DECEMBER 2019

Navigating Crisis and Opportunity: The Peacekeeping Transition in Darfur

DANIEL FORTI

IPI
INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE

Cover Photo: UNAMID officially hands over its team site in Tine, North Darfur, to the government of Sudan, October 19, 2017. Mohamad Almahady/UNAMID.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper represent those of the author and not necessarily those of the International Peace Institute. IPI welcomes consideration of a wide range of perspectives in the pursuit of a well-informed debate on critical policies and issues in international affairs.

IPI Publications
Adam Lupel, *Vice President*

Albert Trithart, *Editor*

Meredith Harris, *Editorial Intern*

Suggested Citation:
Daniel Forti, "Navigating Crisis and Opportunity: The Peacekeeping Transition in Darfur," International Peace Institute, December 2019.

© by International Peace Institute, 2019
All Rights Reserved

www.ipinst.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DANIEL FORTI is a Policy Analyst at the International Peace Institute.

Email: forti@ipinst.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IPI owes a debt of gratitude to their many donors for their generous support. This publication is part of an IPI project entitled "Planning for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Transitions," funded by the government of Germany.

The author would like to thank the many individuals who shared their insights and perspectives during the research interviews. The author is grateful to the individuals who provided feedback on earlier drafts of this report, including Jake Sherman, Namie Di Razza, Adam Day, as well as colleagues from the United Nations. The author owes a particular debt of gratitude to Gabriel Delsol, who provided invaluable support throughout the lifecycle of this study. The author also appreciates the dedicated efforts of Albert Trithart and Meredith Harris during the revision phases, and thanks Thong Nguyen for his work on the graphics contained in this report. Any errors of fact or judgment are the sole responsibility of the author.

CONTENTS

Abbreviations iii

Executive Summary 1

Introduction 2

The Context of UNAMID's Transition 2

- UNAMID'S UNIQUE CONFIGURATION
- CHALLENGES OF PEACEKEEPING IN DARFUR

Laying the Transition's Groundwork 6

- AN EXIT STRATEGY PROMPTED BY THE LIMITS OF PEACEKEEPING
- UNAMID'S DRAWDOWN AND "WHOLE-OF-SYSTEM" TRANSITION CONCEPTS

Implementing the Transition 9

- INTEGRATING STRUCTURES AND PLANNING
- JUMP-STARTING PEACEBUILDING WORK THROUGH THE STATE LIAISON FUNCTIONS
- PROTECTING CIVILIANS AND MONITORING HUMAN RIGHTS
- MOBILIZING POLITICAL SUPPORT AMID A DEADLOCKED PEACE PROCESS

Transitioning through Crisis: UNAMID and Sudan's Governance Transition 17

- KEY DEVELOPMENTS DURING SUDAN'S GOVERNANCE TRANSITION (APRIL–AUGUST 2019)
- UNAMID'S MANDATE RENEWALS AND THE DRAWDOWN'S TEMPORARY PAUSE
- CHANGING SECURITY DYNAMICS IN DARFUR
- SIGNS OF LIFE FOR THE PEACE PROCESS

Priorities for the Transition's Final Stages 22

- STRENGTHENING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNCILS

TRANSLATING THE JOINT POLITICAL STRATEGY INTO AN EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-ON PRESENCE

REINFORCING THE TRANSITION CONCEPT

INTEGRATING HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROTECTION INTO ALL AREAS OF WORK

SUSTAINING FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION

Conclusion **30**

Annex: UNSC Benchmarks for UNAMID **31**

Abbreviations

A3	Three African members of the UN Security Council
AU	African Union
AUHIP	AU High-Level Implementation Panel
AUPSC	AU Peace and Security Council
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism
FFC	Forces of Freedom and Change
IDP	Internally displaced person
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
PBC	UN Peacebuilding Commission
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SLF	State liaison function
SRF	Sudan Revolutionary Front
SRSG	Special representative of the secretary-general
TMC	Transitional Military Council
UNAMID	African Union–United Nations Mission in Darfur
UNCT	UN country team
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNSC	UN Security Council

Executive Summary

In the face of evolving security dynamics and geopolitical pressures, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the UN Security Council initiated the withdrawal of the AU-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) in 2017. This transition is a uniquely complex undertaking. This is in part because UNAMID is a hybrid peacekeeping operation, is not integrated with the UN country team (UNCT) headquartered in Khartoum, and has historically had weak support from the government. The transition also confronts difficult humanitarian, security, and economic conditions in Darfur, where violence is ongoing and many underlying drivers of conflict remain unaddressed. Because of these conditions, the transition began before a comprehensive peace agreement—the central pillar of the mission's exit strategy—could be achieved.

To mitigate these difficult circumstances, the UN and AU's initial concept for the transition focused on a "whole-of-system" approach. This concept placed peacebuilding at its center and prioritized collaboration between the mission and UNCT on planning and decision making. Central to this collaboration were the state liaison functions, an innovative model whereby UNAMID officials collocate in the offices of various UN agencies to undertake joint programming. As UNAMID reduced its footprint in Darfur, the mission and UNCT also pursued new avenues to protect civilians and monitor human rights. These largely programmatic efforts progressed further than the political and security aspects of the transition.

On top of an already complex transition process, a nationwide political crisis erupted in Sudan following protests beginning in December 2018 and the ouster of President Omar al-Bashir several months later. This tested the UN and AU's ability to adapt the transition to changing conditions and led to a temporary pause in the mission's drawdown. Following months of uncertainty, the Sudanese adopted a new constitutional declaration and inaugurated a three-year power-sharing government in August 2019. These momentous changes present a unique opportunity for the Sudanese people to pursue a comprehensive peace agreement.

As Sudan embarks into this new transitional period with a sense of cautious optimism, so too do the UN and AU enter a new stage of the peacekeeping transition. Darfur's deep structural challenges—especially those related to protecting civilians, respecting human rights, and providing basic services—will persist well beyond the mission's exit. While the AU and the UN can help address these challenges, they should not lose sight of the significant investments needed to adapt the transition to the new political reality while ensuring it is effective and sustainable. To this end, their efforts should focus on five broad priorities:

- **Strengthening political engagement between the UNSC and AUPSC:** The two councils' political engagement in Sudan is imperative for the success both of the peacekeeping transition and of Sudan's governance transition. To sustain this engagement, the councils need internal political unity as well as aligned strategies.
- **Translating the joint political strategy into an effective follow-on presence:** The AU and UN need to ensure the primacy of any follow-on presence's political mandate, which should be reinforced by all other aspects of its work. In designing a new presence, they will need to consider whether to maintain a Security Council–authorized mission, whether to expand its focus beyond Darfur, and how to divide up the work.
- **Reinforcing the transition concept:** The mission and UNCT should reinforce joint planning efforts and strengthen national ownership over the transition process. They should also scale up peacebuilding work, identify opportunities for new actors to complement ongoing initiatives, and focus on questions of long-term sustainability.
- **Integrating human rights and protection into all areas of work:** The UN and AU should integrate protection and human rights into their political engagement at the national and subnational levels, continue prioritizing efforts to strengthen justice and the rule of law, explore new approaches to early warning, and accelerate planning for the security transition.
- **Sustaining international attention and financial support:** To avoid a financial cliff after the mission leaves, the UN and AU should consider how they can make funding more predictable

and streamlined. The international community also needs to sustain political engagement on the mission's transition and in Darfur more generally.

UNAMID's drawdown and reconfiguration are the first of many complex peacekeeping transitions the international community will need to manage over the coming years. UNAMID's exit strategy, drawdown, and reconfiguration may offer lessons these future transitions could learn from.

Introduction

The ongoing transition of the African Union–United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) is a uniquely complex undertaking. Since the mission's deployment in 2007, the UN and the African Union (AU) have grappled with the absence of a comprehensive political settlement, persistent threats to civilians from state and non-state actors, and deep-seated structural drivers of conflict. While peacekeeping was necessary to prevent mass atrocities, it was inherently limited in what it could achieve. Evolving security dynamics and geopolitical pressures led the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the UN Security Council (UNSC) to reconsider the mission's long-term viability in 2013; they initiated its transition in June 2017.

The UN's transition in Darfur was initially based on a rapid security drawdown and a reconfiguration to an expanded UN country team (UNCT). Although there was progress in some areas of the transition, its trajectory was upended following Sudan's political revolution in April 2019. In response, the UN and AU had to rapidly adapt their support to the country. Following the formation of a power-sharing government in August 2019, the transition now faces a fundamentally different context from that for which it was designed. Underpinned by a reinvigorated national peace process, the AU and UN now have an opportunity to sustainably transition to a follow-on presence that can provide comprehensive, long-term support to the Sudanese people.

Peacekeeping transitions are intended to shift the UN's presence in a country and establish new modalities of support to national priorities in order to build resilience and prevent relapse into conflict. These efforts require sustained political collaboration among member states and between the UN and national actors, integration across different pillars of the UN system, and coherence between the UN and external partners. Transitions also require flexibility and adaptability, especially as host countries begin strengthening their ownership over a range of peace, governance, and development initiatives. UNAMID's peacekeeping transition has put all of these principles to the test.

This paper examines the dynamics of the ongoing peacekeeping transition in Darfur, focusing on UNAMID's drawdown and reconfiguration, as well as the UN's efforts to build the capacity of other actors to sustain peace following the mission's exit.[1] The research focuses on the period up to October 2019, when the AU and UN issued a joint special report on UNAMID's transition and both the AUPSC and UNSC began reevaluating its trajectory. It pays particular attention to the period beginning in July 2018 when the UN strived to implement the "whole-of-system" approach to the transition endorsed by the UNSC one month earlier. The paper subsequently evaluates the political and operational dynamics that impacted different stages of the transition's planning and execution. It also contextualizes the UN transition within Sudan's national political revolution and governance transition from April to August 2019. The report concludes by articulating priorities for the AU and UN during the final stages of the mission's transition and to guide the reconfiguration of international support to Darfur and Sudan.

The Context of UNAMID's Transition

UNSC Resolution 1769 (2007) established UNAMID and mandated it to protect civilians, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and support the political process in Darfur. At its inception, UNAMID was the largest peacekeeping

1 This research is grounded in an extensive desktop review, participation in closed-door events related to Darfur and UNAMID's transition, and over forty interviews conducted from July to September 2019. Interviews with UN and AU officials, member-state representatives, and independent experts took place either in person in New York City or by phone with individuals located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as well as in Khartoum and Zalingei, Sudan. This paper is part of a larger IPI project on UN transitions and is complemented by similar case studies on UN peacekeeping transitions in Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, and Liberia.

mission ever deployed: it was authorized to have 25,987 uniformed personnel, which was gradually reduced to 19,248 by 2016, and then rapidly contracted to 6,550 by June 2018 (see Figures 1 and 2). While UN peacekeeping transitions are inherently complex processes, UNAMID's transition is unique because of the mission's design and its complex operating environment.

UNAMID'S UNIQUE CONFIGURATION

UNAMID was authorized in 2007 as the first (and so far only) hybrid peacekeeping operation. The AU first deployed the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in 2004 as an observer mission to oversee implementation of a humanitarian cease-fire agreement as a stopgap following the outbreak of a devastating conflict in 2003.[2] The conflict in Darfur

Figure 1. Authorized and actual levels of uniformed personnel (2007–2019)

