



Security Council

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Resolution 2609 (2021)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 8932nd meeting, on 15 December 2021

The Security Council,

Reaffirming all previous resolutions and Presidential statements concerning the situation in Abyei and along the border between Sudan and South Sudan and underlining the importance of full compliance with and implementation of these,

Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Sudan and South Sudan, and to the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and recalling the importance of the principles of good neighbourliness, non-interference and regional cooperation,

Reiterating that the territorial boundaries of States shall not be altered by force, and that any territorial disputes shall be settled exclusively by peaceful means, affirming the priority it attaches to the full and urgent implementation of all outstanding issues from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), *underscoring* that the future status of Abyei shall be resolved by negotiations between the parties in a manner consistent with the CPA and not by the unilateral actions of either party, and *recalling* prior agreements on the administration and security of the Abyei Area,

Welcoming continued cooperation between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and Government of the Republic of South Sudan in support of peace, security and stability, including with regard to the Juba Peace Agreement and the high-level discussions between Sudan and South Sudan in August 2021, and the convening of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM) 8–9 September 2021 and 21 October 2021, and *encouraging* that such meetings and those of other joint mechanisms take place on a consistent basis,

Encouraging the African Union, the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), and the United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa to intensify their mediation roles with the Governments of South Sudan and Sudan to encourage them to establish temporary administrative and security arrangements for Abyei and to achieve a political solution for the status of Abyei, and *commending* the assistance provided to the parties by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA),

Acknowledging that over the course of the ten years since establishment of UNISFA, the mission has contributed towards the stabilization and demilitarization



of the Abyei Area and together with the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) played a stabilizing role along the borders between South Sudan and Sudan,

Expressing grave concern over recent developments in Gok Machar, South Sudan, including threats to the safety and security of peacekeepers which resulted in the death of a peacekeeper from Ethiopia on 14 September 2021, undermining the ability of UNISFA to support the JBVMM, *stressing* that the host states have the primary responsibility to ensure safety, security, and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and assets per their obligations under the Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA), and *urging* South Sudan to intensify its outreach to the local community in Gok Machar to facilitate redeployment of UNISFA personnel to their previous locations,

Underlining that over the course of ten years the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan have not made progress establishing joint institutions in Abyei, and *encouraging* Sudan and South Sudan to engage in substantive dialogue that can advance the political process for resolution of the Abyei dispute,

Expressing concern over crime in the Abyei Area, and further expressing concern that the delayed deployment of UN police to the level authorized by the Council prevents UNISFA from fulfilling its security mandate and holds the potential to create a security vacuum in Abyei, and *further expressing concern* about Sudan and South Sudan's efforts to impede UNISFA from fully executing its mandate,

Commending the efforts of UNISFA in its attempts to carry out its mandate effectively, including by its ongoing facilitation of peaceful migration throughout the Abyei Area, conflict prevention, mediation and deterrence, and *expressing* grave concern about the security threats and targeted attacks against United Nations peacekeepers in UNISFA, strongly underscoring the unacceptability of any attack on United Nations personnel, and reiterating that such attacks, which may constitute war crimes, should be swiftly and thoroughly investigated, and that those responsible should be held to account,

Noting the 17 September 2021 letter of the Secretary-General (S/2021/805), proposing detailed recommendations for the reconfiguration of the mission,

Bearing in mind that people in the Abyei Area continue to rely on humanitarian assistance, that access for humanitarian organizations to reach people in need remains of crucial importance, and that humanitarian actors continue to provide assistance to 210,000 people in the Abyei Area, and *further bearing in mind* that support to livelihoods and resilience at the community level are critical to ending conflict driven by food insecurity,

Recalling resolutions 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security and emphasizing that persistent barriers to full implementation of these resolutions will only be dismantled through dedicated commitment to women's empowerment, participation, and human rights, and through concerted leadership, consistent information and action, and support,

Recognizing that the current situation in Abyei and along the border between Sudan and South Sudan continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security,

1. *Decides* to extend until 15 May 2022 the mandate of UNISFA as set out in paragraph 2 of resolution 1990 (2011) and acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, further decides to extend until 15 May 2022 the tasks of UNISFA as set out in paragraph 3 of resolution 1990 (2011);

