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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kariuki	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Lamce
	Brazil	Mr. De Oliveira Freitas
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mrs. Gasri
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Mr. Korbich
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Mr. Gallagher
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Almazrouei
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2022/316)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2022/316)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of South Sudan and the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations; and Ms. Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Lacroix and Ms. Tetteh are joining today's meeting via video-teleconference.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/316, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the developments pertaining to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), including its support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) as well as the progress made on the design of the Abyei joint programme. I shall also update the Council on the latest developments since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/316).

The overall security situation in the Abyei Administrative Area has remained calm, but the trust deficit between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities remains of great concern. In line with the Security Council's acknowledgement last December that UNISFA must intensify its support to intercommunal dialogue, the Mission worked tirelessly with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, as

well as community leaders on both sides, to come to an agreement on this dry season's migration route. It was disappointing that, at the last minute, the parties could not agree on a number of key points, which resulted in the cancelation of the intercommunal dialogue event that UNISFA had organized in Entebbe.

Since last October, we have also seen incidents of intercommunal violence. For instance, last week we saw intercommunal violence that resulted in a total of 29 people killed, including two women, and 30 injured from both communities. Those violent incidents occurred in Noong/Annam, Kolom, Leul/Al Luo, and the Amiet common market/Faydelzaraf areas. I wish to convey our deepest condolences to the victims and the families who were impacted. Those deaths and injuries could have been avoided had there been more trust between the two communities at all levels.

To address those incidents of violence, the Mission continued its community engagement work, along with more frequent and longer-range patrols. The Force Commander/Acting Head of Mission engaged the parties at capital and community levels. He also encouraged the use of grass-roots conflict resolution mechanisms involving traditional chiefs, youth, women and girls.

However, it is first and foremost for the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to renew their engagement on the final status of Abyei. I welcome the recent request for support from both parties towards organizing the next meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. I call on the leaderships of the Sudan and South Sudan to do their utmost to use that meeting to move forward on the issue of Abyei.

Significant progress has been made in the development of the Abyei joint programme, proposed in the letter from the Secretary-General to the Security Council dated 17 September 2021 (S/2021/805), since my previous briefing to the Council (see S/PV.8887). A team including representatives from the Department of Peace Operations, the Development Coordination Office and the United Nations country teams of South Sudan and the Sudan are at an advanced stage of consultations with women, youth, elders and other community members to ensure that the peacebuilding services proposed through the Abyei joint programme will benefit the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka in a conflict-sensitive manner, and where the needs are the greatest. I am encouraged by the political support for

the programme from the Governments of South Sudan and the Sudan. I appeal for the Council's continued political support to the programme so that it can have a lasting impact on peace in Abyei.

On human rights, UNISFA continued to face challenges documenting human rights violations and abuses, due to its lack of human rights expertise. However, it was encouraging that a team of human rights officers was granted temporary visas to conduct an assessment mission to Abyei last March. There was also small but important progress with regard to the parties' obligations towards improving the meaningful participation of women in decision-making — in the Ngok Dinka community, a woman was appointed in each of the 13 traditional courts.

I am also pleased to inform the Council that, during the reporting period, a rule-of-law team from the Department of Peace Operations was able to successfully conduct a four-week assessment for the development of a rule-of-law support strategy. The strategy, which is forthcoming, seeks to apply rule-of-law tools and mechanisms to advance the Mission's core mandated tasks of increasing security and the protection of civilians, in line with resolution 2606 (2021). The strategy, which will be developed in consultation with all the relevant United Nations entities, including via the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law, will also inform any potential engagement by the Sudan and South Sudan United Nations country teams in Abyei on rule of law matters.

Unfortunately, there was no progress during the reporting period on the deployment of the three formed police units, as mandated by the Security Council. Despite the continued efforts by the UNISFA leadership, visas have not been granted to the three formed police units or the additional individual police officers. We continue to appeal for the Council's continued support on that matter.

The humanitarian situation in the Abyei Area has deteriorated since I previously briefed the Security Council. My humanitarian colleagues went from servicing 103,000 vulnerable people during the most recent reporting period to a stunning 240,000 currently. That was largely owing to the violence between the Twic Dinka and Ngok Dinka communities near Agok in February and March, when 26 people were killed and many were more injured. It is also very concerning that two humanitarian workers lost their lives as a

result of those events. Hundreds of humanitarian workers were evacuated, and the people in the Area are still deeply impacted by the significant decrease in medical services.

Turning to UNISFA's other mandated area, namely, its support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, there has been no progress on re-operationalizing JBVM team sites 11 and 12 and the headquarters of Sector 1 in Gok Machar after UNISFA was forced to relocate in 2021. A new JBVM force is present in the JBVM locations that are operational, and the force is ready to implement that important mandate in all locations previously agreed between the parties. It is key that the Government of South Sudan continue its efforts to enable the return of the JBVM to those areas as soon as possible, as agreed during the Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting of September 2021.

I wish to end my remarks by strongly emphasizing the need to ensure the safety and the security of UNISFA's peacekeepers as they carry out their difficult mandate in a complex operating environment. In the past two months alone, we saw three direct attacks on UNISFA patrols, resulting in the injury of one peacekeeper and one damaged vehicle and one attack — just last week — which involved a rocket-propelled grenade. Such direct, serious violence against United Nations peacekeepers must end immediately. I call on the relevant authorities, consistent with their obligations under the status-of-forces agreement, to investigate those incidents as a matter of priority.

I would like to thank Major General Benjamin Olufemi Sawyerr and the women and men in his UNISFA team for their continued hard work, including overseeing and supporting the successful and challenging transformation of the mission into a United Nations multinational peacekeeping force in just a few months. The reconfiguration was in addition to their other mandated tasks, which they continued to carry out with sensitivity and determination. I would also like to thank Major General Kefyalew Amde Tessema and all Ethiopian peacekeepers for their contribution and the commitment they demonstrated to peace and security in Abyei over the years.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Council for its continued support to UNISFA and to seek the Council's support for the Secretary-General's

recommendation to extend the mandate of UNISFA for a further period of six months, until 15 October.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Tetteh.

Ms. Tetteh: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council for the first time in my new capacity as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. The briefing concerns progress in the implementation of resolution 2046 (2012), which relates to outstanding bilateral issues between the Sudan and South Sudan and the situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

This briefing is taking place in a context marked by uncertainty and yet unresolved internal difficulties following the coup in the Sudan on 25 October 2021, which did not make it possible to plan any meetings of the joint mechanisms between the Sudan and South Sudan that were intended for the beginning of 2022. With the removal of the civilian Government in Khartoum that had been engaging its counterpart in Juba, the momentum towards the resolution of outstanding issues was suddenly stopped and the countries will have to start reviewing them afresh — although, in my recent visits to the Sudan and South Sudan, the Chair of the Sovereign Council, General Al-Burhan, and his Deputy, General Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, informed me that preparations were ongoing to engage their South Sudanese counterparts on those matters, which has been confirmed by the authorities that I met in South Sudan. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/316), the reporting period also witnessed significant violence last week between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya in Abyei. If anything, it reminds us of the need to focus on settling the final status of Abyei.