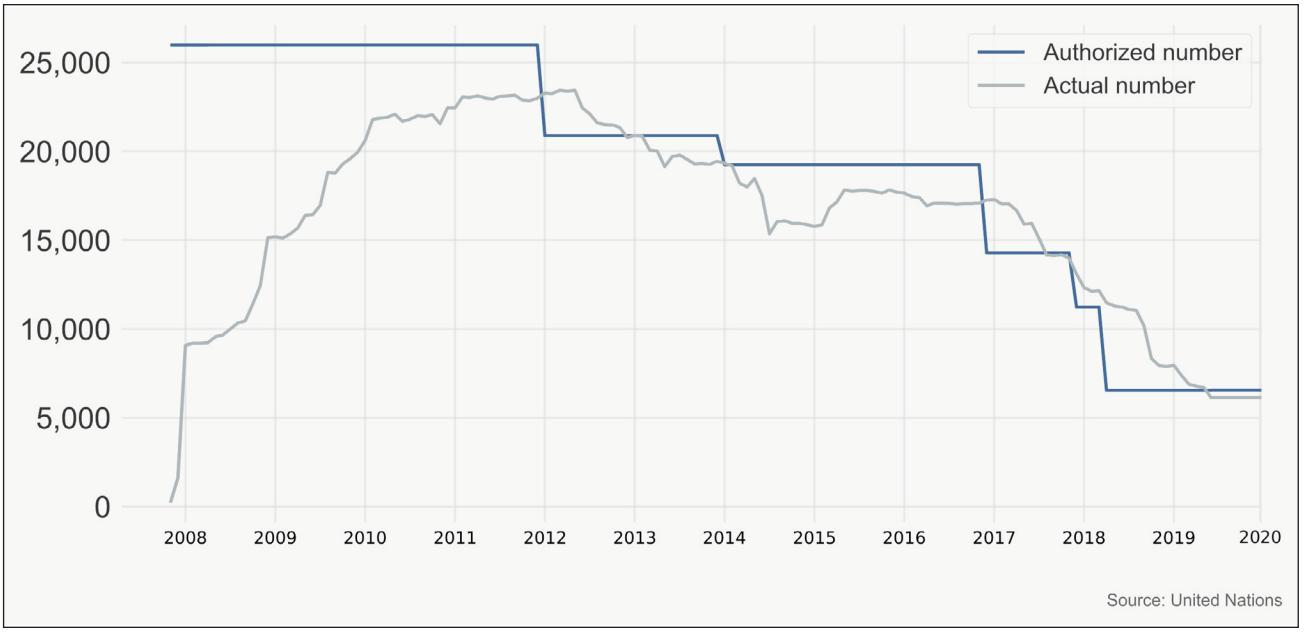
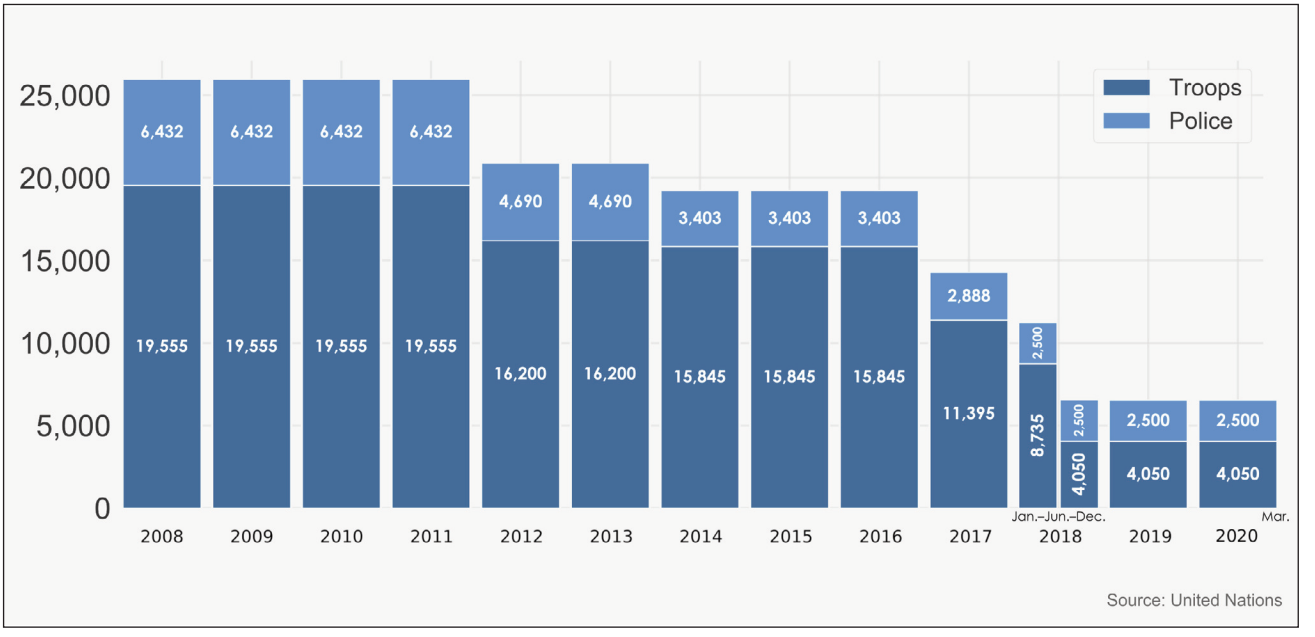


Figure 2. Authorized force levels disaggregated by troops and police (2008–March 2020)



2 AMIS was tasked with monitoring cease-fire compliance, assisting with confidence building, and facilitating humanitarian assistance. AU Peace and Security Council, *Communiqué of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Peace and Security Council*, AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm.(XIII), July 27, 2004.

was sparked by multiple armed rebellions against the Sudanese government following decades of repression of Sudan's peripheries by political elites in the center of the country. Conditions on the ground required AMIS to assume significant responsibility for the protection of civilians, which quickly exhausted the AU's limited operational and financial resources. Despite subsequent agreements by the AUPSC and UNSC to reconfigure AMIS into a UN peacekeeping mission in 2006, the Sudanese government refused to consent to its deployment; subsequent negotiations led to a compromise that AMIS would be reconfigured into a hybrid AU-UN mission.[3]

This hybrid structure has political and operational implications for the transition process. While the mission is administratively backstopped, financed, and maintained by the UN, it is authorized through annual mandates from both the AUPSC and the UNSC, and its special representative and force commander are chosen jointly by the AU Commission chairperson and the UN secretary-general. The AUPSC and AU Commission therefore play an integral role in determining how the mission engages in Darfur. Cooperation between the two councils on UNAMID has not always been easy, with early differences over political leadership, mission leadership, mandated activities, and approaches for engaging the Sudanese government.[4] However, recent improvements in how the two organizations work together on conflict prevention and crisis management have helped them jointly navigate the transition process.[5]

Unlike other contemporary multidimensional UN peacekeeping missions, UNAMID is not integrated with the UNCT in Sudan, and the resident and humanitarian coordinator is not part of the mission's structure. This is because the two entities have different areas of responsibility: UNAMID focuses exclusively on Darfur, while the UNCT focuses on the whole country. This functional separation complicates planning and coordination. The mission and UNCT's different areas of responsibility and nonintegrated structures have led UN agencies, funds, and programs to maintain light footprints in Darfur and heavily rely on UNAMID's activities and logistics. As a result, preparing for UNAMID's exit has required investing in the UNCT and aligning its work with that of the mission.

CHALLENGES OF PEACEKEEPING IN DARFUR

The transition has also been impacted by a number of challenges related to the ongoing conflicts in Darfur and Sudan's broader political and economic dynamics. UNAMID's joint special representative is mandated to serve as the chief mediator between the government and armed groups in Darfur, working within the framework of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP). Continuous efforts to broker a peace agreement between the Sudanese government and these armed groups (along with those in Blue Nile and South Kordofan) have failed to result in a comprehensive, sustainable peace. Since 2003, the role of formal or informal facilitator has oscillated between Chad, Ethiopia, France, Germany, and Qatar, as well as the UN and AU, both separately and jointly, each with varying degrees of success. The signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur in May 2011 was a political turning point, as the Sudanese government, UN, and AU used it as a framework for subsequent political processes even though it did not have the support of all armed groups. Mediators have attempted to reconcile the interests of Darfur's armed groups within the Doha agreement's framework, but with little success.[6]

One of the reasons a political settlement has been so difficult to reach in Darfur is that "several

3 AU Peace and Security Council, *Communiqué of the Fifty First Meeting of the Peace and Security Council*, AU Doc. PSC/MIN/Comm/1(LI), May 15, 2006; UN Security Council Resolution 1679 (May 16, 2006), UN Doc. S/RES/1679. For more information, see: UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2007/307/Rev.1, June 5, 2007.

4 Heiko Nitzschke, "Sudan," in *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century*, Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone, and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, eds. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2016); Security Council Report, "Adoption of Resolution on AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur," *What's In Blue*, April 2, 2014; UN Security Council Resolution 2148 (April 3, 2014), UN Doc. S/RES/2148.

5 For more information, see: Daniel Forti and Priyal Singh, "Toward a More Effective UN-AU Partnership on Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management," International Peace Institute and Institute for Security Studies, October 2019.

6 International Crisis Group, "Sudan's Spreading Conflict (III): The Limits of Darfur's Peace Process," January 27, 2014; AU Peace and Security Council, *Report of the African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD)*, AU Doc. PSC/AHG/2(CCVII), October 29, 2009; David Hoile, *Darfur: The Road to Peace* (London: European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, 2008), Chapter 2.

conflict drivers and grievances have yet to be addressed."[7] The historical marginalization of Darfur vis-à-vis Khartoum has produced structural political, governance, economic and sociocultural inequalities. These have also amplified intercommunal conflict over land tenure and the management of natural resources. Although the extreme levels of violence that characterized the region from 2003 to 2007 have subsided, Darfur still faces a complex humanitarian emergency (see Table 1) and persistent threats to civilians from both state and non-state actors, including frequent incidents of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.

Darfur's conflicts are also inseparable from broader regional dynamics. While South Sudan seceded in 2011, the two countries remain intertwined through political, security, socioeconomic, and cultural ties. Porous borders and weak state institutions in Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic, and Libya allow for the spillover of violence into Darfur; for example, some of Darfur's non-signatory armed groups operate as mercenaries in neighboring countries, driving the flow of illicit small arms and increasing the risk of relapse into conflict. Outside of the immediate neighborhood, the Gulf countries have deepened their ties with Sudan, making them influential external actors.[8]

Sudan's severe economic crisis adds another layer of complexity to the transition. Despite being one of the top ten largest African economies measured by gross domestic product, Sudan has high levels of poverty, youth unemployment, and socioeconomic inequality, especially in Darfur. Comprehensive sanctions imposed by the United States from 1997 to 2017 restricted economic growth and investment, the country is still designated by the US as a state sponsor of terrorism, and it remains in arrears with the International Monetary Fund, restricting access to concessional financing. Rapid exchange-rate depreciation, rising inflation, massive government expenditure on its security sector, and unsustainable subsidies for food and energy all contributed to the economic crisis that fueled the 2018–2019 popular uprising.[9]

Finally, peacekeeping efforts have been hampered by weak host-state consent, as the government of former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir viewed the mission with suspicion. At the strategic level, the government used the Tripartite Coordination Mechanism—a formal body for the UN, AU, and government of Sudan to discuss UNAMID—to negotiate limitations on the mission's mandated activities, at times pitting the AU and UN against one another.[10] At the operational level, reports from the UN and AU

Table 1. Humanitarian indicators for Darfur[11]

Indicator	Number of people affected
Number in need of humanitarian assistance (2018)	3,140,000
Number in protracted displacement (2018)	1,760,000
Number of internally displaced (2019)	1,640,419 in 60 camps
Number of returnees (2019)	315,397

7 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Assessment of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/445, May 30, 2019, para. 59.

8 On these regional dynamics, see: UN Security Council, Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan Established Pursuant to Resolution 1591 (2005), UN Doc. S/2019/34, January 10, 2019; International Crisis Group, "Sudan and South Sudan's Merging Conflicts," January 29, 2015; Andrews Atta-Asamoah and Omar S. Mahmood, "Sudan after Bashir: Regional Opportunities and Challenges," Institute for Security Studies, August 2019, p. 5.

9 On Sudan's economic crisis, see: African Development Bank, "African Economic Outlook 2019," 2019, p. 178; World Bank, "The World Bank in Sudan," April 2, 2019, available at www.worldbank.org/en/country/sudan/overview ; ACAPS, "Sudan: Economic Crisis," February 13, 2019; Elfatih Ali Siddig and Elmoiz Ismail, "Primary Development Finance Assessment," UN Development Programme, April 2018; and African Development Bank, "After Two Decades of 'Solitude': Targeted Strategies for Quick Economic Wins," September 2019.

10 Interview with independent expert, July 2019; Interviews with UN officials, July–August 2019.

11 UN Office for the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs, "Sudan: Darfur Humanitarian Overview," October 2018; "Humanitarian Response Strategy: January–December 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan," December 2018.

have routinely highlighted three sets of issues related to host-state cooperation: delays in or the non-issuance of visas for mission staff, delays in customs clearances, and restrictions on in-country flights and access by mission patrols and humanitarian actors to locations where security incidents or human rights violations were reported.[12] These delays have often reflected the Sudanese government's frustration with some of the mission's mandated tasks; for example, the non-issuance of visas has disproportionately impacted staff working on human rights issues or in police contingents.[13]

Laying the Transition's Groundwork

UNAMID's exit strategy and the peacekeeping transition in Darfur grew out of political and operational pressures that undermined the mission's effectiveness and relevance. The AU and UN tried to mitigate these difficult circumstances; however, the Sudanese government's successive military victories against armed groups in Darfur beginning in 2013 and the lack of progress on an inclusive peace process prompted the organizations to rethink UNAMID's long-term viability. Conducted over multiple phases and spearheaded by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the Sudanese government's Operation Decisive Summer strengthened state control over the region and led to numerous human rights violations against civilians. While open clashes largely subsided across Darfur, except in the Jebel Marra region, bursts of political momentum failed to translate into a comprehensive agreement. These dynamics informed successive decisions by the UN and AU between 2013 and 2016 that prepared the groundwork for the transition, as set forward in UNSC Resolutions 2368 (2017) and 2429 (2018).

