

The President of the Security Council presents his compliments to the members of the Council and has the honour to transmit herewith, for their information, a copy of a **letter dated 3 June 2022 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations** addressed to the Secretary-General, and its enclosure.

This letter and its enclosure will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2022/460.

8 June 2022



New York, June 3rd, 2022

Excellency,

Ireland and Mexico, as co-chairs of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, would like to share the summary note of the following meeting of the Informal Experts Group:

- The situation in Sudan

We would be grateful if the present letter and its attachment could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Geraldine Byrne Nason
Permanent Representative
of Ireland
to the United Nations

Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez
Permanent Representative
of Mexico
to the United Nations

Barbara Woodward
Permanent Representative
of the United Kingdom
to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York





SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMAL EXPERT GROUP ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Summary of the meeting on Sudan held on May 23rd 2022

On 23 May 2022, the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security (IEG) held a meeting on the situation in Sudan. The group was briefed by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sudan, Ms. Khardiata Lo Ndiaye, accompanied by colleagues from the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and the UN Country Team. The meeting concluded with an overview of key recommendations provided by UN Women and additional observations shared by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Questions from Council Members:

Members of the Security Council asked several questions about the participation of women in the political talks being facilitated by the UN and regional organizations, whether through their own stand-alone group or as part of the other delegations, and about sexual violence, including both as part of intercommunal clashes in Darfur as well as the crackdown on protests against the military authorities. Several questions from Council Members were focused on UNITAMS engagement with the authorities and civil society in the current political climate, and whether the mission has the mandate and resources it needs to implement its commitments to advance gender equality. This included questions about the mission's capacity to do more than documenting acts of sexual violence, and about barriers to the deployment of women protection advisers. Other Council Members asked about the role of regional organizations and their level of commitment to women, peace and security, the implementation of the national action plan on civilian protection and whether there is anything that can be done in the short term to mitigate the rising violence in Darfur, and the linkages between women's development needs -for education, healthcare, or livelihood- and their participation in peacebuilding and political processes. One Council Member noted that the government has taken several steps to advance gender equality since the Juba Peace Agreement and the Constitutional Declaration, and asked about the Mission's level of assistance to the authorities, including in response to requests for capacity-building initiatives.

Main points raised in the meeting:

- As the international community continues to support Sudanese stakeholders to reach a political settlement to return to a civilian-led transition, it is crucial that the upcoming resolution on Sudan continues to signal strong support for the integration of gender equality as central to the mandate of UNITAMS.
- The country is now facing multiple and intersecting crises -political, security, and economic- that have derailed the transition, impacted women in distinct and often disproportionate ways, and have truncated many of the aspirations that Sudanese women took to the streets for three years ago.

- New patterns of violence have emerged in the aftermath of the military coup, compounding the pre-existing levels of gender-based violence pervasive across Sudan and that takes multiple forms – early marriage, female genital mutilation, domestic violence, harassment, and sexual violence – in a context of impunity and continued insecurity. The increased militarization in the country, the proliferation of small arms, the continued activities of armed non-state actors, and the excessive use of force against mostly peaceful protestors - including the use of rape as an instrument of repression and political intimidation - has created an environment of fear and intimidation to women’s rights advocates.
- In addition, increased criminality and ongoing intercommunal clashes in Darfur have resulted in displacement, further exposing women and girls to sexual violence. Darfurian women continue to warn that while the national political crisis is unfolding and has taken center stage, the security and institutional vacuum in Darfur has had devastating humanitarian consequences and continues to take a toll on the lives of women.
- Given the majority of women work in agriculture and the informal sector, the growing humanitarian crisis – exacerbated by climate change - has had a disproportionate toll on their shoulders.
- In January and February UNITAMS held consultations over a five-week period to hear from a broad range of Sudanese stakeholders on a way out of the crisis. Over 100 women from all regions of Sudan, including young women and women with disabilities, met with the leadership of UNITAMS to participate in these discussions. Across the board these women’s groups expressed their fears of violence and detention, and for the backsliding of the women’s rights gains made during the revolution and enshrined in the Constitutional Declaration and Juba Peace Agreement, and call for international support. They perceive the incidences of violence against women as a pattern of violence aimed to deter their active presence and participation in public life particularly in demonstrations. They also point to the appointments of former regime officials to government positions at the national, regional and local levels as a key indicator of the country’s anticipated regression of its women’s rights trajectory at the policy level.
- Human rights defenders and civil society activists, specifically those monitoring and reporting on sexual violence, are increasingly under pressure and intimidation. The UN is working with partners like Frontline Defenders to mitigate those risks.
- In spite of the heightened risks faced by protestors, women were among the first to come out to the street in protest of the coup in the early hours of the 25th of October and continue to be on the frontlines of the street movement. While women continue to be active in all components of public life – including civil society, resistance committees, political parties and armed movements -- few enjoy top-tiered decision-making positions of the formal structures. Political parties and armed movements have not regularly brought women in substantive numbers when meeting with the tripartite mechanism comprised of UNITAMS, AU and IGAD, which launched indirect intra-Sudanese talks on May 12th to address key issues to return the country back to an agreed and legitimate constitutional order. For that reason, the SRSG and AU and IGAD envoys have called upon all the stakeholders to ensure a minimum representation of 40 percent women in their delegations in line with national commitments as per the Constitutional Declaration and Juba Peace Agreement.
- In addition to calling for women’s participation in the delegations, the UN gender team has supported a process led by Sudanese women to form a stand-alone women’s rights group