In South Sudan, President Salva Kiir Mayardit made appointments to the command structure of the Necessary Unified Forces on 12 April, which will pave the way for the graduation and redeployment of forces who completed their training as part of a new national army. That followed an agreement on 3 April among the President, First Vice-President Riek Machar and Fifth Vice-President Abdelbagi, as commanders-in-chief of the three-armed parties under the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The development was the outcome of Sudanese mediation efforts led by the Chairperson of the Sudanese Sovereign Council, General Al-Burhan, and his Deputy, General Mohamed

Hamdan Dagalo. As a result, tension between President Kiir and Vice-President Machar, which was also manifested on the ground by fighting between their troops in Upper Nile and Unity states and the surrounding of Vice-President Machar's residence in Juba by military and national security personnel on 27 March, has been dissipated.

An obvious casualty of the coup in the Sudan was the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM), one of the rare mechanisms bringing the two countries together to review outstanding political and security issues. Its last meeting, from 8 to 9 September 2021 in Juba, scheduled the next meeting for Khartoum in the second week of January. Not only did the meeting not take place, but action has not been taken on the other decisions reached at the Juba sitting.

Regarding the call for the two countries to withdraw their forces from the Abyei box by 31 December 2021, the senior leadership I met in the Sudan insists that they have withdrawn all their forces and called on South Sudan to do the same for them to reactivate meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC). That assertion by the Government of the Sudan is challenged by the Government of South Sudan.

The lack of progress on South Sudan's commitment made at the JPSM to mediate between communities in Aweil towards the reactivation of the three dormant Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism locations is also of concern. No new date has been fixed for the next JPSM meeting. However, I was pleased to hear that the parties are in contact regarding the organization of an AJOC meeting soon.

Thanks to the easing of restrictions imposed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, I was able to travel to both countries, not only to introduce myself to the national authorities but also to engage with them in person. In Khartoum, I met with the Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Sovereign Council, the Acting Minister of Defence and the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs from 17 to 19 April. Since 19 April, I have been in Juba, from where I am addressing the Security Council, and have had fruitful discussions with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence and the Minister for East African Affairs and Deputy Head of the Abyei Committee. Unfortunately, I have been unable to meet President Kiir, who is not in the country at the moment.

From those discussions, I have understood that bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan are good. The two countries have continued to engage in high-level visits on each other's territory. Although President Kiir's last visit to Khartoum was in 2018, Sudanese leaders have continued to visit Juba. On 17 March, General Al-Burhan was in Juba to address the tensions between President Kiir and First Vice-President Machar on account of their disagreement over the sharing of positions within the leadership structure of the future national army. The proposal he submitted on 18 March, as Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, was welcomed by President Kiir. For its part, South Sudan continued to follow up on the implementation by the Sudanese parties of the Juba Peace Agreement, which it mediated. President Kiir's security adviser, Tut Gatluak, and other senior South Sudanese ministers shuttled between Juba and Khartoum throughout the reporting period in order to facilitate a solution between the military and civilian components of the transitional Government and prevent the collapse of the agreement.

Although President Kiir and General Al-Burhan did not dwell on the issue of Abyei, they agreed to focus on cooperation along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan, starting with an approach to peace through the development of unitized oil fields, including in the Abyei Area. Pending details to be worked out by the respective foreign ministries of what unitization entails, the hope is that the proposed approach to peace may be a starting point — not only for addressing the recurrent violence in the Abyei Area but also towards the settlement of the final status of Abyei.

Khartoum also continued to play a positive role in seeking peaceful means to resolve intra-party problems experienced by South Sudanese parties. On 16 January, it hosted the signing of an agreement, known as the Kitgwang declaration, between the breakaway faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Government. General Simon Gatwech Dual and his deputy, General Johnson Olony, signed for the SPLM/A-IO, while Mr. Tut Gatluak signed for the SPLM-in-Government. The agreement provides for amnesty for the Kitgwang faction, the recommitment of the parties to the ceasefire agreement under the Khartoum declaration of 2018 and the establishment of a coordination office in Juba.

In the same spirit, South Sudan continued to exert efforts to convince Abdul Wahid Al-Nur, leader of a faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), to join the Sudanese peace process. So far, the efforts have not paid off. On 10 March, Minni Minawi, leader of the other faction of the SLM/A and Governor of Darfur state, visited Juba, ostensibly to meet with Al-Nur. The meeting failed to take place, as Al-Nur accused Minawi of supporting the coup of 25 October. While recommitting to its unilateral cessation of hostilities, SLM/A-Al Nur has reiterated its refusal to join the Juba-mediated peace process for the Sudan and renewed its call for an all-inclusive Sudanese initiative that would comprehensively address the Sudan's multiple problems.

Let me now turn to developments concerning the two areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. I note with regret that efforts deployed by the South Sudan Mediation Committee to facilitate the resumption of negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and the Al-Hilu faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)-North have not been successful. The Council will recall that the talks between them were suspended on 15 June 2021 for two weeks so as to allow the parties time to consult their constituencies on the outstanding issues. The Al-Hilu SPLM-North faction condemned the military coup and called on its members to support the anti-coup demonstrations. Meanwhile, the Malik Agar faction of the SPLM-North, which was one of the signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement with the Government of the Sudan, has remained within the transitional institutions despite the arrest, imprisonment and subsequent release of its Deputy Chairman, Yasir Aman, by the military in the aftermath of the coup.

Clearly, the coup has had a negative effect on the bilateral relations that the two countries had started deepening and are now trying to reboot. It is, however, gratifying that, while each of them is still grappling with its internal conflict, they continue to complement one another in the search for peace and to build on the progress achieved so far. They both emphasize the need to scale up humanitarian assistance to their displaced and vulnerable communities. They both recognize the need for peace on their territories and in the region, which should enable them to foster cooperation as they entertain good-neighbourly relations. My Office will continue to engage with the authorities of both countries and, as appropriate, with key regional actors,

including the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, to encourage them to defuse tensions, advance the implementation of all cooperation agreements and consolidate their improved bilateral relations.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for the commitment he demonstrated to his role and to peace and security in the region.

The President: I thank Ms. Tetteh for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Let me start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for sharing his update on the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) today. I also want to thank Special Envoy Tetteh and congratulate her on the assumption of her new position. We look forward to working with her in the course of activities on the Horn of Africa.

