

Speech: The importance of the sanctions regime in Sudan

Thank you Mr President. And may I, like others, start by thanking the Chair of the 1591 Committee Ambassador Wronka for her briefing and our continued efforts as chair, based of course on her considerable personal experience.

It's disappointing that due to a lack of consensus among the committee, she was unable to give a more comprehensive briefing on our activities.

Mr President, the subsidiary bodies of this Council, including its sanctions committees, constitute a vital part of our collective work to maintain international peace and security. We rely on – and we require – the wider UN membership to implement the sanctions regimes that are agreed by this Council and we have a responsibility to demonstrate transparency in the conduct of the work of the sanctions committees.

Mr President, the United Kingdom continues to support fully the 1591 sanctions regime and the Panel of Experts. I'd like to thank the Panel for their ongoing efforts to provide the committee with comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the sanctions regime and wider political and security dynamics in Sudan and the region.

Mr President, I take issue with the Russian delegation's depiction of the position of the United Kingdom and of Western countries on sanctions in general and on Sudan in particular. It has no relation to the facts. Sanctions regimes and the criteria that underpin them are agreed by this Council, as set out under the United Nations Charter. That is proper. It is right. The United Kingdom will continue to act objectively on this and all sanctions regimes and we encourage all colleagues to do likewise.

In relation to the Panel of Experts' activities, the United Kingdom welcomes the increased cooperation of the government of Sudan. However, we note concerns raised regarding the regular presence of government officials at some of the Panel's meetings. We therefore encourage the government of Sudan to extend its cooperation to the Panel with full respect of its independent and investigative mandate.

As noted by the Chair, the Panel recently transmitted its final report to the committee. In this report, they singled out the clashes between the Sudan Liberation Army – Abdel Wahid and government of Sudan forces in the Jebel Marra region of Darfur as the main development during the reporting period. We have heard during briefings on UNAMID that these clashes have resulted in a significant number of civilian casualties, new displacement and human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by all sides. Reports of indiscriminate shootings, looting and burning of villages and conflict related sexual violence are particularly alarming.

There have been welcome improvements in the security situation in some parts

of Darfur and we saw some progress in the peace process with the signing of a pre-negotiation agreement by the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi and the Justice and Equality Movement with the government of Sudan in Berlin in December. However, the clashes in Jebel Marra are a stark reminder that the situation in Darfur is not yet normalised and remains fragile. It is therefore incumbent upon this Council, Mr President, to ensure a responsible drawdown of UNAMID and to hold the government to account for progress towards the achievement of the exit benchmarks and indicators as we agreed in the past we adopted in December.

Additionally, the arms embargo continues to be violated by all armed groups and the government of Sudan. The Panel's report details the destabilising flow of weapons into and out of Darfur. We call upon all parties to adhere to the arms embargo and remind the government of Sudan of the requirement to request approval from the 1591 Committee for transfers of military material to Darfur.

Mr President, the Chair also noted in her remarks that the committee was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten. During her briefing, the SRSG reminded the committee that conflict-related sexual violence remains widespread in Darfur and that survivor and firsthand witnesses regularly identify members of the security forces as perpetrators. She also highlighted that sexual violence continues to be chronically under-reported due to fear of reprisals, acute stigma, lack of protection for victims and the inaction of law enforcement.

The United Kingdom welcomes the government's engagement on a framework of cooperation to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. Agreement and complete implementation of this framework is necessary. If the Sudanese Armed Forces and rapid support forces are to be delisted from the report to the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

I would like to highlight, Mr President, to draw attention to the important recommendations made to the committee by SRSG Patten. They were namely;

1. That sexual violence be elevated as a standalone designation criteria.
2. That the Panel of Experts be granted adequate resource and expertise to investigate sexual violence. The committee explicitly requests the Panel to investigate and document alleged incidents of sexual violence and for good;
3. Any future benchmarking process for the possible lifting of targeted sanctions include provisions related to sexual violence in Resolution 2429 and the prevention and accountability measures required under Resolutions 1960 and 2106.

The United Kingdom expresses its support for these recommendations and for the continued efforts of SRSG Patten and her office to address the worrying prevalence of sexual violence in Sudan.

Mr President, while it was not discussed by the committee, let me also take this opportunity to say a couple of words on the current situation in Sudan regarding the ongoing protests. The United Kingdom is concerned by the current situation. Security forces' use of lethal force and arbitrary detentions in response to peaceful process protests is unacceptable and it should stop. We are appalled at reports that security forces have used tear gas and violence within hospitals against those being treated and against doctors providing medical assistance. We repeat our calls for restraint in policing the protests for the release of detainees and for accountability for those killed. The government of Sudan's response to this process will shape the United Kingdom's approach to engagement in the coming months and years.

Mr President, in concluding, let me again thank our Chair for her ongoing commitment, reiterate the importance of the sanctions regime in Sudan and express our hope that all members of the committee will be constructive as we approach the renewal of the 1591 regime next month.

Thank you Mr President.