



Briefing on UNISFA, 9 May 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

President

I thank ASG Pobee and Special Envoy Tetteh for their briefings. I also welcome the Permanent Representatives of Sudan and South Sudan.

Malta is committed to a stable, secure, peaceful, and prosperous Abyei. Only a mutually acceptable permanent settlement can achieve this. We call on all parties to assume their respective responsibilities and to ensure that the region is free from hostilities and violence. It is with regret to hear that the clashes in Sudan are adversely impacting the situation in Abyei.

As we continue to stand with the people of Abyei, we call on Sudan and South Sudan to continue working towards a meaningful and lasting peace in the region. Malta is encouraged by the latest high-level engagements, including the Summit held in Juba last January. We also welcome inter-communal dialogues which we hope will translate progress at the grassroots.

We urge for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in these talks, as well as that of local authorities, traditional leaders, civil society, and youth. We stress that political will needs to be matched by implementation.



Violence continues to stall peace and security in Abyei, with civilians bearing the brunt. We strongly condemn the fighting and call on all sides to silence the guns and respect the demilitarised status of the area. We support UNISFA and UNMAS for their work in addressing the dangerous proliferation of weapons and possession of firearms and ammunition in the region.

It is unacceptable that sexual and gender-based violence remains rampant, with impunity to perpetrators, adding additional distress on women and girls. Malta commends the work of UNISFA as it strives to address and mitigate violence against women and girls through awareness campaigns and trainings. We also support the establishment of a referral mechanism that survivors can use, without fear and stigma.

Malta is deeply concerned at the heightened risks in recruitment or use of children in armed conflict, and we acknowledge UNISFA's work in sensitising interlocutors on these and other related violations.

President

In Abyei, more than 200,000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Access to basic services, such as water, sanitation, education, and primary healthcare remains dire.



Climate induced flooding and water shortages are driving further displacement and leading to the outbreaks of communicable diseases. This, in addition to the conflict, exacerbates hunger and severe food insecurity in the region.

Malta commends the work of local and international humanitarian partners on the ground, and regrets that insecurity continues to impact their operations. We continue to call for unhindered, rapid and safe delivery of aid.

We call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law. In this regard, we condemn in the strongest terms the murder of two aid workers in Rumamier last January and express our condolences to their families. We remind all parties that humanitarian workers are not a target.

Furthermore, it is imperative that UNISFA's mandate is implemented without any hindrances. Parties must respect the freedom of movement of UNISFA personnel and visas issued in a timely manner. We support the ongoing reconfiguration of UNISFA into a multi-national force, which is now in its last stages.

As we commend the deployment of an all-women platoon, Malta continues to support the recruitment of women peacekeepers through the Elsie project as well as the appointment of gender-based violence officers in the Mission.



President

To conclude, Malta reiterates the importance of a peaceful and secure Abyei. UNISFA's role is fundamentally crucial and effective but needs to be complemented by the support of all parties. As the situation in Sudan enters a chapter of direct talks, we call on parties to utilise this momentum to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation in Abyei. We are only successful if there's political will translated into action.

I thank you.