As we prepare to consider UNISFA's mandate before 15 May, we are grateful to hear how UNISFA has been dealing with all of the changes in the mission and recent developments in Abyei. I would also like to take this moment to welcome the presence of representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan here today.

On behalf of the United States, I would like to voice our continued strong support for UNISFA, and I thank its personnel for their invaluable service in support of peace, security and stability in Abyei. While the mission is undergoing its reconfiguration into a new multinational force, UNISFA remains dedicated to carrying out its critical mandate to protect civilians and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Still, we know there is a great deal of work ahead of us. Today, therefore, I would like to discuss the need for renewed diplomatic engagement in Abyei, the work United Nations peacekeepers must do to address violence and disinformation and the importance of UNISFA forces having the access they need to complete their mission.

First, let us be crystal clear: the long-term solution to this conflict can be worked out only through diplomacy. We encourage all parties to renew diplomatic efforts to achieve a peaceful and mutually acceptable resolution of Abyei's final status. We regret that there have been no meetings of any joint institutions or mechanisms,

including of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, since the last time the Council was briefed on the situation in Abyei last year (S/PV.8887). It is simply unacceptable to resign ourselves to the status quo. To that end, we urge the appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission for UNISFA, which would enable the mission to better support the parties in their endeavour. The United States welcomes the engagement by the African Union to move us towards a solution.

Secondly, we are deeply concerned by the recent violent clashes in Abyei in February and March, and we thank the mission for quickly reacting to restore order and increasing patrols. Going forward, we must improve community relations on the ground. That is essential to addressing security in Abyei. United Nations police have a central role in engaging local communities in their patrols and through awareness campaigns, including on gender-based violence. That underscores the mission's need for more police to address criminality and a civilian deputy head of mission to strengthen dialogue with the parties, including on establishing the joint police service. We once again reiterate our call for the Sudan to issue visas for United Nations personnel and a civilian deputy head of mission, as mandated by the Security Council in 2019.

UNISFA should also further its support of community dialogue and intercommunal reconciliation through outreach to local peace committees and to those who do not always understand what the mission actually does. So often we hear that the local populations have unrealistic expectations of United Nations peacekeepers because they do not fully understand the mission's mandate. Additional community dialogue and intercommunal reconciliation efforts will improve trust and help prevent violence before it erupts. But this cannot happen if the United Nations mission is stonewalled in doing its work.

UNISFA has still not been able to return to the team sites it had to abandon last year. Local communities have threatened the mission, restricted its freedom of movement and demanded its withdrawal. This is simply unacceptable. This makes it difficult for the mission to support the functioning of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) in this area, as the Security Council mandated it to do. Greater political will by the parties to support the mission on this issue will make a difference. We urge engagement with the local communities to facilitate the smooth functioning

of UNISFA, the JBVMM and the redeployment of UNISFA to the vacated team sites.

We also call on the Sudan to allow the mission access to Athony airfield. This is a matter of peacekeeper safety and security, and it is absolutely fundamental that UNISFA have the ability to provide medical or casualty evacuations if needed.

The United States looks forward to working constructively with the Council to renew UNISFA's mandate. We will continue to partner with all Council members, the Governments of the Sudan and of South Sudan, the people of the region, and all stakeholders to work towards the peace, security and prosperity of the region.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Ghana, Kenya, and my own country, Gabon (A3).

I thank Ms. Hanna Tetteh, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, and Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for their inspiring briefings. On behalf of the A3, I congratulate Ms. Tetteh on her promotion to the position of Special Envoy and reiterate our support for her.

Our statement will focus on the political, security and humanitarian situation. The A3 notes with interest the continued strengthening of relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, which should help resolve outstanding issues, including the Abyei issue. Indeed, the absence of strong administrative institutions, particularly in terms of security and justice, is keeping the territory in a state of permanently fragility. The A3 urges the resumption of dialogue between the Sudan and South Sudan with a view to accelerating the implementation of the agreement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, putting the interests of the people first.

We call on the parties to implement the recommendations and conclusions of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM) and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meetings. The A3 further reiterates the need for the Sudan and South Sudan to meet regularly and actively participate in the JPSM, which is essential to easing tensions and promoting dialogue.

We commend the efforts of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in

organizing the intercommunal peace dialogue and encouraging the participation of women and youth in both the institutional administrative spheres and the political process. More than 10 years after the creation of UNISFA, it seems to us to be an imperative that the final status of Abyei be defined, taking into account the expectations of the populations. The facilitation role of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel and the support of the international community remain essential to this end.

On the security front, the A3 is deeply concerned about the resurgence of armed violence and intercommunal clashes in Abyei. We strongly condemn the violence, particularly in the north-east between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. These attacks, as well as those that took place in Kolom, Mabok and Dungop, must be investigated and those responsible brought to justice.

The A3 calls on all parties to refrain from taking any action that could exacerbate tensions. We urge them to exercise the utmost restraint and cease all hostile activities that could have an adverse impact on the local population.

On the humanitarian situation, we are concerned about the difficulties faced by the people of Abyei, including limited access to basic services. In this regard, the joint programme for Abyei sponsored by the United Nations country teams for the Sudan and South Sudan is to be commended. The completion of projects aimed at restoring service delivery, including access to water, health, education, communication and basic infrastructure, is crucial to improving the lives of the people.

The A3 also stresses the need to strengthen humanitarian assistance. We condemn in the strongest terms the armed attacks against UNISFA staff and humanitarian workers. We express our sincere condolences to the families of the deceased aid workers in Abyei and call for urgent investigations to ensure accountability. All measures must be taken to ensure the protection of humanitarian workers and unhindered humanitarian access.

We further urge both countries to comply fully with the status-of-forces agreement and expeditiously facilitate the administrative steps required for the implementation of UNISFA's mandate, including the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and its redeployment, as appropriate.

We pay high tribute to the UNISFA personnel that are carrying out their mandate despite the difficult conditions. The Ethiopian contingent, whose mandate recently ended, is to be commended for its commitment in Abyei. We welcome the arrival of new contingents from other troop-contributing countries.

International partners, in particular the African Union and the United Nations, must be resolutely engaged diplomatically and politically and support dialogue efforts between the Sudan and South Sudan. We remain convinced that achieving the final status of Abyei is the key to a concerted and coordinated withdrawal from UNISFA. In this regard, we call on the authorities to intensify their consultations to make progress on the seven indicators.

In conclusion, we reiterate our full support for the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, UNISFA, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and all stakeholders for their efforts on the ground aimed at finding a political solution to Abyei's status.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): At the outset, let me thank Under-Secretary-General Jean Pierre-Lacroix and Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Hanna Tetteh for their respective briefings on developments concerning the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA) and its support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) and progress in the implementation of resolution 2609 (2021). I also welcome the presence of the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan at today's meeting.

