

Justice and accountability for Darfur

Thank you Mr President and let me also thank the Prosecutor for her 29th report on the situation in Darfur, pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1593 and for her briefing to the Council today. And I would particularly like to commend the Prosecutor and her staff. Their continued dedication and their hard work on the investigations in Darfur.

Mr President let me take this opportunity at the outset to reaffirm the United Kingdom's strong support for the work of the International Criminal Court, both as a State Party to the Rome Statute and as a member of this Council. We take note of the judgment of the ICC Appeals Chamber in this case on the 6th of May dismissing Jordan's appeal against the Pre-Trial Chambers findings of non-cooperation for its failure to arrest former President al-Bashir. And the United Kingdom renews its call to all State Parties to cooperate with the ICC in this case, as of course must Sudan.

Mr. President I'll focus my intervention on two issues, the situation in Darfur and the wider situation in Sudan and its relevance to justice and accountability for Darfur.

The situation in Darfur was the first case to ever be referred to the ICC by this Council. In the 14 years since our referral, the situation in Darfur has shown signs of improvement. In particular the United Kingdom welcomes the reduction in large scale conflict between armed movements and Sudanese security forces. Despite that improvement we should not forget the reasons for our referral. A conflict, which the United Nations estimates left 300,000 dead and 2.5 million people displaced. We must not overlook the concerns that remain in Darfur today. As we've heard from the Prosecutor, violence targeting displacement of civilians continues in Darfur, particularly in the Jebel Marra area. Moreover as we heard from Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmore last Friday, the human rights situation in Darfur has been alarming in recent months with increased reports of killings, abductions and burning of villages. And Mr President today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, let us not forget that sexual violence continues to be perpetrated at alarming rates in Darfur, often by state security forces and I'm afraid often with complete impunity.

In addition to these worrying trends, there have also been negative impacts on the security situation in recent months. UNAMID has verified the deaths of at least 17 people during an incident of intercommunal violence in Central Darfur, reportedly involving militia and the Rapid Support Forces or RSF. Humanitarian supplies in UNAMID headquarters in West Darfur have been looted. The United Kingdom urges all actors to respect international humanitarian law and allow unfettered humanitarian access. Sustainably addressing the situation in Darfur requires commitment and investment. And for our part the United Kingdom is committed to ensuring long term peace in Darfur including through development and humanitarian assistance.

Mr President as the Prosecutor highlights her briefing comes at a time of political uncertainty in Sudan. The United Kingdom condemns the brutal attacks of violence by the Sudanese security forces against peaceful protesters in the streets of Khartoum. These attacks are not the actions of responsible and credible authorities and they do not represent the will of the Sudanese people. In this regard let me reiterate what I've said in my recent statements on Sudan which is indeed at a crossroads. The Transitional Military Council has a choice. It has a choice to build a new future for Sudan, backed fully with long term and extensive support from the international community, including for strengthening institutions, resolving conflict and dealing with a legacy of long term economic mismanagement. The Transitional Military Council should take the right choice, which would bring an end, as well, to the brutal cycle of violence which the people of Darfur have been subject to. And the United Kingdom stands with the people of Sudan in calling for a swift and inclusive transfer of power to civilian leadership.

Mr President, we know from conflicts and post-conflict situations across the world that accountability is a key element of ensuring sustainable peace and of giving people confidence in the institutions that are then developed. So we remain hopeful that Sudan's political transition will result in a civilian administration which is committed to ensuring justice for the crimes committed against the people of Darfur, which referred to the Court by this Council. We stand ready to support a civilian administration as they seek to build rule of law across Sudan and ensure the horrors experienced by the people of Sudan are never experienced again.

Mr President let me conclude by again thanking the Prosecutor and her Office for their dedication to this case and their pursuit of justice for the victims in Darfur. Thank you Mr President.