

Statement of Mr. Ladsous

Briefing to the Security Council

11 November 2011

Mr. President,

1. Thank you for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situations in Sudan and South Sudan. Given the critical issues facing both countries, I paid my first field visit as Under-Secretary-General of Peacekeeping to Sudan and South Sudan from 30 October to 6 November, during which I met with senior officials from both Governments and President Mbeki of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel.

Mr. President,

2. Starting with Abyei, as the Council is aware, the North-South migration has started and for the first time will cross an international border. The annual migration of the Misseriya nomadic community through Abyei has also begun and elements of the group with approximately 2,000 head of cattle have reached Goli, 25 kilometres north of Abyei Town. The full group, numbering several thousand, with hundreds of thousands of heads of cattle and sheep, is expected to reach the Kiir/Bahr al Arab River by the end of December. Given the ongoing presence of the Sudanese Armed Forces in Abyei, there is a real risk of serious violence during this year's migration if returning IDPs attempt to prevent the migration. While President Kiir assured me that his Government would guarantee the peaceful migration of unarmed nomads, there are signs that other officials in the South do not want

to allow the migration to take place, especially given the ongoing presence of the SAF in Abyei.

3. I visited Abyei and was deeply concerned to see the destruction of property in the aftermath of the May 2011 SAF occupation. At the same time I was impressed by the UNISFA Force Commander and his staff. UNISFA is well deployed with 2,894 military personnel on the ground, including the full troop strength of the second battalion. Deployment of the battalion's equipment and construction of the company operating bases in the northern sector is progressing, having to face extensive demining and engineering tasks. The replacement of the Banton Bridge on 28 October, which restored a key crossing point between Agok and Abyei Town destroyed during the May 2011 fighting, will facilitate the return of displaced persons, humanitarian access and UNISFA's operations. However, President Bashir has stated that the SAF would only withdraw following establishment of the Abyei Area Administration.

Mr. President,

4. With respect to the situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, the Government of Sudan has accused South Sudan of fuelling the fighting and providing direct support to the SPLA-North, warning that continued support would have grave consequences for bilateral relations. President Kiir has denied support for the SPLA-North and accused the Government of Sudan of supporting insurgent groups in South Sudan.

5. During my visit, I strongly urged both sides to address these issues through peaceful negotiations and to make the compromises necessary to resolve them. I expressed the deep concern of this Council and the Secretary-General over the recent increase in North-South tensions and the continued lack of progress on Abyei and other post-CPA issues. I stressed to them, as noted by Special Envoy Menkerios yesterday, that the only course of action available is to recommit to a peaceful, negotiated settlement of outstanding issues and to an immediate de-escalation of the current tensions. However, recent reports of bombings in the border area between Upper Nile and Blue Nile States and of a cross border attack in Kuek, Upper Nile, today have added to these tensions.

6. On 9 November, UNMISS was informed by Government of South Sudan officials that up to nine bombs had been dropped in the New Quffa and Yafta areas in Maban County, Upper Nile State, very near the border with Blue Nile State. The areas are gathering points for tens of thousands of refugees from the fighting in Blue Nile State. Humanitarian partners report that approximately 55,000 people including refugees, returnees and internally displaced are currently on the move as a result of the bombing.

7. Yesterday, UNMISS confirmed that the SAF dropped at least two bombs near the Yida refugee camp and in the vicinity of an SPLA camp along the Unity State/Southern Kordofan border, with unknown casualties. There are reports -still unconfirmed - of an additional two bombs dropped in the area. The Yida camp contains

approximately 10,000 people displaced from the fighting in Southern Kordofan. UNMISS has relocated at least twelve NGO and United Nations agency staff from the area, with additional relocations ongoing. The Mission is also working to verify the locations of the reported bombings.

8. Today, the SPLA reported to the media a cross-border attack by the Sudan Armed forces in Kuek, in the oil fields of upper Nile state, causing up to 20 casualties. The Sudan Armed Forces have since then denied any responsibility in this attack. The Mission is working to verify these reports and evaluate any additional humanitarian needs in the affected areas.

9. As a matter of background, prior to 9 July both the Yida and the Quffa areas were close to SPLA 9th and 10th Division locations, which were largely composed of combatants from the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State.

Mr. President,

10. Yesterday, President Kiir delivered a press conference to the diplomatic community in Juba. The conference was in part a response to the Government of Sudan's 4 November letter to this Council and also covered the reported bombings along the border. President Kiir again denied support to the SPLA-North and reiterated his commitment to resolving issues with Sudan through dialogue. He stated that the bombings were a violation of the territorial sovereignty of South Sudan and that the attacks were on civilian refugees from the fighting in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States. He reiterated his claim that the Government of Sudan was

supporting insurgent groups in South Sudan and warned of imminent attacks by militia forces in Maban County, Upper Nile State. While noting that his Government would not tolerate these activities, President Kiir stated that South Sudan would not be drawn into fighting with the North.

Mr. President,

11. I believe the situation in Sudan and South Sudan is at a difficult juncture, with very low trust between the countries, heightened rhetoric, and mutual accusations of support to insurgencies in the territory of the other. In this environment, neither country is making sufficient progress towards building a strong, mutually beneficial relationship. Tensions along the border may also flare up into serious violence during the migration period, particularly in the Abyei area where neither side has fully withdrawn.

12. Bombings by the SAF in the border areas between Sudan and South Sudan and reports of cross-border incursions and attacks are a major concern, not only for the relationship between the two countries but also for the tens of thousands of civilians in the affected areas. While neither side appears ready to return to war, there is a concerning pattern of escalation and destabilization that could lead to large-scale confrontation and put more civilian lives at risk. It is absolutely imperative that both Governments take the necessary steps to de-escalate the situation, ensure that civilian lives are protected, and resume peaceful dialogue.

Mr. President,

13. During my visit to Sudan, I also spent a day in El Fasher and Shangil Tobaya and discussed the situation in Darfur with a wide range of interlocutors. While UNAMID continues to do its best in particularly difficult circumstances, I was struck by the different perceptions of the situation on the ground by key stakeholders. In reality, there has been progress, but at the same time real challenges continue to cause deep concern. It is true that the security situation has improved since the height of the conflict, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) provides a framework and opportunity for concrete progress and some IDPs have been able to return to some areas. At the same time, however, new displacements have occurred in other areas, tens of thousands of IDPs continue to live in difficult conditions in the camps, a number of armed movements remain outside the peace process, widespread banditry impedes civilian life, access remains limited in a number of areas and much more needs to be done to address impunity. Moreover, renewed hostilities remain a real threat with the end of the rainy season.

14. On the security situation, as you know, UNAMID was attacked twice in the past month, losing four peacekeepers, including one this past weekend. While the Government promised me its full cooperation in the investigation of the first attack, we remain deeply concerned about the need for further cooperation in creating a secure environment and bringing to justice those responsible for attacks on the UN.

Mr President,

15. The preparation of the roadmap for peace in Darfur, as requested by the Council, is an opportunity to bring the international community together to speak with one voice on Darfur. UNAMID and DPKO are working closely with our partners, including the AU and Special Envoys, in the preparation of the roadmap. At the same time, we will work with our UN humanitarian partners and the AU on the review of uniformed personnel, also requested by this Council, particularly in regard to developing a common assessment of the situation on the ground and strengthening our coordination mechanisms. We hope that these exercises will help us to establish a more coordinated international approach in support of the peace process, and humanitarian assistance and early recovery in Darfur.