Peaceful resolution of the final status of Abyei, in conformity with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the agreement on the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, remains fundamental to durable peace, stability and development in the region. In this regard, we note the lack of progress during the reporting period. While the domestic political developments in the Sudan and South Sudan have taken precedence over the final status of Abyei, we hope that, in the coming months, both the parties will move forward in the process for a political settlement.

To this end, convening of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee is a priority, as highlighted at the Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting held in Juba in October last year. The Committee, which was mandated to meet every month, has not met since November 2017. We support the ongoing efforts being

made by the Africa Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development towards resumption of these meetings. We also call for the implementation of the decisions of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. Recent months have witnessed several security incidents resulting in the killing of innocent civilians. We believe that regular meetings of the Committee are crucial for effective administration and to address the security challenges in Abyei.

The continuing violent clashes involving the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities are a matter of concern. In that regard, we appreciate UNISFA's efforts in bringing together elders of the two communities. We welcome the efforts to reconvene the joint traditional leaders peace conference, which is now scheduled to take place next month.

Regarding the mandate implementation of UNISFA, the Mission has carried out key tasks including the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, despite the operational and administrative challenges. It is important that these be addressed by the Sudan and South Sudan authorities in earnest. Those include the operationalization of the Athony airstrip and the issuance of visas for formed police units. We also call for the establishment of Abyei Police Service. We note with concern the attacks against UNISFA forces and freedom of movement violations. In that context, we underscore the importance of ensuring the safety and security of peacekeepers.

We welcome innovative technological initiatives such as the "smart camp" project to improve the Mission's performance. For the Mission's sustenance and ability to fulfil its mandate, all efforts need to be made for better coordination with the host Governments. We note that work in respect of quick-impact projects has begun. Those projects should be implemented expeditiously. We also welcome the progress made in the ongoing process of the reconfiguration of UNISFA's force.

India is committed to the peace, stability and development of Abyei. In that regard, I would like to mention that an Indian contingent of 570 peacekeepers will soon be joining UNISFA, and its deployment is already under way.

In conclusion, India's long-standing and friendly relations with both the Sudan and South Sudan have stood the test of time. We are confident that both countries will successfully resolve all outstanding issues and continue to emerge stronger. On our part,

we remain steadfast in our support for both Juba and Khartoum in this journey.

Mr. Almazrouei (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for his informative briefing. I also join my colleagues in welcoming Ms. Hanna Serwaa Tetteh to the Council and the delivery of her first briefing as the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. We express our support for her and for her important role. I also welcome the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan to this meeting.

Today's meeting is taking place in conjunction with worrying developments in the Abyei area, including continued intercommunal clashes and violence, attacks against the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and other incidents that have hampered UNISFA's operations. Those developments have negatively impacted the work of humanitarian organizations, especially the killing of humanitarian workers and the evacuation of nearly 800 aid workers as a result of the recent clashes in Agok. Therefore, it is essential that all measures be taken to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers.

Addressing those worrying developments requires efforts to promote dialogue and peaceful coexistence in order to deal with the root causes of current tensions and strengthen intercommunal relations. In that context, it is encouraging that steps are being taken to address those tensions, including through investigations and the recent agreement for the cessation of hostilities in South Sudan between two tribes. We also stress in that regard the importance of establishing temporary administrative and security mechanisms, as called for in the 20 June 2011 agreement signed by both parties, in order to ensure that those tensions are contained.

At the same time, we encourage UNISFA to continue engaging on a regular basis with local communities in order to ensure that their concerns are heard. We believe that convening the joint traditional leaders peace conference in May is an important step to that end. We also welcome the mission's efforts concerning the implementation of quick-impact projects and the participation of women in local peace processes and in the settlement of disputes.

Regarding relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, we are encouraged by the fact that the leaders of both countries continue to support efforts to achieve

peace, which reflects the continuing improvement in their relations. We are confident that building on that progress will contribute to the reaching of a lasting solution regarding the final status of Abyei.

We also welcome the meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and its outcome document and look forward to the resumption of the meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, with the support of the African Union.

We recognize the important role of UNISFA in a constantly evolving and challenging environment, particularly in facilitating dialogue among communities, and its support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). In that context, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all UNISFA personnel who have served in the mission, and we welcome the new peacekeeping forces as well as the Force Commander, who has already started his engagement with local communities and the Sudanese and South Sudanese Governments. We echo the Secretary-General's call for the re-operationalization of the JBVMM Sector 1 headquarters in Gok Machar and the two team sites.

In conclusion, we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend UNISFA's mandate and support for the JBVMM for an additional period of six months, taking into consideration the views of Khartoum and Juba when discussing the mandate renewal as well as a renewed focus on engaging with all local communities and utilizing the available tools to reduce tensions.

Mrs. Gasri (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, thank Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Hanna Tetteh for their briefings. We also welcome the Special Envoy's appointment. Ms. Tetteh can count on France's wholehearted support in her new functions, as was the case previously. I, too, welcome the participation of the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan in today's meeting today.

I should like to stress three points: first, the efforts of the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries to reconfigure the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The mission is essential for preserving the conditions that will allow for a settlement of the status of Abyei and to protect civilians. In that respect, the ongoing violence against civilians and peacekeepers is concerning, and we call on the parties to set up the necessary joint mechanisms necessary to ensure stability in Abyei.

We encourage UNISFA and the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan to continue with their peacebuilding activities. Local communities must also be involved in those efforts. That represents a priceless opportunity to resume dialogue and move towards reconciliation.

We are disappointed that UNISFA has not yet been redeployed to the three sites that it had to evacuate at the end of 2021. We call on the Sudan and South Sudan to ensure the security and free movement of UNISFA, in keeping with their commitments under the status-of-forces agreement. South Sudan in particular must ease tensions with local communities to re-establish UNISFA's support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. Otherwise, the Security Council will have to draw the necessary conclusions when we next meet to discuss the renewal of the mission's mandate.

The domestic and regional challenges that the Sudan and South Sudan face are impeding the resolution of the Abyei border dispute. They also make it more difficult to carry out peacekeeping, as shown by the renewal of the UNISFA contingents that is under way. In that context, it is urgent to re-establish a democratic transition in the Sudan, and we reiterate our support for the facilitation efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

We encourage the States in the region to resolve their disputes through dialogue, be it in Abyei, the Al-Fashaqah triangle area or the Renaissance Dam or with respect to the Tigray conflict. It is therefore vital to avert any opportunistic exploitation of those situations of vulnerability and to make use of the African Union's mediation efforts. In all those crises, the Special Envoy has a role to play, and we fully support her.