2. *Decides* to extend until 15 May 2022 UNISFA's mandate modification set forth in resolution [2024 \(2011\)](#) and paragraph 1 of resolution [2075 \(2012\)](#), which provides for UNISFA's support to the JBVMM, and further decides that UNISFA shall continue to implement that mandate and tasks in accordance with resolution [2550 \(2020\)](#) and this resolution;

3. *Determines* that both parties should continue to demonstrate measurable progress on border demarcation, specifically by taking the measures listed below:

- (1) UNISFA and JBVMM Patrols: Achieve standing clearance and full freedom of movement for all air and ground patrols,
- (2) JBVMM Team Sites: Support operationalizing the team site in Abu Qussa/Wunkur, and calls upon South Sudan to resolve the challenges with JBVMM's return to Gok Machar, South Sudan, and team sites Safaha/Kiir Adem and Sumayah/War Abar,
- (3) JPSM: Provide clear guidance to JBVMM by convening two meetings of the JPSM , and ensuring conclusions of meetings are widely disseminated,
- (4) Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ): Immediately withdraw from the SDBZ as both parties committed to do in the 28–29 October 2020 JPSM, and to provide notification of such withdrawal to UNISFA for verification,
- (5) Border Crossing Corridors: Operationalize the reopening of border crossing corridors per the decisions of the 28–29 October 2020 and 8–9 September 2021 JPSM meetings, and together with UNISFA verify their functioning and free movement across the border,
- (6) Border Demarcation: Develop a detailed work plan and budget for demarcation discussions, including negotiations on the disputed areas within the framework of the signed agreements, and hold two meetings of the Joint Demarcation Committee
- (7) National Monitors: Maintain deployment of national monitors to participate in JBVMM operational activities;

4. *Decides* to reduce the authorized troop ceiling to 3,250 until 15 May 2022 and expresses its intention to keep under review the recommendations in the 17 September 2021 letter of the Secretary-General ([S/2021/805](#));

5. *Maintains* the authorized police ceiling at 640 police personnel, including 148 individual police officers and three formed police units, requests the United Nations to continue to take necessary steps regarding sequential deployment of additional police in order to meet the authorized police ceiling of 640, and *expresses* its intention to reduce the authorized police ceiling as the Abyei Police Service is gradually established and providing effective law enforcement throughout the Abyei Area;

6. *Expresses its serious concern* that the Government of Sudan has not issued visas promptly to support personnel critical for the mandate of UNISFA, including police;

7. *Calls upon* the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to provide full support to UNISFA in the implementation of its mandate and deployment of UNISFA personnel, removing any obstacles that hinder the implementation of UNISFA's mandate to protect civilians in Abyei, ensuring the mission's freedom of movement, and facilitating UNISFA's provision of food, medicine, and other supplies to its personnel;

8. *Urges* the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to facilitate basing arrangements for UNISFA in the Mission area including Athony airport, and provide necessary flight clearances, and notes that the utilization of Athony airport will reduce UNISFA's transport costs and logistical challenges, facilitate MEDEVAC, official travel, and air cargo needs for the Mission and enhance safety and security for UNISFA personnel in line with resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#), and *further calls upon* all parties to fully adhere to their obligations called for in its resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#) and under the SOFAs;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General, Member States, and all parties to continue to take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of UNISFA's personnel with unhindered and immediate access throughout Abyei, in line with resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#), notes with concern the grave risks violations of the SOFAs can present to the safety and security of United Nations personnel serving in peacekeeping operations, and requests the Secretary-General to implement the provisions of resolution [2589 \(2021\)](#) for establishing accountability for crimes against peacekeepers;

10. *Reiterates* its request to the Secretary-General to appoint a civilian Deputy Head of Mission for UNISFA and add additional civilian staff within existing resources to further facilitate liaison between and engagement with the parties in a manner consistent with the Agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area of June 2011, including agreement to establish the Abyei Police Service;

11. *Urges* continued progress towards establishing temporary administrative and security arrangements that are agreed to by the parties;

12. *Encourages* the African Union, AUHIP, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to intensify coordinating efforts to establish temporary administrative and security arrangements for Abyei and facilitate the full implementation of the 2011 Agreement on the Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area and the 2012 Cooperation Agreements between Sudan and South Sudan, to achieve a political solution to the status of Abyei, *further encourages* UNISFA to increase coordination with the African Union, AUHIP and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on reconciliation, community sensitization, and political peace processes, and *reiterates* its requests for the Secretary-General to consult with relevant parties on enhancing the role played by the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa to support the above mentioned efforts;