AN EXIT STRATEGY PROMPTED BY THE LIMITS OF PEACEKEEPING

UNAMID's exit strategy was first considered in a joint AU-UN strategic review in 2014, mandated by UNSC Resolution 2113 (2013). The review painted a pessimistic picture of UNAMID's future and highlighted transition-related issues that would need to be addressed in the years to come. Among other issues, it stressed the need for the AUPSC and the UNSC to re-articulate the mission's strategic priorities to give it a more active role in supporting the peace process and local conflict-resolution efforts.[14] It also exposed shortcomings in the mission's structures for coordinating and planning with the UNCT, noting the importance of improving "joint decision-making on joint operational planning, the shared delivery of results and the evaluation of activities and common interests," an unsurprising challenge given the mission's structure.[15]

The strategic review was so impactful that both councils swiftly endorsed its findings outside of the annual mandate-renewal cycle and without the usual tense negotiations.[16] It was also a turning point, as for the first time, the AUPSC's communiqué focused not only on the politics but also on the details of UNAMID's drawdown and reconfiguration. The UNSC's next mandate for UNAMID, in 2014, was the first to mention an exit strategy: the UNSC requested an analysis of the implementation of the mission's mandate, a list of the tasks that could be handed over to the UNCT, and "recommendations for the future mandate, composition, configuration and exit strategy."[17] Subsequent updates from the UN and AU in 2015

12 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on Sudan*, UN Doc. S/2010/681, December 31, 2010; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2013/607, October 14, 2013; and UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2016/812, September 27, 2016; UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Assessment of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/445, May 30, 2019.

13 UN Security Council, *Assessment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of Phase One of the Reconfiguration of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2018/12, January 4, 2018, para. 59.

14 The three revised priorities proposed included: "(1) mediation between the Government and non-signatory armed movements on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, while taking into account ongoing transformation at the national level; (2) the protection of civilians, the facilitation of the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel; and (3) the provision of support, in conjunction with the United Nations country team, to the mediation of community conflict, including through measures to address its root causes." UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Secretary-General on the Review of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2014/138, February 25, 2014, para. 40.

15 Ibid., para. 37.

16 AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué CDXXV (March 24, 2014), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(CDXXV); Security Council Report, "Adoption of Resolution on AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur"; UN Security Council Resolution 2148 (April 3, 2014), UN Doc. S/RES/2148.

17 UN Security Council Resolution 2173 (August 27, 2014), UN Doc. S/RES/2173, para. 7.

highlighted the creation of a UNAMID-UNCT matrix for the long-term handover of tasks (accompanied by a planned capacity-assessment exercise) as well as preliminary conversations between the Sudanese government, UN, and AU on an exit strategy, troop-repatriation schedules, and the gradual handover of responsibilities and assets.[18]

UNAMID's early transition planning unfolded alongside broader political pressures on the mission. The US campaign to reduce UN peacekeeping budgets disproportionately impacted UNAMID, which was framed as the poster child of a mission that was no longer cost-effective.[19] The government of Sudan also undertook a public campaign to demonstrate its full control over Darfur and to assert its national sovereignty. This campaign sought to convince member states that the AUPSC and the UNSC should endorse the mission's swift exit. It also aimed to help Sudan normalize diplomatic relations with Western countries and secure its removal from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism.

These dynamics, which defined the mission's drawdown and exit strategy until the next significant revision to its mandate in 2017, offer two insights into early transition planning. First, the UN and AU dedicated attention to improving collaboration between the mission and UNCT. Multiple references in joint AU-UN reports and in UNSC mandates provided impetus for developing collaborative processes and structures. A shortcoming, however, was that the UN framed its underlying goal as "handing over tasks" from the mission to the UNCT. This framing presupposed that missions and UNCTs have enough overlap in their mandates, frameworks, and resources to seamlessly transfer substantive responsibilities. It also assumed that the UN's comparatively limited security and peacebuilding efforts in Darfur were sufficient for meeting the region's needs. Although this framing was in line with how the UN transitioned peacekeeping missions at the time, lessons from recent transitions have led to a shift in approach.[20]

Second, even though the transition was not initially conceived as a phased security drawdown, rapid changes on the ground afforded the Sudanese government greater leverage over its trajectory. With fewer open clashes in Darfur and greater external pressures on UN peacekeeping, the Sudanese government successfully lobbied AU and UN member states to accelerate troop withdrawals (see Figures 1 and 2) even though humanitarian and protection concerns persisted and progress toward mission benchmarks was limited.[21] The organizations readily acknowledged, on multiple occasions, that an inclusive political settlement was not only imperative for sustainable peace in Darfur but also the premise for the mission's long-term exit strategy.[22] Nonetheless, the mission's transition quickly became a political and operational priority in 2017, even as this goal remained far from achievable.

UNAMID'S DRAWDOWN AND "WHOLE-OF-SYSTEM" TRANSITION CONCEPTS

UNSC Resolutions 2363 (2017) and 2429 (2018) are the cornerstones of UNAMID's transition concept. Read together, these two resolutions highlighted the organizations and member states' efforts to reconfigure a long-standing mission under difficult circumstances. They also demonstrated the limits of peacekeeping transitions absent sustainable political solutions and amid ongoing threats to civilians.

Resolution 2363 (2017) established the parameters for UNAMID's drawdown and operational reconfiguration. It first outlined a two-pronged concept of operations: traditional peacekeeping activities would focus on the Jebel Marra region, while the mission would undertake stabilization

18 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2015/378, May 26, 2015, paras. 74-76; UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2015/163, March 6, 2015, paras. 74–77; UNAMID, "Talks in Khartoum on UNAMID's Exit Strategy," February 15, 2015; UNAMID "Working Group for UNAMID's Exit Strategy Convenes," March 17, 2015.

19 Interviews with UN and AU officials, July–August 2019; "UN Agrees to Cut Down Darfur Peacekeeping Force," Al Jazeera, June 29, 2017.

20 Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, "Pivoting from Crisis to Development: Preparing for the Next Wave of UN Peace Operations Transitions," International Peace Institute, July 16, 2019.

21 International Refugee Rights Initiative, "The Challenges of Peacekeeping in Darfur," June 2016, pp. 27–28

22 See: UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2015/378, May 26, 2015, para. 84; and UN Security Council Resolution 2228 (June 29, 2015), UN Doc. S/RES/2228, para. 26.

and peacebuilding activities in the rest of Darfur.[23] It established a two-phase uniformed drawdown that would reduce the number of authorized military personnel by 44 percent and of police personnel by 30 percent over the course of a year (see Figure 2). Phase one would take six months, and phase two would begin automatically in the seventh month "unless the UNSC decides… to adjust the scope and pace of the reduction."[24] It reaffirmed the mission's strategic priorities established in the previous mandate and encouraged greater cooperation between the mission and UNCT in the implementation of mission-wide protection and humanitarian strategies.[25] It also underscored that the exit strategy and long-term transition planning should be based on progress toward the mission's benchmarks, especially an inclusive and sustainable peace process.[26]

Resolution 2429 (2018) expanded on this two-pronged concept of operations and laid out the transition's "whole-of-system" approach. This approach centered on the collocation of UNAMID and the UNCT and joint analysis and programming under the framework of the state liaison functions (SLF) in four areas: the rule of law, human rights, resilience and livelihoods, and immediate service delivery for internally displaced persons (IDPs).[27] The resolution also redefined the mission's strategic priorities to reflect this integration between the mission and UNCT.[28] The UNSC further reduced the number of authorized troops by 53 percent over the ensuing twelve months while freezing the number of authorized police (see Figure 2). The resolution "took note" of the two-year time frame proposed by the UN and AU for the mission's closure, including a June 2020 deadline for its exit and a December 2020 deadline for its liquidation. The UNSC also requested that the Sudanese government begin discussions with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the establishment of a stand-alone office in Sudan.

As for the mission's operational reconfiguration, Resolution 2429 provided for the establishment of a new mission headquarters in Zalingei to bring leadership closer to the Jebel Marra region. It also relocated the joint special representative to Khartoum and mandated the deputy joint special representative, from the base in Zalginei, to oversee both the mission's day-to-day operations and the transition. With the UNCT's headquarters in Khartoum, much of the collaboration between the mission and UNCT was set to take place in UN agencies' field offices in Darfur.

Four aspects of the UN's transition concept in Darfur are noteworthy. First, the drawdown and transition were initiated before many of the core indicators of the mission's success were achieved. No peace agreement had been finalized or implemented, active fighting continued in parts of the mission's area of operations, and over 1.7 million people remained displaced. In addition, the Sudanese government did not engage on the design of the transition strategy, as it was predominantly concerned with the mission's expedited withdrawal.

Second, UNAMID's phased security drawdown was different from that of previous missions because it involved shorter time frames, the repatriation of larger numbers of troops and police, and multi-phase reductions during a single mandate-renewal cycle. UNAMID's authorized number of troops decreased from 15,845 to 4,050 over a two-year period, a significant reduction under any circumstances. This rapid drawdown limited the flexibility of repatriation schedules, and

23 The resolution defined "traditional peacekeeping activities" as military protection, clearance of explosive remnants of war, and emergency relief. This was a recommendation from the UN Security Council: *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Review of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2017/437, May 18, 2017, para. 49; and Resolution 2063 (July 31, 2012), UN Doc. S/RES/2063, para. 2.

24 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Review of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2018/530, June 1, 2018, paras. 5, 7.

25 These include the protection of civilians and facilitation of humanitarian access; mediation between the Sudanese government and non-signatory armed groups on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur; and support for the meditation of intercommunal conflict. UN Security Council Resolution 2363 (June 29, 2017), UN Doc. S/RES/2363, para. 10.

26 Ibid., para. 39.

27 Ibid., paras. 51–55; UN Security Council Resolution 2429 (July 13, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2429, para. 18.

28 These include: "(a) the protection of civilians, human rights monitoring and reporting, the facilitation of humanitarian assistance and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel; (b) mediation between the Government of the Sudan and non-signatory armed movements on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur; and (c) mediation at the local level to address intercommunal or other local conflict that could undermine the security situation in the area of operations." See: UN Security Council Resolution 2429 (July 13, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2429, para. 11.

delays in repatriating some contingents reverberated across other parts of the mission.[29] On a positive note, the multi-phase drawdown during a single mandate cycle provided the UNSC and AUPSC with more direct oversight and helped them demonstrate a level of flexibility that would prove necessary two years later.[30] While the rapid drawdown stretched the mission's limited operational capacity, it also sent positive signals within the UN about the mission's civilian character and the growing importance of its peacebuilding work.

Third, the concept demonstrated how the UNSC could better integrate mission-led peacebuilding efforts into transitions. While the transitions in Liberia and Haiti also addressed peacebuilding work, the SLFs in Darfur were an innovation. The UN and AU recognized that unresolved conflict drivers required additional attention to prevent intercommunal violence from spiraling.[31] At the operational level, they concluded that "handing over" the mission's tasks to the UNCT was "unrealistic" because of the massive discrepancy in capacity and resources and their different programmatic approaches.[32] Moreover, despite early efforts to improve integration between the mission and UNCT, the AU and UN's 2018 special report noted that "insufficient emphasis was put on communication and cooperation with the [UNCT] with regard to joint planning, programming and implementation," and the mission's limited peacebuilding activities continued "without any coherent overarching guidance or strategy in support of the UNCT or the local governments."[33] The SLFs were an attempt to tackle these challenges head on.

Finally, the deadlines both helped and hurt the transition process. The UN and AU included caveats in the transition schedule, noting that the June and December 2020 deadlines would be met "provided that there will be no significant change in the security situation in Darfur and key indicators are fulfilled."[34] This caveat was reflected word-for-word in Resolution 2429.[35] Even though this was not the first time the UNSC projected an exit date two years in advance, it led some member states to focus disproportionately on the mission's end date instead of on the conditions on the ground. Rigid adherence to the June 2020 deadline would lead to heightened political tensions within the UNSC, limiting the body's flexibility to adapt the mission to changing conditions in Darfur and Sudan. On the other hand, the articulation of clear deadlines underpinned the urgency of accelerating transition planning within the mission and UNCT.

Implementing the Transition

From July 2018 onward, the mission's focus quickly shifted to reconfiguring its engagement in Darfur. These efforts accelerated at the same time as the UN was refining its broader approach to mission transitions (see Box 1). Most visibly, this reconfiguration included the rollout of the SLFs and the transition of programming. But while starting up the SLFs presented the most day-to-day operational challenges, it was relatively straightforward compared with the uncertainties confronting the transition on the political and security fronts.