Mr. De Oliveira Freitas (Brazil): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Tetteh for their briefings, as well as Special Envoy Onanga-Anyanga for his contributions. I welcome the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan to this meeting.

I would also like to thank all the personnel of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for the hard, essential work that they have done so far and continue to do daily in the Abyei Area. Special thanks should be expressed to Ethiopia and the Ethiopian troops and staff officers who have

enabled UNISFA's deployment. I also thank Nigeria and Force Commander Sawyerr, in addition to China, Ghana, India, Kenya, the Russian Federation, Bolivia, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Ukraine, Uruguay and all the contributing countries that make UNISFA's work possible.

On that note, I would like to raise three issues.

The first one is the long-term political settlement of the status of the Abyei Area. Processes, timelines and, most important, solutions to reach common ground will advance only with fair, credible negotiations. Direct contacts are key to those efforts. That is why we should support not only additional talks between South Sudan and the Sudan, but also further contacts between the two parties at different levels. Domestic challenges in each country should not derail the bilateral dynamics that have led to friendlier relations in recent years. The Sudanese and South Sudanese leaders may seize such bilateral openness to make progress towards a political settlement regarding Abyei.

The second issue that I will highlight is the regional dimension of the negotiations. The Secretary-General has appropriately encouraged the African Union to intensify its mediation efforts. If the parties are willing to resume the consultations of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, the African Union has the legitimacy to facilitate and support both the political and the logistical aspects of it. It is encouraging to note that the United Nations is poised to contribute to those efforts, as the Secretary-General clearly stated in his recent report (S/2022/316). If support from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is available, a subregional dimension could be reinforced and additional channels of negotiation could be created.

I would like to comment on a third issue, which is the situation on the ground. The frequent cycles of violence in the Abyei Area make humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians dangerous.

Moreover, it is extremely concerning that more than 70 per cent of local children are out of school. That figure sums up the local human rights situation, as well as the substantial challenges that the local population faces in Abyei.

We are encouraged by the fact that UNISFA conducted a broad human-rights assessment in March.

The positive developments that enabled such scrutiny, such as the issuance of visas, should be stimulated.

I conclude by stressing Brazil's support to Special Envoy Tetteh.

Mr. Gallagher (Ireland): Let me start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing and by welcoming Special Envoy Tetteh. The Special Envoy has assumed her role at a vital time for the Horn of Africa. Her recent experience, working closely with the African Union (AU), is welcome, as the AU has a key role to play in helping to address many of the region's crises, not least in Abyei. Let me also welcome the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan to the Chamber.

In addition, I would also like to pay tribute to Ethiopia, whose peacekeepers have made an important contribution to maintaining peace and security in Abyei.

Ireland echoes the Secretary-General's appreciation for the support and collaboration of the Sudan, South Sudan and the new troop-contributing countries in the reconfiguration of United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We urge all involved to continue to work towards the deployment of additional enablers in the coming months. UNISFA's reconfiguration should be considered an opportunity to strengthen the mission, including its capacity to support human rights in Abyei.

We welcome the recent issuance of temporary visas for the long overdue deployment of two human rights officers in Abyei. Their assessment of the human rights situation highlighted concerns for women's and children's rights, as well as barriers to accessing justice and a lack of accountability. We call on the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to facilitate the permanent deployment of relevant human rights expertise.

We also call on the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to now address other issues that undermine UNISFA's operational capability, including the non-issuance of visas for police, and the lack of progress towards the operationalization of the Athony airstrip.

We are concerned by the ongoing impediments to mandate implementation, including restrictions on UNISFA's freedom of movement. Such impediments should cease immediately.

Most worrisome, however, are attacks against the force, as referenced by Under-Secretary-General Lacroix. Ireland condemns those incidents and calls upon the authorities to investigate them. There must be accountability for attacks against our peacekeepers.

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General told us, a solution to the final status of Abyei is a prerequisite for peace. That requires the Sudan and South Sudan to prioritize the issue and rapidly agree on a process to find a political settlement. Unfortunately, there has been no progress on that in the past six months.

We urge both parties to utilize and support the existing mechanisms in order to make progress. Those include the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee.

The demarcation of the border is an important part of a final resolution to the situation. We call on South Sudan to address the problems faced by UNISFA in support of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Gok Machar and elsewhere.

We are deeply concerned by the high levels of violence in Abyei, including recent attacks in Leu, Noong and Amiet, in which more than 60 people were reported killed or injured. That is a worrisome escalation. The ongoing violence serves only to exacerbate the very serious humanitarian situation in Abyei and the lack of access to basic and critical services for the population.

We hope that the traditional leaders' peace conference, planned for February this year, can be held soon. We welcome the March talks in Juba between the Sudan and South Sudan, and we urge a resumption of dialogue.

We also welcome the recent efforts of the South Sudanese authorities to forge peace between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka. It is critically important that all dialogue efforts benefit from the full and unhindered participation of women and the inclusion of young people, both of which are key to any inclusive and sustainable peace.

In conclusion, in the interests of the people of the region, I again call for all parties to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the final status of Abyei and the demarcation of the border.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-

Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa Hanna Tetteh for their informative briefings. I congratulate Ms. Tetteh on her new appointment. Let me also take this opportunity to thank Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga for his work in the post.

We are pleased to note that, despite some recurrent cases of intercommunal violence, which were swiftly resolved by representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan and the Blue Helmets, including the new Nigerian command, the situation in Abyei has remained generally stable in recent months.

It requires the joint efforts of the parties to successfully promote an inter-Sudanese settlement. In that regard, we welcome the fact that representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan stepped up their contacts during the reporting period, including at the highest levels.

We also commend the fact that the parties demonstrated readiness to establish mutually beneficial cooperation, in particular on the joint exploitation of the potential oil resources of the disputed Abyei Area. We view the visit by the Chairperson of the Sovereign Council of the Sudan, General Al-Burhan, to Juba on 18 and 19 March and his talks with the President of the Republic of South Sudan, Mr. Salva Kiir Mayardit, as an important step in that direction.

We also welcome the joint meeting in October between the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Joint Border Commission. We hope the dialogue between Khartoum and Juba will facilitate agreements on the final status of Abyei.

We consider the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) an important factor in ensuring stability. To that end, we believe that UNISFA must strictly adhere to its mandate. The main aim of the United Nations presence in the region is to maintain security and to assist the Sudan and South Sudan in their efforts to find a mutually acceptable resolution to the border dispute.

We welcome the mission's work to maintain dialogue between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities with an emphasis on elaborating confidence-building measures between them. The causes of the new episodes of violence in Abyei should be analysed more closely. We hope that the next joint peace conference of traditional leaders will soon be held.