13. *Urges* renewed efforts to determine conclusively the SDBZ centreline on the ground, and reiterates that the centreline of the SDBZ in no way prejudices the current or future legal status of the border, ongoing negotiations on the disputed and claimed areas, and demarcation of the borders;

14. *Underscores* that UNISFA's protection of civilians mandate as set out in paragraph 3 of resolution [1990 \(2011\)](#) includes taking the necessary actions, without prejudice to the responsibilities of the relevant authorities, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, irrespective of the source of such violence, and in that regard underlines that peacekeepers are authorized to use all necessary means, which includes the use of force when required, in order to protect civilians under threat of physical violence, in accordance with mission mandates, the United Nations Charter and other applicable international law, and *stresses* the importance of continued and further engagement by senior mission leadership, with a view to ensuring that all mission components and all levels of the chain of command are properly informed of, trained for, and involved in the mission's protection of civilians mandate and their relevant responsibilities; and commending UNISFA's efforts in that regard;

15. *Condemns* the intermittent presence of South Sudan security service personnel and the deployment of Sudan's Oil Police in Diffra, in the Abyei Area, in violation of the 20 June 2011 Agreement, as well as any entry of armed militias into the territory, and reiterates its demands that immediately and without preconditions the Government of South Sudan fully redeploy its security service personnel from the Abyei Area and that the Government of Sudan redeploy the Oil Police in Diffra from the Abyei Area, and further reiterates, in accordance with relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 1990 (2011) and resolution 2046 (2012), that the Abyei Area shall be demilitarized from any forces, as well as armed elements of the local communities, other than UNISFA and the Abyei Police Service;

16. *Urges* the two governments to take all necessary steps to ensure that Abyei is effectively demilitarized, including through disarmament programmes as necessary;

17. *Reaffirms* that UNISFA may undertake weapons confiscation and destruction in the Abyei Area as authorized under resolution 1990 (2011), consistent with its mandate and within its existing capabilities, in coordination with the signatories of the June 2011 Agreement on the Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area, the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC), and the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities and consistent with the previous AJOC decision to establish the Area as a "weapons free area", calls upon the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan, the AJOC, and the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities and all other groups to extend full cooperation to UNISFA in this regard;

18. *Welcomes* UNISFA initiatives to support community dialogue and efforts by the Misseriya, Ngok Dinka, and all other communities, such as local peace committees, to strengthen intercommunal relationships and facilitate stability and reconciliation in the Abyei Area, and *invites* UNISFA to coordinate with the Juba-appointed administration in Abyei, the Misseriya administration in Muglad, and the Khartoum-appointed administration, using appropriate civilian expertise, to maintain stability, foster intercommunal reconciliation, and facilitate the return of displaced persons to their villages and the delivery of services;

19. *Requests* UNISFA to collaborate with the United Nations Country Teams in Sudan and South Sudan, in consultation with the host governments and the local communities, to engage with the local communities on peacebuilding initiatives, including conflict prevention and mitigation and rule of law, *welcomes* the United Nations' development of an integrated rule of law support strategy in close coordination with the host governments and communities, and strongly encourages all parties to cooperate with UNISFA for the establishment of the Abyei Police Services (APS);

20. *Urges* the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to take steps to implement and facilitate confidence-building measures among the respective communities in the Abyei Area, providing for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women, regardless of area of origin, at all stages, including through reconciliation processes at the grass-roots level as well as through ongoing efforts of non-governmental organizations and by fully supporting UNISFA's efforts in promoting community dialogue, *further urges* Sudan and South Sudan to consider the support of the UN and African Union to help facilitate dialogue amongst all parties in Abyei, and *urges* the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to take forward the joint investigation, announced in 2020, to hold perpetrators accountable for violence in the Kolem area of Abyei in January 2020, and hold accountable those responsible for violence in Mabok in April 2020 and Dunguop in May 2021;

21. *Expresses concern* that women remain absent from the leadership of local peace committees, *recognizes* the Juba-appointed Chief Administrator's public support for women's empowerment, *calls upon* all parties to promote the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women, including at all levels of intercommunity dialogue and peacebuilding efforts, to ensure a credible, and legitimate process, and *requests* UNISFA to integrate women into peace discussions and to assist these efforts through, inter alia, the provision of gender advisers to Abyei where their expertise is urgently needed;