to participate in the political process, comprised of 22 women from all regions of Sudan with a background on gender equality, experience working on women's empowerment at the local level, and technical expertise related to the political process. The Women's Rights Group was established after weeks of consultations with gender experts, academics and women's groups on the criteria and mechanism for selection. Sudanese women provided the nominations of women, and a panel of Sudanese academic female experts chose the women based on the agreed criteria. While the members of the group are not affiliated with particular political groups, they will continue to engage with women of political parties, the Juba Peace Agreement signatories, and civil society on priorities of the women's rights agenda, and have already engaged with the envoys of the tripartite mechanism.

- Following disturbing allegations of sexual violence during protests last year, the UN established a Working Group on Sexual Violence with membership including the Unit for Combatting Violence Against Women of the Ministry for Social Development and local civil society partners. The Working Group on Sexual Violence continues to monitor cases of sexual violence and provide guidance on strengthening measures to address support needs of survivors.
- The latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence documented 61 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2021, affecting 30 women, 29 girls, and 2 boys. This violence continues to be reported during clashes between armed groups and security forces and during situations of intercommunal violence in different areas of Darfur, including most recently in El Jeneina. The resulting widespread insecurity has severely limited access for humanitarian organizations and human rights monitors.
- Accountability for sexual violence continues to be elusive in Sudan, with the limited political will and national capacity to investigate and adjudicate gender crimes. For example, a UN workshop to bring together prosecutors from across the country to help them prioritize sexual violence crimes and receive advice on prosecutorial strategies has been put on hold, waiting for sign off from the government. Implementation of the Framework of Cooperation between the government of Sudan and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict was stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN has documented cases where parents of survivors were coerced by security agents to settle cases of rape out of court, including marrying child survivors to the perpetrators or paying a fee to the survivor's parents. Out of 29 reported incidents of sexual violence against children reported in the annual report of the Secretary-General, only 6 resulted in the arrest and prosecution of perpetrators. The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, as well as the adoption of a law on combatting violence against women, remain pending.
- 2.9 million people are in need of gender-based violence services, an increase from 2.3 million in 2021. 1.8 million of those are either IDPs, refugees, or returnees, placing a huge burden on humanitarian actors while the protection cluster remains one of the least funded of the Humanitarian Response Plan. This is further complicated by the fact that 70 percent of GBV services are provided in public facilities, and donors are reluctant to work with the military authorities. Approximately 80 percent of localities lack access to services that can provide clinical management of rape.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations were made by UN Women, as the secretariat of the IEG, and the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict:¹

When renewing the mandate of UNITAMS, the Security Council should retain the relevant language on women, peace and security in resolution 2579 (2021), with special attention to OP 3 and OP 12. In addition, the Security Council should consider the following language:

Urge the authorities to respect the commitments made to Sudanese women in the Juba Peace Agreement and the Constitutional Declaration and ensure the full, equal, and meaningful participation in the prompt transition to civilian rule in Sudan.

Call on the United Nations, the African Union, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa to prioritize women's participation in the political process and any future rounds of peace negotiations.

Urge the authorities to resume adequate and independent investigations into the massacres and rapes committed in June 2019 against peaceful protesters, accelerate the investigations into sexual violence cases reported since 25 October 2021, and ensure that these are conducted independently and impartially, without further stigmatizing survivors.

Strongly condemn any killings, use of excessive force, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, and sexual and gender-based violence against peaceful protesters and civil society organizations, including women peacebuilders and those who protect and promote human rights, call on the authorities to take measures to prevent these acts and ensure the effective protection of civic space against threats and reprisals, and request the Mission to report to the Security Council on this issue.

Urge the authorities to fulfil their responsibility to protect civilians and speed up implementation of the security arrangements in the Juba Peace Agreement and the National Action Plan for the Protection of Civilians, ensure women's meaningful participation in decisions about this plan, and recognize the importance of the role of Darfur Women's Protection Networks and other civil society initiatives.

Demand the authorities ensure that no amnesty is granted for conflict-related sexual violence, swiftly investigate all acts of sexual violence committed during protests, urge that perpetrators are held accountable and removed from positions of power or effectively vetted, including the security sector and other public offices, and call for full implementation of the Framework of Cooperation to address conflict-related sexual violence, with support from the United Nations.

In addition, Security Council Member and the IEG co-chairs could:

¹ These recommendations are suggestions from UN participants in this meeting, such as the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, or the background note prepared by the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group ahead of the meeting, and not recommendations from the Informal Expert Group as a whole or Council Members.

- Advocate for increased budgetary allocations to reinforce the gender expertise in the Mission and urge for the deployment of women protection advisors, as called for in multiple resolutions.
- Provide political and financial support to the women's civil society organizations in Sudan and multisectoral assistance for survivors of sexual violence.
- Advocate for the deployment of the joint security-keeping force for Darfur and ensure that it prioritizes the protection of women and girls.

The Co-Chairs thanked all participants and encouraged Security Council Members to follow-up on the important issues raised at the meeting.