We note that there are still some issues concerning the activities of the Blue Helmets and progress on meeting the benchmarks in the work of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). We continue to believe that pressure and accusations will not solve those problems. We call on the leaders of UNISFA to work further towards resolving those issues with Khartoum and Juba. The positions of the Sudan and South Sudan and the concerns they have voiced must be closely taken into account. We hope that this situation will be taken into account in the work on the resolution of the Security Council on the UNISFA mandate rollover.

As we see in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/316), the replacement of the Ethiopian troops in UNISFA with new peacekeepers from other countries is proceeding smoothly and moving towards its conclusion. It is also important to ensure that the new configuration is deployed in proper succession with the work of the Ethiopian peacekeepers, who demonstrated a high level of professionalism and bravery, and that logistical problems are avoided.

We think that the ongoing presence in the region of peacekeepers is still very important. In that connection, we support the Secretary-General's proposal to review UNISFA's mandate, including providing support for the JBVMM for six months.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Tetteh for their briefings. China congratulates Ms. Tetteh on her appointment as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa and will actively support her work. I also welcome the presence of the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan to this meeting.

The security situation in Abyei has continued to face challenges for some time now. Communal conflicts and public security crimes have occurred from time to time, while the joint police service for Abyei has not yet been established. Nonetheless, it is heartening that the Sudan and South Sudan have continued to exercise restraint on the issue of Abyei. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) has cooperated with the Abyei Area administration, local communities, the Sudan and South Sudan in properly handling security incidents. The community protection committees, established with the assistance of UNISFA, have also played an important role.

Communal relations are the key to achieving long-term peace and stability in Abyei. China encourages relevant communities to continue their dialogue, with the assistance of UNISFA, in order to improve their relations, properly resolve conflicts and differences and achieve harmonious coexistence.

During the reporting period, the relationship between the Sudan and South Sudan continued to improve, which has established favourable conditions for the stability of the Abyei region. Currently, both countries are concentrating on advancing their respective political processes. China encourages both sides to leverage the role of joint institutions, such as the Joint Political and Security Mechanism for Abyei, exchange information and deal with emergencies in a timely manner in order to maintain peace in Abyei.

The reconfiguration of the military component of UNISFA is progressing in an orderly manner, and the Ethiopian peacekeepers will be replaced by peacekeepers from multiple troop-contributing countries (TCCs). Over the past 11 years, Ethiopian peacekeepers have actively fulfilled their mandates under extremely difficult conditions and cooperated closely with the Sudan, South Sudan and local communities, thereby making important contributions to maintaining peace in Abyei, which China highly commends.

As a new TCC to UNISFA, China has deployed a helicopter unit in Abyei and will deploy a rapid reaction force as soon as possible.

Pending the resolution of the final status of Abyei, China supports in principle the renewal of the mandate UNISFA and encourages the Sudan, South Sudan and local communities to facilitate its operation by ensuring the safety and freedom of movement of its personnel and the smooth delivery of supplies to the mission.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Hanna Tetteh for their briefings this morning. We would also like to welcome the representatives of South Sudan and the Sudan to today's meeting.

The coup d'état in the Sudan in October last year and the multiple challenges facing South Sudan have unfortunately reduced the attention of the parties to the situation in Abyei. However, the recent improvement in relations between the two countries, which we welcome, is an opportunity to relaunch the process

to reach a lasting agreement with regard to the border dispute in Abyei, which should not exclude a priori any mechanism for the peaceful settlement of disputes, including the International Court of Justice if that were the will of the parties. But it is only through cooperation and joint efforts in forums, such as the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, that progress can be made towards stabilizing the region. We, like other members, regret that the Committee has not met for a number of years.

The human rights situation in Abyei remains a source of concern. Naturally, we welcome the issuance of visas to two human rights officers to allow them to conduct a long overdue evaluation in Abyei. Along those lines, we call on the authorities of the Sudan and South Sudan to allow the deployment of human rights experts as part of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), in accordance with the mandate granted by the Security Council.

Unfortunately, we note that clashes continue between the communities in Abyei, in particular in the Agok area. We recognize the efforts undertaken by the authorities in South Sudan to try to reduce those intercommunal tensions. While we recognize the efforts undertaken to organize a joint peace conference of traditional leaders, we regret that the differences over the composition of the two delegations have prevented the conference from being organized in accordance with the scheduled timeline, that is, in February. We urge UNISFA to continue promoting the necessary peace talks with the full participation of young people and women, as was already mentioned.

The safety of UNISFA staff is crucial. That is why my delegation has condemned the armed attacks that took place in March against UNISFA personnel. Those acts of violence represent a threat to the United Nations operations on the ground. We urge the authorities to guarantee the safety and freedom of movement of UNISFA personnel. Similarly, and in accordance with their obligations under the status-of-forces agreement, urgent investigations must be carried out to bring those responsible to justice.

Finally, we acknowledge the reconfiguration of UNISFA, with the incorporation of new troop contributors. I wish to conclude by reiterating our continued support for the African Union and its mediation efforts and encourage it to continue its work.

Mr. Lamce (Albania): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Tetteh for their briefings today, as well as the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan for their presence.

At the outset, I would like to thank Ethiopia for its leadership and engagement as the sole troop-contributor to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) over the past decade. Ethiopia has made a significant impact in supporting the safety and security of the people in Abyei and has ensured that the mission could carry out its functions, as mandated by the Council.

UNISFA is now at a critical point due to its restructuring as a multinational mission. We thank all the troop-contributing countries whose battalions or personnel have already been deployed. This comes at a vital time in Abyei, as new violence has broken out and peacekeepers have increasingly been attacked and injured in recent weeks.

We are deeply concerned about the recently renewed violence that has resulted in humanitarian suffering and displacement and has aggravated disputes between communities in Abyei. Such intercommunal violence risks reversing gains made towards achieving peaceful coexistence in the Area. We urge the parties to show political will, prevent an escalation of hostilities and call for the immediate cessation of violence.

While there is no political will and no progress on the political agreements and border demarcation between Khartoum and Juba, the socioeconomic grievances of the population need to be addressed. The various actors and communities continue to mistrust each other. Confidence-building measures are urgently needed and must be implemented in a coordinated manner.

We commend the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan for improving their coordination and cooperation in Abyei, reflecting a one-United Nations approach that is imperative in addressing the complex situation on the ground. UNISFA should work closely with both country teams in order to ensure that all United Nations actors on the ground speak with one voice and act in harmony.

Albania applauds the first signs of participation of women in Abyei. We cannot find sustainable solutions when half of the population is excluded from decision-making. It is high time to bring women into the discussions and include them in project work. We call

on United Nations actors and all stakeholders to place a sharp focus on implementing the women and peace and security agenda in Abyei, including by engaging with community stakeholders, women and youth.