INTEGRATING STRUCTURES AND PLANNING

Strengthening collaboration between the senior and working levels of the mission and the UNCT is necessary for any transition process; this was even more urgent in UNAMID since the mission is not integrated. As transition planning accelerated, UNAMID and the UNCT aimed to strengthen both the frequency and the effectiveness of their collaboration on planning and decision making.

UNAMID's transition planning is informed by

29 UN Security Council, *Assessment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of Phase One of the Reconfiguration of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2018/12, January 4, 2018, para. 36.

30 Security Council Report, "AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur Mandate Renewal," What's In Blue, June 28, 2017.

31 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Review of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2018/530, June 1, 2018, para. 48.

32 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Review of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2017/437, May 18, 2017, para. 43–44.

33 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Review of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2018/530, June 1, 2018, para. 28.

34 Ibid., para. 62.

35 UN Security Council Resolution 2429 (July 31, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2429, para. 76 (ii).

Box 1. The UN secretary-general's planning directive on transitions

The secretary-general's planning directive on transitions, endorsed in February 2019, puts forward institutional guidance for the planning and management of transitions in UN missions.[36] It builds on the 2013 Policy on UN Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal, as well as the UN Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning. Transitions have been a recurrent item on the agenda of the UN's Executive Committee dating back to January 2017.

The directive covers four main areas: leadership, early joint planning and financing, operational support, and staffing. On leadership, it acknowledges that transition planning is the responsibility of the entire senior leadership team led by the special representative of the secretary-general (SRSG). It requests that the deputy SRSG/resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator (in integrated mission contexts), or another senior leader appointed by the head of mission, assume overall responsibility for operational planning, with a view to sustaining meaningful engagement on peacebuilding priorities. It also encourages both the SRSG and deputy SRSG to engage political leaders in the host country "as early as possible" to seek a joint approach to a transition. The directive requests that all strategic assessment missions and mission reviews examine issues related to a transition.

On early joint planning and financing, the directive requests all multidimensional missions and UNCTs to jointly develop integrated transition calendars following the completion of a mission's start-up phase. These tools should be understood as succinct roadmaps that forecast timelines and milestones for the transition, with the ultimate goal of articulating a detailed transition plan "at least 24 months prior to the withdrawal or reconfiguration" of a UN mission.

On operational support and staffing, the directive requests UNCTs working in mission contexts to assess their reliance on a mission's logistical capacity and outline all joint modalities. It also requests the UN Secretariat and other UN agencies to streamline staffing arrangements and make them more flexible so they can more easily place mission staff in UNCTs. The directive makes provisions to support national staff following mission transitions and requests a transition-specific review of the UN's human resources framework and UN downsizing policy.

the UN secretary-general's planning directive on the Darfur transition, which aims to coordinate UN efforts. In line with this and the UN secretary-general's planning directive on transitions (see Box 1), the deputy joint special representative is the overall manager of the transition, working alongside the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator in Sudan, who is responsible for the UNCT side of the transition.

UNAMID and the UNCT put in place a range of coordination and decision-making structures to execute the transition.[37] These structures are backstopped by regular meetings of the headquarters-based Darfur Integrated Task Force, chaired by the Sudan Integrated Operational Team in the UN Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations. In addition, the Integrated Operational Team and UN Development Programme (UNDP) co-chair a working group dedicated to transition activities that includes staff based in New York, Khartoum, and Zalingei.[38]

Day-to-day work is guided by a transition action plan, endorsed by UNAMID and the UNCT in

36 UN Secretary General, *Secretary-General's Planning Directive for the Development of Consistent and Coherent UN Transition Processes, In Line with Executive Committee Decision 2018/38*, February 25, 2019 (internal document).

37 UNAMID and the UNCT convene a bimonthly Senior Leadership Forum involving chiefs of UNAMID sections and the heads of UN agencies. The UN also established an interim transition mechanism comprising working-level officials from both the mission and the UNCT, mandated to oversee both substantive and operational elements of the transition. This mechanism was replaced by a Joint Transition Cell on September 1, 2019.

38 Interview with UN official, August 2019.

March 2019.[39] Personnel working on the transition intentionally chose to develop an action plan over a comprehensive strategy document so it would be a "living document" that can evolve according to political and security developments.[40] It is built around six work streams that align with the pillars of the transitions directive and a matrix with deliverables, implementing parties, time frames, and monitoring requirements.[41] Even though the action plan is succinct, overseeing its implementation is a heavy burden, particularly for sections of UNAMID that report both to the resident and humanitarian coordinator and to the joint special representative and deputy joint special representative.

Furthermore, day-to-day work on the transition was not accompanied by a joint transition plan between the Sudanese government and the UN in the vein of the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan.[42] Intermittent meetings of the Tripartite Coordination Mechanism from 2017 onward focused more on the consolidation of UNAMID's team sites than on the articulation of a shared vision for the transition.[43] This was largely because of the government's confrontational posture toward UNAMID and its limited interest in the transition's substantive components. The process of outlining such a vision only began in September 2019, after Sudan's transitional government was put into place. Nonetheless, agreements on specific projects between state administrations in Darfur and the SLFs reflect some level of joint engagement at the local level.

Some UNAMID and UNCT personnel reflected positively on the operationalization of the transition structures. They highlighted the positive commitments, strategic thinking, and overall flexibility demonstrated by the UN's senior leadership during a complex transition. Most importantly, senior leaders in the mission and UNCT worked together to articulate a joint transition narrative, which gave them stronger footing for engaging their UN colleagues and Sudanese counterparts. Strong leadership also facilitated regular coordination between Zalingei, Khartoum, New York, and Addis Ababa.[44]

The transition structures also encountered challenges, however. One challenge was that the mission focused on technical and political preparations for the transition rather than dynamics within the mission. As with other recent peacekeeping transitions, the mission struggled to set expectations, oversee the day-to-day management of the transition, and provide psychosocial and human resources support to staff.[45] These challenges were compounded by the strenuous working conditions in Darfur. The speed with which the mission and UNCT had to change their way of working following the adoption of Resolution 2429 likely put additional pressure on staff. UNAMID's nonintegrated structure, exemplified by its leadership's geographic separation, made it difficult to implement coherent programs. In addition, some personnel were perceived to disagree with the transition timeline due to concerns that the mission would exit Darfur without a sustainable peace agreement or serious advances toward resolving the conflict's structural causes: "It's not clear that the entire mission has truly embraced the transition," one official surmised.[46] Combined, these challenges have fostered internal resistance to change and highlight how missions in transition are forced to balance political and operational considerations.

39 The action plan was developed with support from the UN's Joint Transitions Project. Jointly managed by UNDP, the Department of Peace Operations, and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the project has provided integrated support to UN transitions since 2014 through the long-term deployment of transition specialist and short-term deployment of a core team. UNAMID, "UN State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in Darfur," accessed December 5, 2019, available at https://unamid.unmissions.org/un-state-liaison-functions-slfs-darfur .

40 Interviews with UN officials, August 2019.

41 The six work streams are political work, peacekeeping and mission issues, SLF/integrated programs, other programs, operations, and communications (the latter two are crosscutting).

42 On the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan, see: Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying: Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition," International Peace Institute, December 18, 2018.

43 "Coordination Mechanism on UNAMID: 'Situation in Darfur Improved Significantly,'" Radio Dabanga, April 9, 2018; UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Assessment of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/445, May 30, 2019, para. 52.

44 Interviews with UN officials, July–August 2019.

45 On similar challenges during the peacekeeping transition in Haiti, see: Namie Di Razza, "Mission in Transition: Planning for the End of UN Peacekeeping in Haiti," International Peace Institute, December 26, 2018.

46 Interviews with UN official, August 2019.

Delays in establishing and operationalizing the Joint Transition Cell also had an impact. The cell was first conceptualized during the 2018 AU-UN strategic review based on lessons learned from previous transitions, which did not have cross-disciplinary teams to oversee daily transition activities.[47] The UN team overseeing the initial strategic planning was reconstituted as an interim transition mechanism immediately following the strategic review.[48] The interim mechanism focused almost exclusively on the SLFs, which some perceived as the only transition issue. It also struggled with communication and reporting, as team members from UNAMID were based in Zalingei while their UNCT counterparts remained in Khartoum. It proved difficult, however, to agree on the terms of reference and working modalities for a joint structure that could operate between Khartoum and Zalingei and fit within both the mission and UNCT's bureaucratic structures. This delayed the transition from the interim mechanism to the Joint Transition Cell, which did not formally start up until September 2019.[49]

JUMP-STARTING PEACEBUILDING WORK THROUGH THE STATE LIAISON FUNCTIONS

Accelerating the UN's ability to deliver on peacebuilding work in Darfur is central to the mission's transition. Continuation of this work can help the UN sustain its presence in the region, maintain relationships with Sudanese actors, and build on investments made by the mission. Before the passage of Resolution 2429, UNAMID had limited capacity or resources to undertake peacebuilding work.[50] This has changed with the creation of the state liaison functions (SLFs), which the UN is using as an anchor for its long-term engagement in Darfur.

As of October 2019, approximately sixty UNAMID officials were physically collocated in the offices of ten UN agencies, funds, or programs to jointly undertake SLF projects in four of Darfur's five states (including pilot projects in the Jebel Marra region); the UN hopes to establish SLFs in Central Darfur state in early 2020 as part of phase III of their rollout.[51] A three-person mobile human rights team also operates out of El Fasher under the SLF framework, and forty individual police officers are deployed to work alongside the SLFs.[52]

Financed with programmatic funding from UNAMID's assessed budget, the SLFs received approximately $15 million for phase I (January–June 2019), with an additional $17.2 million allocated for phase II (July–December 2019); an additional $17.2 million is expected to be allocated for phase III (January–June 2020).[53] While UNDP received the majority of SLF funding during phase I (owing to its comparative advantage in peacebuilding and grant management), other UN agencies have also benefitted.[54] This funding is framed as "seed money" for the UN to demonstrate gains and advocate for long-term financial commitments from donors.

Although it is too early to assess the long-term impact of the SLFs, their broad scope of work and strong financial support are a step forward in how

47 The transition cell also received surge support from a transition specialist deployed to Khartoum at the end of 2018. This official was sponsored by the UN's Joint Transition Project.

48 UN transitions workshop, June 2019.

49 Interviews with UN officials, August 2019; UNAMID, "UN State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in Darfur."

50 UNAMID only had approximately $5.5 million allocated to quick-impact and community-level-impact projects from 2014 to 2018. UN Office of Internal Oversight Services, "Evaluation of the Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency of UNAMID in Supporting Transition from Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding in Darfur in Collaboration with UNCT," May 2019, para. 24 (internal document).

51 The SLFs are designated according to Darfur's administrative boundaries. As of October 2019 there are SLFs in East, North, South, and West Darfur states. The participating agencies, which were selected based on assessments of their respective comparative advantages in terms of their mandates, programmatic experience, and operational capabilities in Darfur, include: the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Organization for Migration, UNDP, the UN Population Fund, UN Habitat, the UN Refugee Agency, UNICEF, UN Women, the World Food Programme, and the World Health Organization. UNAMID, "UN State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in Darfur."

52 UNAMID, "Concept Note: UNAMID Transitional Presence and Coordination with UNCT in Four Darfur States," February 2019 (internal document)

53 These resources are significant compared to earlier years. For example, UNAMID received $2.9 million in the 2017–2018 period for programmatic activities outside of mine action. UN General Assembly, *Overview of the Financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Budget Performance for the Period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 and Budget for the Period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018—Report of the Secretary General*, UN Doc. A/71/809, February 22, 2017, Table 16; UNAMID, "UN State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in Darfur"; UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/816, October 17, 2019, para. 27.

54 UNDP received approximately 40 percent of the $14 million programmatic funding allocated in Phase I; the second highest allocation went to the World Food Programme, which received approximately 15 percent of the total. UN Office of Internal Oversight Services, "Evaluation of the Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency of UNAMID in Supporting Transition from Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding in Darfur in Collaboration with UNCT."

the UN transitions.[55] The peacebuilding and conflict-analysis skills brought by UNAMID staff with years of experience in the region have helped the UNCT gradually reorient its work from predominantly humanitarian activities to peacebuilding.[56] The SLFs have also helped the UNCT change its approach to the protection of civilians in areas where UNAMID is no longer conducting patrols, with greater focus on rule of law and human rights programming. This joint programming has fostered collaboration and integration within the UN system.

