

Security Council downsizes AU-UN mission in Darfur, eyeing eventual exit

The Security Council on Friday extended the mandate of the joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping operation in Sudan's Darfur until the end of June next year, but reduced the number of troops deployed in the field with an eye towards the mission's eventual exit.

The decision was unanimous as 15 Council members determined that although the security situation has improved in Darfur, the long-running conflict there remains a threat to international peace and stability.

By the terms of the resolution, the Council will cut the troop strength of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) from the current 8,735 to 4,050 personnel, while maintain its police strength at the current level of 2,500 personnel.

In the resolution, the Council took note of the recommendations in the Special UN-AU report issued earlier this year, with a view towards the mission's exit on 30 June 2020, drawing down fully by December 2020, provided there is no significant change in the security situation in Darfur.

A civil war which broke out in 2003 led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Darfuris and the displacement of nearly two million. In the fighting between Sudanese Government troops and militias and other armed rebel groups, widespread atrocities such as murder and rape of civilians were committed.