At the same time, we echo the Secretary-General's call for the inclusion of human rights monitoring and expertise in the mission. UNISFA urgently needs permanent human rights experts to fill that void.

Finally, we call on the Governments of South Sudan and the Sudan to ensure that the mission and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism can carry out their mandates unimpeded. The Sudan in particular needs to issue all visas requested by UNISFA for its police components in order to allow the mission to function and implement the mandate in full. We very much hope that UNISFA, which is the only entity providing law and order in Abyei, will operate in its mandated full capacity.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Hanna Tetteh for their insightful briefings. Like others, Norway congratulates Ms. Tetteh on her new assignment and is very much looking forward to engaging with her on her important and broad Horn of Africa mandate. I am also pleased to see that the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan are participating in today's meeting.

Norway remains deeply concerned about the high level of tension in and around Abyei. We call on the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka to refrain from attacks in connection with the seasonal migration. And we appreciate all local initiatives aimed at conflict prevention and resolution. Moreover, we appreciate the Force Commander's efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, in accordance with his mandate.

It is of the utmost importance that the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) remain fully operational and ready to use force when required to protect civilians at risk of physical violence. That includes the deployment of formed police units. Furthermore, we urge the Sudan and South Sudan to support the work of UNISFA.

Let me add three additional points to today's discussion on UNISFA and the situation in Abyei.

First, Abyei is a contested area with a very troubled past. There is no doubt that UNISFA plays an invaluable role in providing security and stability. There is, however, no progress on the most contested

issue — whether Abyei will belong to the Sudan or South Sudan.

While that remains unresolved, the implementation of joint mechanisms, as stipulated in the June 2011 agreement, is important. It will strengthen cooperation and build trust between the communities on the ground. We urge the parties to resume meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee.

It is also critical that efficient visa procedures be applied in order to ensure timely recruitment and replacement of police and military personnel, as well as human rights expertise and other civilian personnel. In addition, it is critical that the Athony airstrip be accessible.

Secondly, we value UNISFA's continued efforts to foster dialogue and trust among the communities of Abyei. And we strongly encourage the Force's continued engagement in supporting women-led peace initiatives, as well as its efforts to promote the rule of law and human rights. Closer cooperation among UNISFA, United Nations agencies and civil society should be considered in that respect.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the current impasse on the final status of Abyei reflects the severe democratic challenges that mark the transitions in both the Sudan and South Sudan. We encourage the Governments of both countries to promote inclusive political processes that consider the views of the local populations. Cross-border cooperation is, and will continue to be, key to a future where the people enjoy security and development. Practical confidence-building measures also create a conducive environment. Neither side should see the ultimate solution as a zero-sum game.

In conclusion, Norway strongly supports the renewal of UNISFA's mandate. We urge the parties to implement the joint mechanisms, and we call on the leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan to redouble their efforts to reach an agreement on the final status of Abyei.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

Let me begin by thanking our briefers, Mr. Lacroix and Ms. Tetteh. I wish Ms. Tetteh all the best in her new role. I also welcome the presence of the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan, and I commend the two countries for their improved bilateral engagement,

including the mutual support for their respective peace processes.

The United Kingdom is encouraged by the latest joint session of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Joint Border Commission, held in October. However, it is regrettable that such positive developments have not led to tangible progress for ordinary people in Abyei or to an agreement on a political solution for the region. We therefore urge both countries to organize a further meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, and we echo the Secretary-General's encouragement for the African Union to intensify its mediation efforts in order to help facilitate such efforts.

Turning to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), we are glad to see that the rotation of troops is almost concluded. We commend the dedication of the Ethiopian peacekeepers in their work to support peace and security in Abyei over the last decade. It is our hope that attention can now return to the full implementation of UNISFA's mandated tasks and improving the lives of citizens in Abyei who continue to suffer.

To this end, we repeat our call on the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to remove the operational obstacles that limit UNISFA's ability to implement its mandate in full. We also remain concerned at the continued restriction of UNISFA's freedom of movement, including on vital border-monitoring activities. We call on both countries to remove restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNISFA and urge the Government of South Sudan to allow the re-operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters in Gok Machar.

We also join our fellow Council members in expressing concern over the two armed attacks on UNISFA forces during the reporting period. The safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers is vital, and we echo the Secretary-General's call for the relevant authorities to investigate and hold those responsible to account.

Lastly, we would like to express deep concern at the outbreak of violence in Agok, during which two humanitarian workers were killed and activities suspended. The United Kingdom urges all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law and allow humanitarian actors to deliver aid to those in need in all parts of Abyei without hindrance.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): Mr. President, first of all, let me congratulate you and your delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council during this holy month of April. My delegation accords you its support.

Allow me also to welcome our briefers, Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Hanna Tetteh. We congratulate Ms. Tetteh on her new appointment. She is surely not new to the issues of South Sudan and the Sudan, and we are additionally pleased that she is participating today from Juba.

I would also like to thank the Government of Ethiopia for its commitment and service to the people of Abyei for the last 10 years. The Ethiopian peacekeeping forces, through their commitment, have sacrificed and at times paid the ultimate price for keeping peace in the Area. The Abyei community and the people of South Sudan will be forever grateful.

South Sudan welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2022/316), as called for pursuant to resolution 2609 (2021). This report comes at a time when the situation in Abyei is engulfed by an uncertain security situation, especially from perpetual attacks from the Ajaira Misseriya, who over the last year have continuously attacked, killed, displaced the Ngok Dinka and looted their property. These attacks are organized and systematic, as reflected in the coordinated approach and intensity with which they have been unleashed on the villages. This can be seen in the 5 and 6 March attacks in Mading Tong, where 30 lives were lost, as well as in the 13 April attacks in Leu, Noong and Amiet, where a total of 41 lives were lost. These are not well reflected in the report before the Council.

South Sudan repeatedly raised its concern as to the timing and security vacuum that will be created by the quick and abrupt manner in which the Ethiopian forces were allowed to exit. We knew their replacements would not take over as quickly and as smoothly as the Department had hoped. The aforementioned attacks can be directly linked to the security vacuum, which the Ajaira Misseriya are keen to exploit, as they have done at the expense of our people.

The Security Council has repeatedly emphasized through its resolutions that the region should remain

a weapon-free area, with an exception granted to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) forces. But we continue to have the so-called Oil Police in Diffra, despite the Security Council's calls for its exit. The recent attacks revealed that elements of the Sudanese Armed Forces — its Rapid Support Forces — were picking from the remains of the attackers left on the ground. If this is allowed to continue unabated, given the fact that the attacks on Ngok Dinka have intensified, the security situation will deteriorate further, with the Ajaira Misseriya, as reported by our sources, organizing and mobilizing for more attacks.