In addition, by ensuring that projects align with the priorities of community-level actors and state authorities, SLFs are gradually shifting ownership away from the UN and increasing the inclusion of national actors. Cooperation with the Sudanese authorities throughout the design and implementation of these projects has improved the capacity of authorities, accelerated infrastructure development, and enabled the UN to raise politically sensitive issues with the government—including on human rights and justice—in a constructive way.[57] As one UNAMID official described, this project-based engagement on political issues complements the track-I political dialogue led by UNAMID's joint special representative.[58]

Compared to the relatively straightforward process of determining the programmatic direction of the SLFs, the administrative process of setting up this new mechanism proved difficult. Phase I had a short time frame, the mission and UNCT had different project-management modalities, and the mission had limited project-management skills (including a limited understanding of theories of change and results frameworks).[59] Moreover, separate memoranda of understanding between UNAMID and the ten participating UN agencies are required for each phase, leading to continuous negotiations that delay implementation. While recent negotiations have benefitted from improved understanding of staff collocation and reporting structures, one official lamented, "We didn't get to focus on the big picture stuff because of haggling over comparatively smaller details."[60]

Navigating UNAMID and UN agencies' different financial arrangements similarly overwhelmed the start-up process. Questions arose over how to allocate indirect costs and manage the dual reporting lines between the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly's Fifth Committee.[61] Even though SLF projects were expected to begin in January 2019, funding for phase I was only disbursed in March 2019, leading to a rush to spend money without finalizing the joint analysis or the planning and vetting of projects.[62] Some challenges were structural in nature, including different budgetary and human resources policies, unclear recruitment practices for hiring managers and collocated staff, varying project-management skills, and different bureaucratic work flows. Others were more administrative, including how some collocated staff initially lacked identification badges and were not included on the appropriate mailing lists.[63]

In addition, headquarters and operational staff initially lacked a common understanding of the SLFs' objectives and working methods.[64] This required senior leaders in UNAMID and the UNCT to expend significant effort fostering collaboration. According to some involved, the visit of three UN assistant secretaries-general in February

55 Joint programs implemented during previous peacekeeping transitions have largely focused on justice and the rule of law. See: Forti and Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying"; and Di Razza, "Mission in Transition."

56 Interviews with UN officials, July–August 2019.

57 These are especially important as the SLFs work with state ministries, police, and intelligence officials in Darfur. Interviews with UN officials, July–August 2019.

58 Interview with UN official, July 2019.

59 Interviews with UN officials, July–August 2019.

60 UN transitions workshop, June 2019

61 Missions' programmatic funds are not allowed to cover UN agencies' indirect overhead costs for the SLF projects. UNAMID allocated $1 million (of Phase I's $15 million) to cover the general operating expenses for the collocation of staff to implement joint SLF activities. Interviews with UN officials, August 2019; UN transitions workshop, June 2019. ECOSOC oversees financial reporting for UN agencies, funds, and programs; the UN General Assembly's Fifth Committee (and its Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) oversees financial reporting for UN peacekeeping operations.

62 UN transitions workshop, June 2019.

63 Interviews with UN officials, August 2019.

64 Common misperceptions include that the assessed funding would be distributed evenly among UN agencies in the SLFs, that the agencies would get to hire their own new staff instead of accepting collocated staff from UNAMID, and that the SLFs were an exclusively peacekeeping project that had little relevance or space for the work of staff from the UNCT. Interviews with UN officials, July–August 2019.

2019 and the visit of the joint AU-UN strategic review a few weeks later provided an opportunity to promote a common narrative and underscore the SLFs' value to UNAMID's transition.[65]

PROTECTING CIVILIANS AND MONITORING HUMAN RIGHTS

Protecting civilians and monitoring human rights violations have long been central components of UNAMID's mandate. Even as large-scale clashes have decreased considerably since 2016, the mission has struggled to fully realize these objectives. This has become even more challenging as the mission closes team sites, reduces armed patrols, and downsizes civilian staff. Open conflict in the Jebel Marra region increased in 2018, as did intercommunal violence and criminality across Darfur.[66] Human rights violations also increased in frequency throughout the first half of 2019, while conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence remains prevalent.[67]

The mission's already limited capacity to monitor and provide early warning of human rights violations has decreased as it has reduced its presence, a dilemma inherent to peacekeeping transitions. UNAMID's reconfiguration led to the closure of twenty team sites between June 2017 and June 2019, most of them outside of the Jebel Marra region (see Figure 3).[68] Recognizing the potential impact the drawdown would have on the mission's early-warning capabilities and on the communities adjacent to the team sites, Resolution 2429 mandated the mission to assess the impact of its withdrawal on the area surrounding each closed site.

Assessing the impact of the closure of these sites has been difficult, however, as the Sudanese government has often restricted the mission from returning to them. Initial AU-UN reports indicated that the closure of team sites "has created a gap in early warning mechanisms, and access of human rights teams to those locations."[69] In March 2019, while UNAMID concluded that the withdrawal had not significantly altered civilians' freedom of movement or the security situation inside nearby IDP camps, it noted reports that the RSF had become more visible in these areas. It also noted the RSF's "alleged 'occupation' of a significant number of former UNAMID Team sites, used in some cases as recruitment or training centers," a dynamic exacerbated by the ensuing national political transition.[70] In addition, the report highlighted "the absence or an adequate presence of protective mechanisms and the inability of the Government of Sudan to ensure its protection function."[71]

UN officials indicated that protection challenges have arisen in part because while transition planning for programmatic activities has advanced, there has not been comparable progress on planning for security issues (including the protection of IDP sites). Moreover, the SLFs and OHCHR cannot on their own fill the gap in human rights monitoring left by UNAMID's departure. Multiple UN officials also observed that a decrease in reported human rights violations in recent years does not definitively reflect an improved situation, as decreased monitoring and reporting could limit the availability of data.[72]

To compensate for the mission's downsizing, UNAMID and the UNCT have attempted to monitor human rights through other avenues. At the political level, UNAMID's joint special representative and deputy joint special representative have navigated the narrow political space to engage senior Sudanese officials in Khartoum and Darfur on these issues. At the operational level,

65 Interviews with UN officials, July–August 2019.

66 Interviews with UN officials, July–August 2019; UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan Established Pursuant to Resolution 1591 (2005)*, UN Doc. S/2019/34, January 10, 2019, para. 44; Amnesty International, "Sudan: Fresh Evidence of Government-Sponsored Crimes in Darfur Shows Drawdown of Peacekeepers Premature and Reckless," June 11, 2019.

67 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary General: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, UN Doc. S/2019/280, March 29, 2019, paras. 84–90; *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Assessment of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/445, May 30, 2019, para. 22.

68 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Assessment of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/445, May 30, 2019, paras. 48–51.

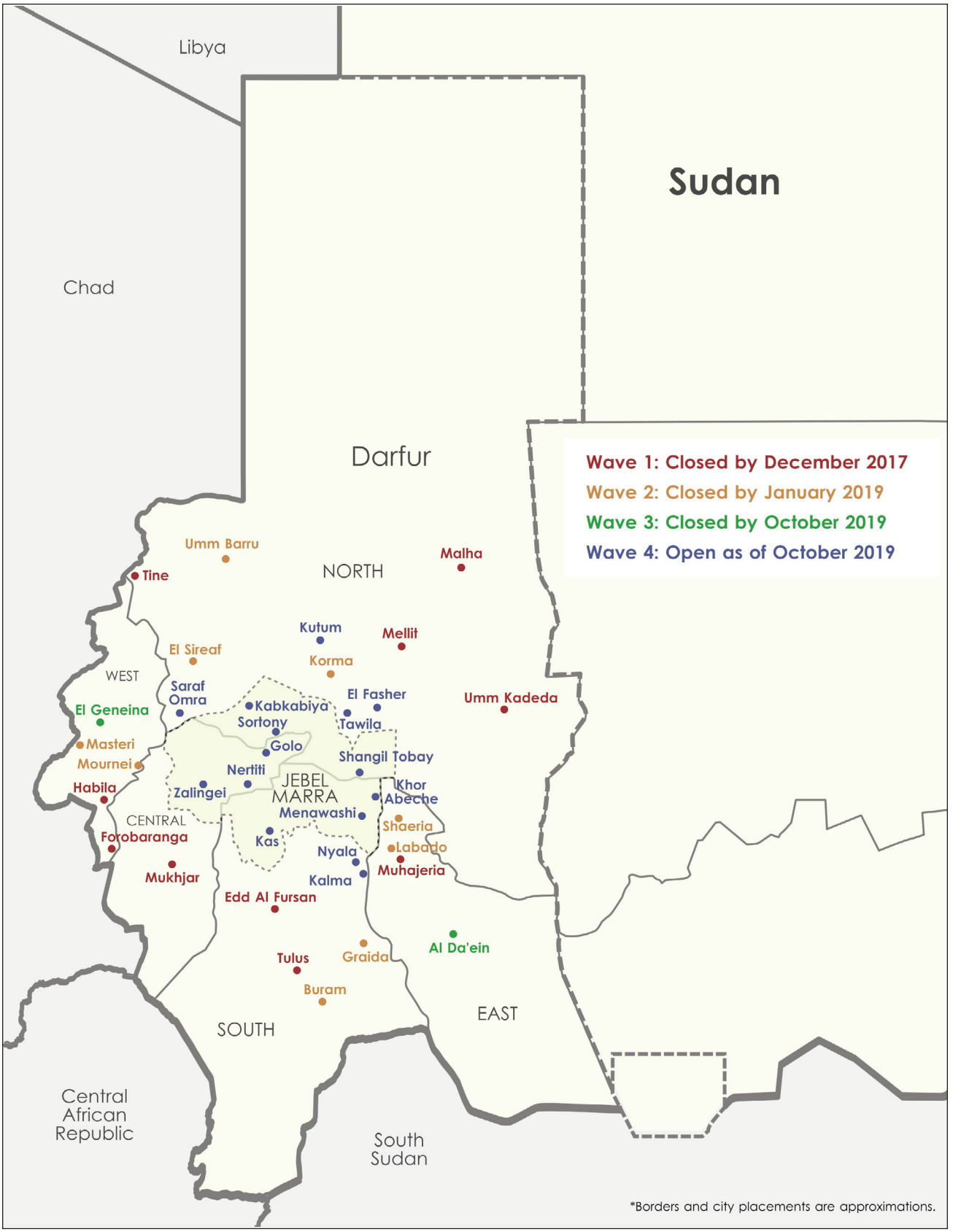
69 UN Security Council, *Assessment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of Phase One of the Reconfiguration of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2018/12, January 4, 2018, para. 52.

70 UNAMID, "Assessment of the Situation in the 10 Team Sites from Which UNAMID Withdrew since July 2018: Briefing for the Strategic Review," March 2019, para. 16 (internal document).

71 Ibid.

72 Interviews with UN officials, July–August 2019.

Figure 3. UNAMID team site closures (December 2017–October 2019)



UNAMID's military and police continued routine patrols in the Jebel Marra region, and its integrated protection teams have undertaken frequent monitoring visits to IDP sites.[73] The mission's human rights component has similarly continued carrying out situational analyses and monitoring. These efforts have complemented the SLFs' work on the rule of law and human rights, which is an entry point for the UNCT to engage on these issues. In particular, the mobile human rights monitoring team can help "[assess] human rights priorities and opportunities for engagement, and… strengthen human rights protection and promotion."[74]

The UN also explored creating a stand-alone office for OHCHR with a national mandate. The Human Rights Council used the prospect of ending the mandate of the UN independent expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan—a position that has frustrated the Sudanese government—to create a political opening for the establishment of such an office. The council's September 2018 decision on Sudan tied the end of the expert's mandate to the establishment of a fully functional OHCHR country office.[75] Three months later, OHCHR undertook a working visit to Khartoum to begin consultations with the government, though these were paused following the April 2019 political upheaval.[76] One month after the signing of the constitutional declaration in August 2019, OHCHR and the government of Sudan signed an agreement to open a UN Human Rights Office in Khartoum with field offices in Darfur, Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan, and Eastern Sudan.[77]

Confronted with these dynamics, member states have implicitly accepted that the transition will unfold even as civilians remain vulnerable. Progress on the overall protection and human rights environment in Darfur has plateaued, especially when evaluated against UNSC benchmarks.[78] While conditions seem to have become more conducive to protection since August 2019, the mission will continue to confront the dilemma of monitoring human rights and protecting civilians while reducing its presence.

MOBILIZING POLITICAL SUPPORT AMID A DEADLOCKED PEACE PROCESS

Given the inherently political dimensions of peacekeeping transitions, the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement has shaped the transition in Darfur; without tangible progress toward an agreement, it is unlikely that the long-term conditions for protection, peacebuilding, human rights, and development will materialize.

Political engagement on Darfur has proceeded along separate but interrelated tracks at the subnational, national, bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels.[79] The AU and UN's approach was to seek a comprehensive peace agreement and the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. Progress on this front had stalled since the government and Sudan Call alliance signed the AU High-Level Implementation Panel's (AUHIP) national roadmap for resolving the conflict in Darfur, as well as in Sudan's Blue Nile and South Kordofan states, in August 2016.[80] Months of preliminary talks between the Sudanese government and two Darfuri armed groups facilitated by the AU culminated in a pre-negotiation agreement in December 2018. However, this brief agreement dissolved within days of its adoption, as both groups withdrew in solidarity with Sudanese protesters. The AUHIP's concurrent consultations with the Sudan Call alliance on advancing the roadmap also broke down around that period.

