the Abyei Area;
4. **Expresses deep concern** over the continued incidents of violence and relative security fragility in Abyei, **condemns** all violent clashes and, in this respect, **calls on** UNISFA, working in close cooperation with the Governments of South Sudan and Sudan, to undertake full investigations of these clashes and report the findings to the upcoming meeting of the JBVMM;
5. **Appeals** to the Parties to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement on Temporary Security and Administrative Arrangements for the Abyei Area, signed on 20 June 2011, particularly the finalization of the establishment of the Abyei Area Administration, the Abyei Area Council, and the Abyei Police Service, in order to facilitate the provision of essential services to the Abyei population;
6. **Expresses concern over** the delay in holding the referendum on the status of Abyei in accordance with the Abyei Protocol of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and, in this regard, **appeals** to the Governments of the South Sudan and Sudan to agree on the arrangements that can expedite resolving the status of Abyei and **requests** the Chairperson of the Commission, working with the AUHIP, to engage the two Heads of State to resolve the status of Abyei on the basis of the AUHIP proposal of 21 September 2012;
7. **Calls upon** the parties to implement the September 2012 Cooperation Agreements related to border agreements, especially the demarcation of the Safe demilitarised Border Zone (SDBZ) to allow the JBVMM to effectively discharge its mandate;
8. **Reiterates its full support** to the efforts of the AUHIP on the issue of the Abyei Area and **commends** the AUHIP Chairperson, former President Thabo Mbeki and its members for their perseverance and support to, the efforts of the Governments and peoples of Sudan and South Sudan; and in this regard, **urges** the Sudanese and South Sudanese stakeholders to extend full cooperation to the AUHIP;
9. **Emphasizes** the need to maintain the presence of UNISFA in order to continue providing security to the fragile situation in Abyei and along the border between Sudan and South Sudan; in this regard, **welcomes** the UN Security Council Resolution 2550 of 12 November 2020 which,

inter alia, extended UNISFA mandate for 6 months and, in this context, **appeals** to the Governments of South Sudan and Sudan to extend their full support and cooperation to UNISFA, and **emphasizes** that the discussion concerning the possible drawdown and exit strategy of UNISFA should be guided by the level of progress achieved until May 2021, in relation to finding a peaceful final resolution;

10. **Underscores** the need for the AU Commission, AUHIP, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to continue coordinating their efforts in providing support to South Sudan and Sudan in the full implementation of the Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area of 20 June 2011;

11. **Requests** the AU Commission and the AUHIP to develop modalities for releasing the Report on the killing of Chief Koul Deng Koul of the Ngok Dinka, and to ensure that the Report is used as a basis for community reconciliation, sensitization, and peace process in Abyei; **also requests** the Chairperson, once the modalities for the release of the Report are agreed, to dispatch a sensitization mission to Abyei, to be composed of representatives of the AU Commission, the AUHIP, the UN, with the assistance of UNISFA, to engage the local communities on the Report, with a view to facilitating the reconciliation process in Abyei;

12. **Urges** all stakeholders to maintain the objective of organizing the referendum, in accordance with the 2011 Protocol, as a priority for the finalization of the stabilization process of the Abyei Area;

13. **Further requests** the AU Commission to work with the Governments of South Sudan and Sudan in identifying areas for post-conflict reconstruction and development support in Abyei, with meaningful and effective participation of women and youth;

14. **Requests** the Commission to regularly update the Council on the situation in Abyei;

15. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.