22. *Welcomes* UNISFA's continued efforts, in close coordination with the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, to strengthen the capacities of Community Protection Committees in order to assist with management of law and order processes in Abyei, while ensuring the humane and dignified treatment of suspects and other detainees, and to continue engaging with both governments on this issue;

23. *Calls upon* all parties to cooperate fully with the findings and recommendations following the Abyei Area Joint Investigation and Inquiry Committee's investigation into the killing of a UNISFA peacekeeper and the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief, following the release of findings by the AU Commission, *welcomes* the 24 March 2015 AUPSC press statement requesting the AU Commission to engage the parties on the findings and recommendations, and *looks forward* to the release of the African Union Commission's report on the killing of the Ngok Dinka chief, as agreed to by the traditional leaders, and for the report to be used as a basis for reconciliation between the communities, bearing in mind the need to promote stability and reconciliation in the Abyei Area;

24. *Calls upon* all Member States, in particular Sudan and South Sudan, to provide for the free, unhindered and expeditious movement, to and from Abyei and throughout the SDBZ, of all personnel, as well as equipment, provisions, supplies and other goods, including vehicles, aircraft, and spare parts, which are for the exclusive and official use of UNISFA;

25. *Demands* that all parties involved allow, in accordance with international law, including applicable international humanitarian law, all humanitarian personnel full, safe and unhindered access to civilians in need of assistance and all necessary facilities for their operations, consistent with United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, including humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence;

26. *Welcomes* the Abyei UN Joint Programme Initiative supported by the Sudan and South Sudan United Nations Country Teams;

27. *Encourages* the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan to continue to facilitate the deployment of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to ensure freedom of movement, as well as the identification and clearance of mines in the Abyei Area and SDBZ;

28. *Strongly urges* that all parties cease all forms of violence, human rights violations and abuses, violations of international humanitarian law, and violations of other international law, as applicable, committed against civilians, including women and children, and bring perpetrators of such abuses or violations to justice;

29. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that effective monitoring of human rights violations and abuses, including those involving sexual and gender-based violence and other violations and abuses committed against women and children is carried out, and reiterates its call upon the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan to extend their full cooperation to the Secretary-General to this end, including by swiftly issuing visas to the concerned United Nations personnel;

30. *Requests* the Secretary-General to implement the following activities in the planning and conduct of UNISFA's operations within the limits of the mandate and area of operation and in line with existing United Nations guidelines and regulations:

(a) Strengthening the implementation of a mission-wide early warning and response strategy, as part of a coordinated approach to information gathering, incident tracking and analysis, monitoring, verification, early warning and dissemination, and response mechanisms, including response mechanisms to threats and attacks against civilians that may involve violations and abuses of human rights or violations of international humanitarian law, as well as to prepare for further potential attacks on United Nations personnel and facilities, and ensure gender-sensitive conflict analysis is mainstreamed across all early warning and conflict prevention efforts;

(b) Encouraging the use of confidence-building, facilitation, mediation, community engagement, and strategic communications to support the mission's protection, information gathering, and situational awareness activities;

(c) Prioritizing mission mobility and active patrolling to better execute its mandate in areas of emerging protection risks and emerging threats, including in remote locations, and prioritize deployment of forces with appropriate air and land assets, to support the mission's protection, information gathering, and situational awareness activities;

(d) Improving UNISFA's peacekeeping-intelligence and analysis capacities, including surveillance and monitoring capacities, within the limits of its mandate,

(e) Improving logistics in mission, in particular by taking all necessary measures to secure UNISFA's logistical supply routes,

(f) Implementing effective casualty and medical evacuation procedures, including the Standard Operating Procedure on Decentralized Casualty Evacuation, as well as deploying enhanced medical evacuation capacities,

(g) Taking active and effective measures to provide the planning and functioning of UNISFA's safety and security facilities and arrangements,

(h) Securing long-term rotation schemes for critical capabilities as well as exploring innovative options to promote partnerships between equipment, troop- and police-contributing countries;

(i) Ensuring that any support provided to non-United Nations security forces is provided in strict compliance with the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, including the monitoring and reporting on how support is used and on the implementation of mitigating measures;