Absent progress in the peace talks, the UNSC focused on benchmarks for the mission's drawdown and exit. Benchmarks help set expecta-

73 UNAMID, "JPG Guidelines for Monitoring of Protection Situation at Priority IDP Camps in 'the Rest of Darfur,'" (internal document).

74 UNAMID, "Concept Note: UNAMID Transitional Presence and Coordination with UNCT in Four Darfur States," para. 67.

75 UN General Assembly, *Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building to Improve Human Rights in the Sudan*, UN Doc. A/HRC/39/L.24/Rev.1, September 27, 2018, para. 19.

76 UN Security Council, *African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/44, January 14, 2019, para. 42.

77 OHCHR, "Bachelet Signs 'Milestone Agreement' to Open UN Human Rights Office in Sudan," September 25, 2019.

78 See the human rights benchmarks in: UN Security Council, *African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2018/912, October 12, 2018, Annex 1.

79 For more information, see: UN Security Council, Final *Report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan Established Pursuant to Resolution 1591 (2005)*, UN Doc. S/2019/34, January 10, 2019, paras. 7–21.

80 The Sudan Call alliance of opposition forces and movements includes the National Consensus Forces, the Sudan Revolutionary Front, the National Umma Party, and the Civil Society Initiative. *Roadmap Agreement*, Addis Ababa, March 21, 2016, available at http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/auhip-roadmap-signed-080816.pdf .

tions and measure progress so the council can better understand the transition environment.[81] While benchmarks have long featured in the council's discussions on UNAMID (see Annex), Resolution 2429 requested that existing benchmarks on progress toward the mission's strategic priorities be complemented by an additional set of benchmarks and indicators focused on the mission's exit strategy. The new benchmarks were meant to be centered on the government of Sudan, measurable, based on the implementation of the Doha agreement, and accompanied by clear time frames.[82]

However, subsequent negotiations over the UNSC presidential statement that acknowledged—but did not endorse—these benchmarks reflected their inherent limitations.[83] Multiple council members expressed dissatisfaction with the benchmarks and did not see them as valuable.[84] Debates emerged over whether the benchmarks should be prerequisites for the exit or indicators of where to focus, which benchmarks and indicators should be prioritized and according to what time frames, and whether the benchmarks would actually impact how member states viewed the transition's trajectory.[85] Continuous adjustments to the benchmarks also concerned the Sudanese government, which perceived the council to be shifting the goal posts. These political debates about the benchmarks themselves took the place of conversations about the lack of progress in achieving them and the implications for the transition.

In addition to focusing on benchmarks, the UN sought to mobilize financial and institutional support for the transition. A high-level event on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2018 aimed to build a common understanding of the transition among member states and urge them to increase their political and financial contributions to Sudan after UNAMID's departure.[86] In addition, a visit by three UN assistant secretaries-general to Darfur in February 2019 was intended to accelerate high-level UN engagement with national stakeholders.[87]

Transitioning through Crisis: UNAMID and Sudan's Governance Transition

UNAMID's transition took place during seismic shifts in Sudan's political landscape that tested the AU and UN's ability to adapt while undertaking a major reconfiguration. Public demonstrations that began in December 2018 over the high cost of living launched Sudan into a period of uncertainty that culminated in the signing of a constitutional declaration on August 17, 2019, and the beginning of a three-year transitional period under a power-sharing government.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS DURING SUDAN'S GOVERNANCE TRANSITION (APRIL–AUGUST 2019)

Sudan's popular revolution transformed the country's governance institutions and began reshaping its social contract. Protests over the removal of bread subsidies began on December 19, 2018, and quickly spread across the country as protesters mobilized around "freedom, peace, and justice." Following the imposition of a state of emergency and despite marginal political concessions, the protests culminated in senior military officers removing President Bashir from office on April 11th.

After taking power, the officers reconstituted themselves as a Transitional Military Council (TMC) and signaled their willingness to begin political negotiations with the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), an umbrella coalition of civil

81 See Forti and Connolly, "Pivoting from Crisis to Development," p. 3.

82 UN Security Council, *African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2018/912, October 12, 2018, para. 57 and Annex 1.

83 UN Security Council, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/19, December 11, 2018.

84 Security Council Report, "AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID): Presidential Statement," *What's In Blue*, December 10, 2018; Interviews with UN diplomats, July–August 2019.

85 Interviews with UN diplomats and officials, July–August 2019; Interview with independent expert, August 2019.

86 UN Secretary-General, "Note to Correspondents: Chair's Summary of High-Level Event on the Transition from Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding and Development in Darfur," September 28, 2018; "Deputy Secretary-General's Opening Remarks at General Assembly Side Event on the Transition from Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding and Development in Darfur," September 28, 2018.

87 The three officials were Bintou Keita, Mourad Wahba, and Oscar Fernandez-Taranco. UN Security Council, *Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan*, UN Doc. S/PV.8468, February 25, 2019.

society and opposition groups. The TMC represented a complex mosaic of security institutions with diverse political, security, and financial interests.[88] Most notably, its deputy was Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemeti), the head of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), formed in 2013 from remnants of the Janjaweed militias that had committed atrocities throughout Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan since 2003.[89] Hemeti's rise coincided with the RSF's rapid deployment throughout the country.[90] Limited progress in negotiations with the FFC and increasing tensions on the ground precipitated the RSF to violently disperse a Khartoum sit-in on June 3rd, leading to the massacre of at least 128 individuals and widespread sexual violence against protesters.

The June 3rd attack was a turning point in Sudan's political transition. The AUPSC suspended the Sudanese government from all AU-led proceedings three days later, and widespread international condemnation of the TMC shifted the momentum back toward political negotiations. A mediation process facilitated jointly by the AU and the Ethiopian government that began in April led to a preliminary power-sharing agreement on July 5th, followed by the signing of a constitutional declaration on August 17th (see Box 2).[91]

It is against this backdrop that the peacekeeping transition entered a delicate stage, especially considering that UNAMID's mandate (as set out in Resolution 2429) was scheduled to expire on June 30, 2019. This moment provided the AUPSC and UNSC opportunities both to constructively influence Sudan's political transition and to identify how it would impact the drawdown and reconfiguration.

UNAMID'S MANDATE RENEWALS AND THE DRAWDOWN'S TEMPORARY PAUSE

Negotiations over UNAMID's mandate renewal in June 2019 were an important moment both for the peacekeeping transition and for international engagement in Sudan. Based on the AU and UN's historical division of labor on Sudan, the AUPSC led on the national political transition while the UNSC led on the operational details of the transi-

Box 2. Sudan's constitutional declaration and transitional government

The August 2019 constitutional declaration established a transitional, power-sharing government for a thirty-nine-month period, culminating in nationwide elections.[92] The Sovereign Council is an eleven-member, collective head of state that includes five members nominated by the Transitional Military Council (TMC), five by the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), and one civilian jointly appointed by both. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, former chair of the TMC, is chairing the council for the first twenty-one months, and a civilian nominated by the FFC will chair it for the final eighteen months. The council is responsible for confirming appointments to other branches and commands the armed forces.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok serves as head of government and chairs a cabinet of twenty ministers, all civilians except for the two security portfolios. The Transitional Legislative Council will have a membership of less than 300, with 67 percent nominated by the FFC and the remainder nominated by other groups (excluding Bashir's National Congress Party and members of the TMC). At least 40 percent of the members must be women. The declaration also provides for the creation of several commissions to deal with priority reforms, a Supreme Judicial Council, and a structure for the armed forces that formalizes the RSF as a distinct branch.

88 For a good summary of these dynamics, see: Lauren Ploch Blanchard, "Sudan's Uncertain Transition," Congressional Research Service, June 28, 2019, pp. 4–6; and International Crisis Group, "Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution," October 21, 2019.

89 Alex de Waal, "General Mohamed Hamdan Dagolo 'Hemedti,'" World Peace Foundation, July 1, 2019; "Remote-control breakdown: Sudanese paramilitary forces and pro-government militias," Small Arms Survey HSBA Issue Brief No. 27, April 2017; Jérôme Tubiana, "The Man Who Terrorized Darfur Is Leading Sudan's Supposed Transition," *Foreign Policy*, May 14, 2019.

90 Hilary Matfess, "The Rapid Support Forces and the Escalation of Violence in Sudan," *ACLED*, July 2, 2019.

91 For more information about the roles of the AU and Ethiopia in the mediation process, see: Atta-Asamoah and Mahmood, "Sudan after Bashir," pp. 9–10.

92 Draft Constitutional Charter for the 2019 Transitional Period, August 4, 2019, available at http://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Sudan%20Constitutional%20Declaration%20%28English%29.pdf .

tion in the mandate renewal.[93] The AU Commission deployed an envoy to begin mediation almost immediately after the removal of President Bashir on April 11th. On April 15th, the AUPSC issued a communiqué that threatened to impose sanctions and urged the formation of a civilian-led government within fifteen days.[94] Two weeks later, the AUPSC reemphasized this commitment but extended the deadline by an additional sixty days, in part reflecting the outcomes of the consultative summit of Sudan's regional partners.[95]

Discussions on UNAMID's mandate renewal picked up shortly after the release of the joint AU-UN strategic review on May 30th. The report expressed concern over how Sudan's political dynamics might impact Darfur and UNAMID, but it largely suggested the transition continue as outlined in Resolution 2429.[96] The strategic review was published at a time of division among UNSC members on UNAMID's next mandate. Some countries wanted to take a cautious approach, using the mandate renewal as an opportunity to consider pausing the drawdown in light of national developments. These countries included Germany and the UK (co-penholders on Sudan), Poland (chair of the sanctions committee on Sudan), Belgium, and France. China, Indonesia, Kuwait, and Russia insisted that the drawdown and transition should continue according to the schedule outlined in Resolution 2429. The three African members of the UNSC (A3)—Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, and South Africa—and the United States did not stake out strong positions at the outset. These positions were informed by council members' differing perspectives on core political questions regarding UNAMID's transition.[97]

The June 3rd massacre and the AUPSC's suspension of Sudan marked a turning point in the negotiations.[98] The A3, alongside the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN, convened an emergency press stakeout on June 6th to urge UNSC members "to support AU and [Intergovernmental Authority on Development] efforts and refrain from any action that could undermine African-led initiatives."[99] Backed by the AUPSC, the A3 strongly advocated for protecting the primacy of African-led political dialogue and mediation.[100] While opinions within the UNSC began to evolve, some members remained reluctant to comment on Sudan's political situation, as evidenced by the protracted negotiations over a press statement denouncing the June 3rd massacre.[101]

The AUPSC's renewal of UNAMID's mandate in June 2019 provided another marker for the UNSC negotiations. The communiqué extended the mission's mandate for twelve months, endorsed the closure of eight inactive team sites, urged the relocation of troops to identified security hot spots, and requested a review of civilian staffing levels. It also articulated the implications of national security and political developments for Darfur.[102] However, UNSC members diverged in their interpretation of the communiqué's implications, forcing the A3 and AU Permanent Observer Mission to confer with the AUPSC; the A3 subsequently conveyed the AUPSC's desire for a temporary pause to the drawdown.[103] They also urged the UNSC to ensure the mandate renewal

93 Both Darfur/UNAMID and Sudan are on the agenda of the AUPSC. While the UNSC's formal agenda item is "Reports of Secretary-General on Sudan and South Sudan," debate within the UNSC has almost exclusively focused on Darfur.

94 AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCCXL (April 15, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm.(DCCCXL).

95 AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCCXLIV (June 6, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm.(DCCCXLIV); "Communiqué of the Consultative Summit of the Regional Partners of the Sudan," April 23, 2019 (internal document).

96 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Assessment of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/445, May 30, 2019, para. 40.

97 These included debates about the effectiveness of peacekeeping in Darfur, whether the situation constituted a threat to international peace and security, political linkages between developments in Khartoum and Darfur, interpretations of the mandate's language on the transition's deadlines, and deference to the host government. Interviews with UN diplomats, July–August 2019; UN Security Council, *Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan*, UN Doc. S/PV.8549, June 14, 2019.

98 AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCCXLIV (June 6, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm.(DCCCXLIV).

99 Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations, "Press Conference by the African Members (A3) of the United Nations Security Council (Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea & South Africa) on the Situation in Sudan at the UNSC Press Stakeout, UN Headquarters, New York," June 6, 2019.

100 Interviews with UN diplomats, July–August 2019.

101 UN Security Council, "Security Council Press Statement on Sudan," UN Doc. SC/13836, June 11, 2019.

102 AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCCXLVI (June 13, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm.(DCCCXLVI), paras. 1, 10.

