

Speech: “Lasting peace in Darfur can only be realised with the agreement of a permanent ceasefire and an inclusive political settlement”

Thank you Mr President.

I would like to thank the Prosecutor for her 26th report on the situation in Darfur, the unwavering commitment that she and her staff have shown to this investigation and for her briefing to the Council today.

The ICC has an important role to play in global efforts to end impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern and the United Kingdom fully supports its efforts to hold perpetrators to account and achieve justice for victims.

The UK welcomes the reduction of armed conflict between government forces and the armed opposition, as well as the extension of unilateral cessations of hostilities by both sides. We are also encouraged by the improvements in humanitarian access and the operational environment.

Whilst the situation in Darfur is beginning to show signs for cautious optimism, the international community would be remiss to accept the narrative that the situation has normalised. As noted in the prosecutor’s report, the security and human rights situation remains volatile and unpredictable, particularly for Darfur’s 2.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Also, of particular concern is the continued use of sexual violence in conflict, although it is noted that reported incidents have purportedly declined during this reporting period.

As we have said many times before in this chamber, lasting peace in Darfur can only be realised with the agreement of a permanent ceasefire and an inclusive political settlement that addresses the root causes of conflict. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) will be vital in this regard. We note the Government’s ongoing disarmament campaign but are concerned by the tensions and armed confrontations that have emerged as a result, and which threaten to undermine the recent improvements in the security situation.

We therefore urge the Government of Sudan to pursue a balanced DDR and security sector reform, with full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and in close cooperation with UNAMID.

With regard to the currently stalled peace process, we urge all parties to capitalise on the recent security and humanitarian improvements by re-focusing their efforts on implementing the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) Roadmap.

The UK welcomes the progress that UNAMID has made in completing the first phase of its reconfiguration and the Government of Sudan's improved cooperation with the Mission. However, it is regrettable that the Government of Sudan has yet formally to agree to the opening of a temporary UNAMID base in Golo, Jebel Marra. This base is vital to ensuring a smaller UNAMID is able to focus its efforts on the Jebel Marra area, including supporting the provision of humanitarian assistance in this high need area. We therefore urge the Government of Sudan to agree formally to the opening of this base without further delay.

As UNAMID reconfiguration continues, it is crucial that the Mission and the Security Council closely monitor the impact of the reconfiguration on the situation on the ground, as well as the cooperation afforded to the Mission by the Government of Sudan. The UK therefore requests other Council members to engage constructively with the upcoming assessment of phase one of the reconfiguration and to consider carefully whether phase two remains appropriate.

Mr President, in adopting UN Security Council resolution 1593, this Council committed to support the Office of the Prosecutor in its efforts to investigate the situation in Darfur. In the twenty-six reports that have followed since, the Prosecutor has consistently reminded us of the need for state cooperation and Council support in order to make progress in this investigation.

Mr President, in this regard, we must do better. We encourage our fellow Council member to consider carefully what more we, as a Council, can do to ensure that the Court receives the necessary support. The UK will continue to call on the Government of Sudan to meet its obligations under UN Security Council resolution 1593, and to cooperate fully with the Court, to execute outstanding arrest warrants and to fulfil its international obligations.

The United Kingdom continues to be frustrated that fugitives of the Court, including Mr Al-Bashir, Mr Harun and Mr Hussein, are still travelling to certain countries unhindered. We note the Chambers findings on 6 July that vis-à-vis the Court, Sudan cannot claim the immunity of Mr Al-Bashir as Head of State in the context of a request to arrest and surrender him to the Court. For our part, the United Kingdom will continue to raise our concerns with the relevant governments, including through the European Union, as noted in the Prosecutor's report. We renew our call to all States Parties to cooperate with the ICC and abide by their obligations under the Rome Statute. We also urge them to consult the Court if they feel that they are unable to co-operate with it for any reason.

We welcome and thank the Office of the Prosecutor for its continued efforts to achieve justice for victims in Darfur, despite the fragile security situation, access restrictions and lack of cooperation. The UK also appreciates the effort that the Prosecutor's Office has put into making the most effective and efficient use of the resources it has available, while recognising that the lack of resources does impact on its investigations.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the UK's

commitment to supporting the Court, both as a State Party to the Rome Statute and as a member of this Council. We thank the Prosecutor again for her report.

Thank you Mr President.