

Speech: Community Engagement and Political Stability to Ensure Peace in Abyei

Thank you Mr President. I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his presentation and I would also like to thank Special Envoy Haysom both for your presentation and for your excellent work you have done during your tenure to support peace and stability between South Sudan and Sudan and we look forward to working with you in your new role.

Mr President, I would like to touch on three issues. First, I would like to talk about the progress that's been made by UNISFA, and particularly by the Joint Border Verification Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), against the benchmarks set out in Resolution 2412 (2018).

The UK welcomes the maintenance of standing clearance for all UNISFA air and ground patrols along with both governments' support of the Mission, particularly ceasing to obstruct the movements of the Mission as we have seen in previous reporting periods.

However, as the Netherlands has said, the lack of progress against other benchmarks has been disappointing and we do urge both governments to devote their efforts to change this. Establishing the four remaining JBVMM team sites and holding two meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism must be a priority.

While both government's efforts are essential to progress, we do recognise, as Special Envoy Haysom has said, that wider dynamics, including both government's focus on the South Sudan peace process and a lack of agreement from local communities for JBVMM team sites have both contributed to delays. Therefore, we believe it is essential, as France has said, that UNISFA and the JBVMM engage local communities so their concerns can be considered and their support garnered.

Second Mr President, let me touch on the Secretary-General's recommendations for UNISFA which, broadly speaking, we welcome. We support the recommendation to augment the civilian component of UNISFA, particularly via the deployment of community liaison officers. We also acknowledge the Secretary-General's recommendation to deploy a civilian Deputy Head of Mission and we commend UNISFA for improving the security situation in Abyei and reducing the need for a large military presence in the area. We welcome therefore Secretary-General's recommendation that UNISFA's military component concentrate its deployment along the borders of the Abyei area in light of the finding that cross-border military action is the most likely threat to security in the area.

Despite improvements to the security situation, we, like many others, are concerned by reports of increased criminality within the Abyei Area and at

the continued delays to establish the joint administrative arrangements, including the Abyei Police Service. We therefore fully support for the recommendation to deploy three formed police units to the three major population centres in the Abyei Area.

Third and finally, again, as others have said, only a political settlement can address the underlying causes of this conflict and ensure that long-term stability for the people of Abyei is a reality.

It is this Council's responsibility to ensure that the Mission is resourced appropriately to support this overarching aim. We welcome very much Special Envoy Haysom's sense of optimism that I detected that Sudan and South Sudan are now more willing and more able to make progress on the political track. I look forward to hearing from them both today on how they intend to do that and of course, they will have our full support.