103 See the South African statement in: UN Security Council, *Reports of the Secretary General on the Sudan and South Sudan*, UN Doc. S/PV.8566, June 27, 2019; Interviews with UN diplomats, July–August 2019.

did not jeopardize the mission's ability to protect civilians during this volatile period.[104]

Subsequent UNSC negotiations gravitated toward a temporary pause of UNAMID's drawdown. Some council members initially proposed a six-month pause, while others favored a one-month pause; as a compromise, they agreed to a four-month pause and to freeze the handover of thirteen team sites and the Nyala super camp.[105] Some were more willing to agree to this compromise following a briefing from senior UN officials who noted that a temporary pause would not have to prevent the mission from meeting its June and December 2020 exit deadlines.[106] Council members also endorsed the UN and AU's proposal to develop a joint political strategy and options for a follow-on configuration. UNSC Resolution 2479, adopted unanimously on June 27th, provided the AU with sufficient political space to continue mediating and enabled UNAMID to "see how the cards fell" before accelerating the transition.[107] By agreeing to pause the drawdown, the UNSC demonstrated flexibility and political coherence with the AUPSC. It also demonstrated that council members could use mandate discussions to politically support a transition without having to renegotiate the end date.

CHANGING SECURITY DYNAMICS IN DARFUR

While the initial protests did not fundamentally alter Darfur's security environment, Bashir's downfall had a direct impact. Political protests and public demonstrations in urban areas and IDP camps increased in both frequency and magnitude, culminating in mass marches across Darfur on April 25th.[108] As one UN official described, after Bashir's overthrow "you could feel the electricity in the environment."[109] The reverberations of these protests amplified existing conflict drivers and exposed shortcomings in the handover of UNAMID bases to the Sudanese government.

Intercommunal conflicts also intensified after the ouster of Bashir. Sudan's political transition coincided with the beginning of the summer farming season (late May–early June), a period that has historically seen heightened tensions between pastoral and farming communities. Even though these conflicts are common in Darfur, UN officials expressed concern over their increasing intensity. They cited Hemeti's ascension as a possible contributing factor, considering his origins in the nomadic Mahariya Rizeigat Arab tribe; they also observed increased RSF recruitment from Darfur's nomadic communities and increasingly hardline stances taken by herders.[110] The removal of civilian government employees and the redeployment of security forces (including the RSF) from Darfur to Khartoum also "created administrative and security gaps."[111] As a result, Darfuri civilians continued to suffer human rights violations. As summarized by Andrew Gilmour, UN assistant secretary-general for human rights,

> The human rights component of [UNAMID] documented the killing of 47 and the injury of 186 civilians in various regions of Darfur between 11 April to 12 June.… We believe that many cases in Darfur remain invisible and underreported due to lack of access to some parts of the region. In some areas of Jebel Marra, the sole representatives of Government present are the security forces, but they are reported to be the main perpetrators of violations against the civilian population—that is, the people they are there to protect.[112]

Some of the most prominent incidents included attacks on the Kalma IDP camp, intercommunal violence in Deleij, the looting of UNAMID's El Geneina super camp, and the looting of shared World Food Programme–World Vision premises in Graida. Because of these incidents, both the

104 Interviews with UN diplomats, July–August 2019.

105 Security Council, Report, "UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) Mandate Renewal," *What's in Blue*, June 26, 2019; Interviews with UN diplomats, July–August 2019.

106 Interviews with UN diplomats, July–August 2019.

107 Interviews with UN diplomats and officials, July–August 2019.

108 Hilary Matfess "The First Step on a Long Road: Public Demonstrations and Political Reform in Sudan," *ACLED*, May 2, 2019, Radio Dabanga, "Sudan Uprising: Mass Marches across Darfur," April 26, 2019.

109 Interview with UN official, August 2019.

110 Interviews with UN officials, August 2019.

111 UN Security Council, *Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan*, UN Doc. S/PV.8603, August 26, 2019.

112 Ibid.

AUPSC and UNSC's mandate renewals in June 2019 requested that the mission ensure it could protect itself.[113]

Additional security challenges resulted from the handover of UNAMID team sites to Sudanese authorities. These concerns originated as early as 2017, with the UN uncertain as to whether the government was adhering to its "commitment to use these facilities for non-military civilian purposes that benefit communities, as stated in the [memoranda of understanding] and hand-over documents signed by both parties."[114] Despite multiple allegations that RSF soldiers were occupying the bases shortly after they were handed over, the UN secretary-general's January 2019 report considered the handovers in the latter half of 2018 to have been in compliance with the UN's Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.[115]

Concerns over the handovers only received significant attention after the TMC decreed on May 13th that all UNAMID bases should be handed over to the RSF. Over the course of the following month, the AU-UN strategic review directly referenced these concerns, an article on the issue in *Foreign Policy* magazine received widespread attention, and the AUPSC rejected the decree in its mandate renewal.[116] The TMC quickly capitulated following this external pressure, issuing a follow-up decree toward the end of June annulling its earlier decision.[117] However, the mission could not independently verify the new decree's implementation as of the end of August, and the RSF's presence across Darfur remains a concern for the sustainability of UNAMID's transition.[118]

SIGNS OF LIFE FOR THE PEACE PROCESS

New political space for the peace process opened up almost immediately after the TMC assumed power. While the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)—a coalition of armed groups in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile—was nominally linked to the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) through its affiliation with the Sudan Call alliance, it took a cautious approach to engagement with the TMC. Nonetheless, the armed groups did engage directly with the TMC, most notably in a June 27th meeting between the TMC and two Darfuri armed groups facilitated by Chadian President Idriss Déby. The agreement emerging from this meeting committed all parties to upholding existing cease-fire agreements in Darfur and ensuring that a new transitional government would prioritize an inclusive, national peace process.[119] Although the SRF rejected the July 5th political agreement between the TMC and FFC, it continued negotiating with both groups bilaterally. Following consultations in Addis Ababa, the SRF and FFC agreed on an eleven-point document addressing the eventual transitional authority, the prioritization of a nationwide peace process, and the contents of the constitutional declaration.[120]

After the creation of the Sovereign Council, dialogue between the SRF and the transitional government led to the signing of the Juba Declaration on September 10th, a landmark meeting between Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and rebel leader Abdul Wahid in Paris on September 30th, the start of preliminary negotia-

113 UN Security Council Resolution 2479 (June 27, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2479; AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCCXLVI (June 13, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm.(DCCCXLVI), para. 10.

114 UN Peacekeeping, "UNAMID Completes Handover of Team Sites to the Government of Sudan," December 20, 2018.

115 UN Peacekeeping, "UNAMID Expresses Concern over Allegations of Improper Team Site Handovers," September 11, 2017; "UNAMID Denies 'Improper Handover" of Bases in North Darfur," *Sudan Tribune*, September 12, 2017; UN Security Council, *African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2019/44, January 14, 2019, para. 53.

116 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Assessment of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/445, May 30, 2019, para. 31, 51; Colum Lynch, "Document of The Week: Sudan's Paramilitaries Are Seizing Abandoned U.N. Outposts in Darfur," Foreign Policy, June 7, 2019; AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué (June 13, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm.(DCCCXLVI), para. 4.

117 UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 17 June 2019 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/2019/517, June 26, 2019.

118 Jean-Pierre LaCroix, in: UN Security Council, *Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan*, UN Doc. S/PV.8603, August 26, 2019.

119 "Sudan's TMC, Two Armed Groups Agree to Uphold Ceasefire in Darfur," *Sudan Tribune*, June 28, 2019.

120 "Sudan Opposition, Armed Movements Reach Agreement in Addis Ababa," Radio Dabanga, July 26, 2019.

tions on October 14th, and the signing of a pre-negotiation agreement between the government and the SRF on October 21st.[121] As part of the Juba Declaration, the Sudanese parties agreed to sign a final peace agreement by December 14, 2019, to sustain the transition's momentum and demonstrate their commitment to peace.

Taken together, these efforts are early signs of progress for the Darfur peace process. The shift from an internationally facilitated process toward one that is nationally owned and led represents the new government's stronger commitment to a comprehensive and inclusive agreement. This reflects broader changes in Sudan's political climate that open a window of opportunity for Sudan and, by extension, the AU, the UN, and UNAMID.

Priorities for the Transition's Final Stages

As Sudan embarks into a new transitional period with a sense of cautious optimism, so too does UNAMID enter the next stages of its own transition. Darfur's deep structural challenges—especially those related to protecting civilians, respecting human rights, and providing basic services—will persist well beyond the mission's exit. While early progress toward a national peace process is encouraging, history demonstrates that such progress can be fleeting and subject to rapid reversals. And even if the Sudanese government can provide security across the Jebel Marra region, Darfur is still situated in a volatile neighborhood where the unpredictable spillover of other conflicts could alter dynamics on the ground.

The ultimate goals of any peacekeeping transition are to prevent a relapse into violent conflict and to reconfigure international support to national actors as they reassume ownership over development and security. Until April 2019, the peacekeeping transition was making headway on preparing for the transition, even as there was little progress on resolving the core political questions of achieving peace in Darfur. The significant changes across Sudan now present a unique opportunity for the Sudanese people to pursue a comprehensive peace agreement. While the AU and UN can provide meaningful support to these efforts, they should not lose sight of the political, security, and operational dimensions of the peacekeeping transition. Achieving progress in these areas and, by extension, protecting the viability of UNAMID's peacekeeping transition require the UN and AU to focus on coherence, adaptability, and sustainability.

The AU and UN began considering the next steps for UNAMID's transition in October 2019. The AUPSC's October 24th communiqué encouraged the mission to "deploy all necessary efforts aimed at ensuring its smooth transition from a peacekeeping mission to a peacebuilding mission." It also requested that "the UNSC considers extending the UNAMID mandate, in line with the [June 13th communiqué]."[122] In its renewal of UNAMID's mandate one week later, the UNSC kept the drawdown on hold, extending the mission's mandate for twelve months and requesting it to continue implementing existing priorities; it also maintained uniformed personnel ceilings at the same level for six months and authorized the closure of only one team site. The UNSC requested a new special report on the transition by the end of January 2020 and affirmed that, by March 31, 2020, it would decide on a course of action for the mission's "responsible drawdown and exit" and "adopt a new resolution… establishing a follow-on presence to UNAMID."[123]

These efforts will require the UN and AU to handle many moving parts, each with political, security, peacebuilding, and financial implications. This section discusses five broad priorities for the final stages of UNAMID's transition: (1) strengthening political engagement between the UNSC and the AUPSC; (2) translating the joint political strategy into an effective follow-on presence; (3) reinforcing the transition concept; (4) integrating human rights and protection into all areas of work;

121 "Sudan Armed Movements: Juba Declaration Is a Major Step Forward," Radio Dabanga, September 13, 2019; "Soudan: Rencontre à Paris entre le Premier ministre Abdallah Hamdok et l'un des chefs rebelles du Darfour," *Jeune Afrique*, September 30, 2019; "SRF rebels, Sudan Govt Sign Agreement in Juba," Radio Dabanga, October 21, 2019.

122 AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué (October 24, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm.(DCCCLXXXIX), para. 10.

123 UN Security Council Resolution 2495 (October 30, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2495.

and (5) sustaining international attention and financial support. While this paper does not aim to provide definitive answers to all of the issues raised below, it offers sign posts for monitoring the AU's and the UN's reconfiguration in Darfur and Sudan.

STRENGTHENING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNCILS

The UNSC and AUPSC's political engagement in Sudan is imperative for the success both of the peacekeeping transition and of Sudan's governance transition. This engagement should be underpinned by the joint AU-UN political strategy for Sudan (see Box 3). To sustain their political engagement, the councils need to have internal political unity and ensure that their approaches are coherent.[124] Such coherence was evident as the two councils responded to Sudan's political uprising in June 2019, but it should not be taken for granted. With its mandate to consider both Darfur-centric and national issues, the AUPSC is primed to continue leading support to Sudan's governance transition. The UNSC should continue to complement and reinforce the AUPSC's political engagement while leading on the peacekeeping transition.

To ensure coherence between the UNSC and AUPSC, the A3 should make Sudan a priority in their role as a bridge between the two councils.[125] This could entail more frequently consulting with the AUPSC on Sudan and continuing to issue joint statements that reflect the AUPSC's positions during formal and informal deliberations in the UNSC. In addition, the A3, the UNSC co-penholders on Sudan, and Sudanese officials should more regularly discuss both UNAMID's transition and political developments throughout the country.

