

Time to seize this momentum and deliver positive change for the people of Abyei

Thank you President and thank you to the Assistant Secretary-General and the Special Envoy for their very helpful briefings. I would also like to welcome the representatives of Sudan and South Sudan to this meeting. We would like to make three brief points today.

First, the United Kingdom commends UNISFA's tireless efforts to deliver its mandate under such challenging circumstances and we thank the troop-contributing countries. We fully support the extension of the Mission's mandate for twelve months.

We join our fellow Council members in reiterating the call on the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to remove the longstanding obstacles that limit the full implementation of UNISFA's mandate.

In particular, we are concerned by the restrictions on the Mission's freedom of movement and by attacks on UNISFA personnel during the reporting period.

We urge the Government of South Sudan to ensure the re-operationalisation of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism Headquarters in Gok Machar.

Second, we must continue to watch carefully the situation on the ground in Abyei. Civilians continue to suffer due to the absence of basic services and limited rule of law.

We are concerned about the ongoing intercommunal violence across Abyei, including the worrying increase in tensions between Dinka communities. Recent flooding has compounded the worsening humanitarian situation too. On top of insecurity and a lack of infrastructure, this is putting huge pressure on the humanitarian response. In these circumstances, ensuring unrestricted access is vital.

The United Kingdom urges all parties fully to respect International Humanitarian Law and protect and enable humanitarian staff, assets and operations to deliver aid to those in need in all parts of Abyei, without hindrance.

Third, we remain concerned by the lack of progress on a political solution for Abyei. We therefore welcome the increased focus on this from Sudan and from South Sudan. We call on both Governments to seize this momentum and deliver measurable positive change for the people of Abyei.

As a next step, we urge both countries to organise a further meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee as a sign of their recommitment to reaching an agreement.

Lastly, we welcome the African Union's recent Communiqué regarding Abyei, and we encourage the AU to intensify their mediation efforts to help reach an agreement on its final status.

Thank you.