South Sudan calls on the Security Council, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to engage with the parties and finalize the status of Abyei and the borders of the region, as agreed in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and held by the International Court of Arbitration in The Hague. This will create much-needed security, improve relations and a structured engagement, which Ngok Dinka have been longing for for a long time. In this regard, we welcome the call of the representative of the United States for a renewed diplomatic initiative on the issue of Abyei.

The role of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism is crucial, as it continues to support both countries in their obligation to complete the demarcation of their border in line with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. South Sudan will continue to play a positive role towards the realization of that goal.

On the unfortunate conflict between the Twic Dinka and Ngok Dinka over the ownership of Agok — or Amiet, as it is known — His Excellency President Salva Kiir Mayardit acted swiftly in his appointment of an investigating committee, with His Excellency Vice-President Hussein Abdelbagi Akol Agany serving as the committee chair and the committee composed of stakeholders from both communities. Calm has been restored while the investigation team continues to investigate the genesis of the tension and find a sustainable solution. I would like to take this opportunity to pay our condolences to the families of those who lost their lives, including the two humanitarian workers.

We have welcomed the initiative for an Abyei joint programme with the visit of the team set up by the Secretary-General, which visited both countries as well as Abyei. This joint programme will play a pivotal

role in addressing the question of lack of services and the scarcity of other essential items required by the community. South Sudan has endeavoured within limited resources to provide services in the region. With this programme, we are confident that much will be achieved.

I would like to conclude with the question of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a very important aspect of humanity when it is genuine and addresses the core issues with the ultimate objective of reaching a lasting solution between the parties or communities. However, reconciliation in the face of perpetual attacks, loss of life, displacement, loss of property and looting without the perpetrators being answerable for their acts or punished, reconciliation becomes a difficult task to be achieved. For instance. It is nearly 10 years since the Paramount Chief was assassinated in cold blood. No one has answered for that. No report has been released. Therefore, when the Council repeatedly calls for reconciliation, what are we called to reconcile over? Over a Paramount Chief assassinated, over a community displaced, over property looted or over life lost?

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohammed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also express our appreciation to the delegation of the sisterly United Arab Emirates for its successful presidency of the Council last month.

We thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for his briefing on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We also thank Ms. Hanna Tetteh, the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, and congratulate her on her new position. The Sudanese leadership welcomed her during her visit to Khartoum two days ago. We also take note of the report of the Secretary-General on this issue (S/2022/316).

Bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan have witnessed positive developments over the past few months, with the successful mediation lead by the Sudan, resulting in the signing of an agreement by the Government of South Sudan and the parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan that will structure the senior command of regular forces in South Sudan and

establish an integrated and effective unified command of the forces of all factions signatories to the peace agreement, in line with the security arrangements under the agreement, which have witnessed some challenges before a positive breakthrough, thanks to the Sudanese mediation and proposals.

Allow me to note that the proposals of the Sudan took into account the spirit and text of the peace agreement and therefore were accepted and welcomed by the parties. Those proposals are comprehensive and include a road map and a timetable for implementation.

The Sudan is playing that role not only to strengthen stability and security in South Sudan but also as a main guarantor to monitor the implementation of the peace agreement in South Sudan and because of the strong historical relations between the Governments and peoples of both countries.

As part of the rapprochement between the two countries, we note the visit in March by the adviser of the President of the Republic of South Sudan to Khartoum, where he met with Sudanese political leaders and officials. During the visit, the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council called for accelerating the process of opening border crossings between the two countries to facilitate the movement of trade between the two neighbouring countries.

Among the issues related to the situation in Abyei that were discussed during the visit is a proposal from the Sudan to establish a joint administration for Abyei. We are still waiting to hear back from South Sudan in that respect. If accepted and implemented, we believe that it will have a positive impact on the security, economic and social life of the residents in the region.

A meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism was held on 4 and 5 September 2021 in Juba. At that meeting, which was headed by the Ministers of Defence of both countries, the mechanism reviewed the implementation of the results of the previous meeting, held in Khartoum. The meeting also heard a report from UNISFA and a report from the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) in the safe demilitarized zone. The Joint Political and Security Mechanism, as the highest body responsible for the joint cooperation agreements between the Sudan and South Sudan, took positive decisions at its latest meeting that will strengthen relations between the two countries and promote joint security and stability. The

two parties also agreed to hold another meeting of the Mechanism in Khartoum later this year.

Ms. Tetteh's statement that political developments in Khartoum were a cause of the meeting's not being held was incorrect. It was not the first time that the meetings of the Joint Political and Security Committee were postponed for various reasons, none of which was the reason mentioned by Ms. Tetteh in her briefing.

The positive climate between the two countries has had a positive impact on the situation in Abyei. The Sudanese leadership is very pleased about that. The Government of the Sudan is committed to building on the development in the bilateral relations between the two brotherly neighbours in order to promote peaceful and social coexistence in the area and accelerate consensus and understanding on the final status of Abyei.

Allow me to stress the following points.

First, the Government of the Sudan is counting on friendly relations with South Sudan and wishes to take advantage of the positive momentum in order to settle the issue of Abyei, including the establishment of the security and administrative mechanisms stipulated in the agreement signed on 20 June 2011 between the two parties, as well as issues related to border demarcation, and without encroaching on the land and the current demographic reality in the area.

Secondly, the Sudan is keen to maintain security, stability and peace in Abyei, but we also express our concern regarding the incidents that have taken place over the past few weeks. We offer our condolences to the families of the humanitarian workers who lost their lives as a result of those incidents, which led to the withdrawal of the JBVMM team from some locations. Those locations were closed, and the personnel were evacuated to Abyei. The Sudan calls for de-escalation, the easing of tensions in the area and for the parties to refrain from taking any unilateral measure that

could threaten the stability of UNISFA operations. We stress that the Abyei Area must be free of any armed presence north and south of the zero line, pursuant to the agreements signed between both countries.

Last week, the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council of the Sudan issued a decision to form a fact-finding mission to investigate the recent violent incidents in Abyei. In that context, we are very concerned by the presence of armed forces from South Sudan in the buffer zone. That will have a negative impact on security and stability in the area.

Thirdly, we welcome the fact that UNISFA has started to implement 16 quick-impact projects. We call on it to accelerate the implementation of further similar projects, as that would have a positive impact on the lives of the people there, especially with respect to education, health, drinking water and the maintenance of security and order. We also welcome the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the mandate of UNISFA be renewed for six additional months.

In conclusion, we reiterate the commitment of the Government of the Sudan to strengthening cooperation with the Government of South Sudan in order to strengthen the work of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, in addition to establishing joint security and civil mechanisms between the two countries, in accordance with the provisions of the agreements signed between the two parties, leading to a resolution of the final-status issues for Abyei, according to the agreed-upon terms of reference.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.