(j) Prioritizing mandated protection activities in decisions about the use of available capacity and resources within the mission, according to resolution [1894 \(2009\)](#);

(k) Strengthening its sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response activities in line with resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#), including by assisting the parties with activities consistent with resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#), and by ensuring that risks of sexual and gender-based violence are included in the Mission's data collection and threat analysis and early warning systems by engaging in an ethical manner with survivors and victims of sexual and gender-based violence, and women's organizations;

(l) Implementing resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and all resolutions addressing women, peace, and security, including by seeking to increase the number of women in UNISFA in line with resolution [2538 \(2020\)](#), as well as to ensure the full, equal,

and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of operations, including by ensuring safe, enabling and gender-sensitive working environments for women in peacekeeping operations, taking fully into account gender considerations as a cross-cutting issue throughout its mandate, and reaffirming the importance of uniformed and civilian gender advisors, gender focal points in all mission components, gender expertise and capacity strengthening in executing the mission mandate in a gender-responsive manner;

(m) Taking fully into account child protection as a cross-cutting issue;

(n) Implementing youth, peace and security priorities under resolution 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020);

(o) Implementing peacekeeping performance requirements under resolutions 2378 (2017) and 2436 (2018),

(p) Implementing the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on serious misconduct, sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, and all actions under resolution 2272 (2016), and to report to the Security Council if such cases of misconduct occur;

31. *Requests* troop- and police-contributing countries to fully implement relevant provisions of resolution 2538 (2020) and all other relevant resolutions on reducing barriers to and increasing women's participation at all levels and in all positions in peacekeeping, including by ensuring safe, enabling and gender-sensitive working environments for women in peacekeeping operations;

32. *Urges* troop- and police-contributing countries to continue taking appropriate action to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including vetting of all personnel, and pre-deployment and in-mission awareness training, and to ensure full accountability in cases of such conduct involving their personnel, including through timely survivor-centred investigations of all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, to hold perpetrators accountable, and to repatriate units when there is credible evidence of widespread or systemic sexual exploitation and abuse by those units, appropriate disciplinary measures, and reporting to the United Nations fully and promptly on actions undertaken;

33. *Notes* the Secretary-General's efforts to ensure close cooperation among United Nations missions in the region, including UNISFA, the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), and the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), as well as his Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa;

Reporting and Consultation

34. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide integrated, evidence-based and data-driven analysis, strategic assessments and frank advice to the Security Council, using the data collected and analyzed through the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) and other strategic planning and performance measurement tools, taking into account performance of all uniformed and civilian personnel, to describe the mission's impact, to facilitate as necessary a re-evaluation of the mission composition and mandate based on realities on the ground, and further, to continue to inform it of progress in implementing UNISFA's mandate, in one written report, no later than 15 April 2022 and include reporting on:

- engagement by the African Union and AUHIP on political mediation of the Abyei dispute and Sudan and South Sudan border issues, and recommendations on the most appropriate framework, structure or organizational mandate for the

region to provide support to the parties that will enable further progress in these areas,

- the efforts deployed by the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa to support the African Union and help the parties to establish temporary administrative and security arrangements for Abyei and to achieve a political solution to the status of Abyei,
- progress in implementing any steps taken per paragraph 3,
- progress with the increase in police, appointment of a civilian Deputy Head of Mission, usage of Athony airport, and the issuance of visas to support implementation of the mandate,
- results of human rights monitoring as requested in paragraph 28 including information, analysis, and data on violations and abuses of human rights, and steps that have been taken in line with paragraph 29(1),
- a summary of progress on the Abyei UN Joint Programme Initiative,
- results of a joint consultation with the governments of Sudan, South Sudan, and relevant stakeholders, including the local community, to develop clear and realistic benchmarks and indicators for a responsible, successful and durable mission transition, which should prioritize the safety and security of civilians living in Abyei and account for the stability of the region,
- a summary of actions taken to improve mission performance and address performance challenges including lapses in leadership, national caveats that negatively affect mandate implementation effectiveness, and demanding operational environments,
- overall Mission performance, the Mission's implementation of the Integrated Peacekeeping Performance and Accountability Framework (IPPAF) and CPAS; including information on undeclared caveats, declining to participate in or undertake patrols and their impact on the mission, and how the reported cases of under-performance are addressed;

35. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.