Member states on the two councils should also request more briefings and informal consultations on Sudan. While these usually occur in advance of the renewal of the mission's mandate, the governance transition, national peace process, and peacekeeping transition all underscore the urgency of more consistent engagement. The two councils should be prepared to leverage their diplomatic capacity in national capitals, New York, and Addis Ababa to engage the broader UN and AU memberships on developments in Sudan. These efforts would help the councils navigate sensitive political debates by building common understandings and identifying divergent interests in advance of important policy decisions. While the working

Box 3. The joint AU-UN political strategy for Sudan[126]

The joint AU-UN political strategy for Sudan, which is rooted in the priorities of the Sudanese government, positions the organizations to provide wide-ranging support throughout the national peace process and transition period. Ensuring that any follow-on presence can effectively implement this strategy through a flexible, integrated, and inclusive approach will be critical to the peacekeeping transition's long-term sustainability.

The joint strategy envisions the AU and UN providing political support in four areas during Sudan's thirty-nine-month transition period: (a) an inclusive peace process with armed groups in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile; (b) peacebuilding processes within local communities; (c) regional and cross-border initiatives; and (d) the constitutional and electoral processes. A focus on gender equality, empowerment of women and youth, and human rights cuts across all areas of engagement.[127] This inclusive approach is integral to the strategy, as communities across Darfur have felt excluded by previous political processes, and the opening of political space has raised their expectations to be included.[128]

124 Forti and Singh, "Toward a More Effective UN-AU Partnership on Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management," pp. 3–6.

125 Ibid., pp. 6–9.

126 UN Security Council, Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, UN Doc. S/2019/816, October 17, 2019, paras. 38-44.

127 Ibid., paras. 40-42.

128 Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, "Sudan: Darfur (2009–2017)," Case Study Series on Women in Peace and Transition Processes, September 2018; Darfur Women Action Group, "Strategic Framework for Sustainable Change in the Republic of Sudan," September 2019.

modalities of joint council missions have yet to be finalized, a joint UNSC-AUPSC mission to Sudan would be a prime opportunity for delivering a unified message.[129]

The councils should also take seriously the challenge of fostering political coherence among all AU and UN entities working on Sudan. While UNAMID remains an anchor for Darfur-centric engagement, the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), AU special envoy for Sudan, AU Liaison Office in Sudan, UN secretary-general's special adviser for Sudan, and UN special envoy for the Horn of Africa all operate in a similar political space. Although each entity has a different mandate, they should avoid unintended overlap, duplication, and competition. Moreover, even if the two councils view these entities as separate, Sudanese stakeholders may perceive them to be the same. It is therefore imperative that the two councils align the political goals of these entities.

TRANSLATING THE JOINT POLITICAL STRATEGY INTO AN EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-ON PRESENCE

While the AU and UN's October 2019 special report details a joint political strategy, it is less prescriptive on proposals for a post-UNAMID configuration. As the Sudanese government requested additional time to articulate its own position, a joint task force is expected to prepare recommendations by December 2019.[130] The AU, UN, and Sudanese government agreed on six principles to guide the design of any follow-on configuration:

(a) National ownership and support to this presence is a pre-requisite to its success;

(b) In line with the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations, the mandate should be "clear, focused, sequenced, prioritized and achievable";

(c) The nature of issues to be addressed and the security conditions do not require the presence of a military force component;

(d) The assistance could be accommodated within Chapter VI or VIII of the United Nations Charter;

(e) The deployment timeline should not exceed the transition period; and

(f) The mechanism should have a light presence and geographical footprint.[131]

Beyond these principles, a follow-on presence should not be based exclusively on political compromises or on efforts to retrofit a predetermined configuration onto the joint strategy; it should reflect council members' assessments of what is needed to successfully implement the joint political strategy on the ground. Any follow-on presence should also be driven by its political strategy, with all other work reinforcing this political focus.

The councils should delineate the tasks they mandate to a follow-on presence for the full thirty-nine-month timeline for Sudan's transitional government instead of focusing only on the one-year mandate cycle. Such a long-term approach could better equip any follow-on configuration with the substantive expertise needed to implement the political strategy (e.g., on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration) and enable it to adjust its capacity and priorities over time. The follow-on presence should also consider providing advisory support to national actors rather than directly implementing programs.

There are various factors to consider in determining whether a follow-on presence should be a UNSC-mandated mission (under either Chapter VI or Chapter VII of the UN Charter), or an expanded UNCT. Conditions on the ground would suggest that a UNSC-mandated special political mission would best help the UN and AU navigate the next stage of the peacekeeping transition. A Chapter VI mission would provide Darfur with more direct attention from the UNSC, thereby strengthening the political leverage of leaders on the ground to engage their national counterparts.[132]

129 The AUPSC has already committed to undertaking a mission to Sudan in early 2020. AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCCLXXXIX (October 24, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm.(DCCCLXXXIX), para. 11. Security Council Report, "Dispatches from the Field: UN Security Council Visiting Mission to the AU," *What's In Blue*, October 22, 2019.

130 The Joint Task Force is a sub-committee of the UN-AU-government of Sudan Tripartite Coordination Mechanism.

131 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/816, October 17, 2019, para. 46.

132 Even when the UNSC ends a mandated operational presence in a country, the item technically remains on the council's agenda for two years. Nonetheless, there is a distinction between items that are regularly scheduled for discussion and those that are inactive agenda items.

The predictable funding that would accompany such a mission would also better position the AU and UN to fulfill the political tasks outlined in the joint strategy. Such a mission could take multiple forms, ranging from a mission mandated to support ongoing peace processes (like the UN Support Mission in Libya) to a peacebuilding-centric mission built around the state liaison functions (like the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau). If there is only a UNCT presence—which would more explicitly signal that engagement is development-oriented—the UN resident coordinator would require far more resources and institutional support than currently available in order for the UNCT to play a political role.

While a new Chapter VII mission may not be politically feasible, it is nonetheless important for the UNSC and AUPSC to debate the tradeoffs of such an arrangement and whether it would be suitable for current security dynamics in Darfur. Recognizing the volatility of Darfur's security landscape and the structural drivers of conflict that will persist indefinitely, some form of light and mobile quick-reaction force may offer a last line of defense if the security situation rapidly deteriorates. A similar tool was employed during the peacekeeping transitions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, and those experiences may offer guidance.[133] However, such a configuration would require political consensus on the councils and consent from the Sudanese government. It would also require agreement on operational details, including where the force would be located, its size and composition, its area of operation, and its rules of engagement. While a reserve capacity of one battalion is expected to remain throughout UNAMID's drawdown for deployment in extremis, it may be worthwhile for the UNSC, AUPSC, and Sudanese government to discuss this option.

A UNSC-mandated police-centric mission, similar to the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti, could also play a valuable role following UNAMID's departure. The fact that UNAMID's number of authorized uniformed police has remained unchanged over the past three years is an implicit acknowledgement by the UNSC and AUPSC of their role in maintaining security in Darfur (see Figure 2). Such a follow-on mission could also advise Sudanese police and bolster the justice and rule of law activities already underway through the SLFs. Nonetheless, this option would similarly require an extraordinary political agreement with the Sudanese government under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Any follow-on configuration should involve a defined but flexible division of labor between the AU and the UN. Recent progress on the UN-AU partnership suggests that the two organizations could collaborate effectively either through a hybrid political configuration or through separate mandates working closely alongside one another. The AU's engagement on the political negotiations provide it with a comparative advantage at the national level, while the UN's existing infrastructure in Darfur would position it as the leading partner in the region. Irrespective of formal modalities, the partners should also align their efforts at the senior political level (through close contact between special envoys) and at the technical level (through aligned programming on peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and development, rule of law, and security sector reform). Regardless of the type of follow-on configuration, the two organizations could engage in joint conflict analysis, planning, programming, and messaging. The UN and AU could draw on the experiences of Guinea-Bissau, where the AU, UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, and Economic Community of West African States Mission in Guinea-Bissau closely aligned their work, and of Liberia, where the UN and AU have worked toward shared political goals in a non-mission setting.[134]

The UNSC and AUPSC's discussions on any follow-on configuration should be framed by national dynamics so that the reconfigured presence is aligned with the needs of Sudanese throughout the country. Given the new government's openness to international engagement, the AU and UN could be asked to provide support to other regions of Sudan. A post-UNAMID presence

133 UN Department of Peace Operations, "Regional Quick Reaction Force (RQRF): Lessons Identified Study," December 2016.

134 Forti and Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying," pp. 22, 33–34.

could feasibly cover some combination of Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Khartoum. Engagement beyond Darfur would likely depend on the outcomes of the ongoing national peace process as well as the scope of Sudanese authorities' requests for support. Decisions about the area of responsibility will need to balance the follow-on presence's objectives with available resources and geographic priorities to ensure that attention is not turned away from Darfur altogether.

Regardless of the final decision about the follow-on presence, the UN and AU should be mindful of the burdens associated with significant and rapid reconfigurations of missions. The transition from a multidimensional peacekeeping mission to a smaller mission in Haiti highlighted the substantive, organizational, and operational challenges of closing a mission and opening another one simultaneously.[135] While transitioning away from a multidimensional peacekeeping mission is an opportunity to improve international support and signal a "fresh start," UNAMID personnel would benefit from a reconfiguration that builds on existing goals and processes by adjusting structures where necessary but not designing the follow-on presence as a new mission altogether.

REINFORCING THE TRANSITION CONCEPT

Strengthened planning processes and accelerated peacebuilding efforts are necessary for consolidating gains achieved in Darfur over recent months and for ensuring the peacekeeping transition provides a sustainable anchor for long-term international engagement.

The Sudanese government should articulate a joint transition compact with the UN and AU. The compact should be considered a political commitment instead of a technical exercise and should affirm the government's vision for how the organizations can collectively support national priorities.[136] It should cohere with existing policy frameworks, particularly the constitutional declaration and joint AU-UN political strategy.[137] A joint transition compact would be valuable for demonstrating national ownership throughout this process and clarifying how it will unfold. It would also lay out substantive priorities that the UNCT could use to anchor a capacity-mapping study. This exercise would realistically assess each UN agency's operational footprint, capabilities, and limitations to meet these priorities both in Darfur and across the country.[138]

In strengthening national ownership over the mission's transition and reconfiguration, the UN and AU should focus on building the capacity of subnational government officials to engage in the process. The anticipated redeployment of civilian personnel to government ministries in Darfur may provide an opportunity for the UN to engage these officials on transition-related issues and ensure their work is complementary.[139]

Peacebuilding is at the heart of UNAMID's transition concept, and the state liaison functions (SLFs) are valuable conduits for this work. While the SLFs were only planned to continue through June 2020, the UN now needs to assess their long-term future. Security conditions and the national peace process will dictate whether full-fledged SLFs can be established in Central Darfur state. There are also questions about whether the SLFs could be expanded beyond Darfur; while this approach may be politically appealing, early challenges to their operationalization suggest that the UN and AU should take a gradual and cautious approach grounded in the findings of the capacity mapping. Decisions about the follow-on presence will also impact possible financing options for the SLFs. Even though special political missions are funded through the UN's regular budget, there are currently no provisions for this framework to cover programmatic activities. Financing the SLFs in a non-peacekeeping setting would therefore require extra-budgetary contributions.

135 Di Razza, "Mission in Transition," pp. 28–34.

136 UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 24 October 2019 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, October 25, 2019, UN Doc. S/2019/842, Annex 1, para. 146.

137 This transition plan could also incorporate the outcomes of any peace agreement, the Darfur Development Strategy, the SLFs' priorities, the UN development assistance framework for 2018–2021, or the humanitarian response plan for 2019

138 Forti and Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying," pp. 8–10.

139 The UN's Joint Project on Transitions is expected to focus on strengthening direct support to national governments in transition settings. See remarks by Rania Dagash at the International Peace Institute: "Preparing for the Next Wave of UN Peace Operations Transitions," New York, September 18, 2019.

The UN Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) potential role in the transition is still an open question. The previous Sudanese government requested inclusion on the PBC's formal agenda, and the AUPSC supported the government's request in its June 2018 renewal of UNAMID's mandate; however, the issue has not featured prominently in recent months.[140] The new Sudanese government could benefit from evaluating how best to engage the PBC and its members. While a country-specific configuration for Sudan would be the most high-profile and structured form of collaboration, it is far from the only way the PBC could support the transition. For example, Darfur and Sudan could be an agenda item during the annual meetings of the AUPSC and PBC. The PBC could also provide a multi-stakeholder forum for the government, NGOs, and UN to discuss government priorities, community needs, and how they align with the UN's transition plans, as it did in Liberia.[141]

Finally, Darfur presents an opportunity for the AU to accelerate its post-conflict reconstruction and development initiatives in Sudan. More robust AU efforts in this area could complement those of UNAMID and the UN by prioritizing support to the mission's quick-impact projects, ensuring that peacebuilding work focuses on the local dimensions of post-conflict recovery, and convening dialogue among bilateral and multilateral partners to ensure policy coherence.[142] Greater peacebuilding engagement in Darfur should also be a priority for the planned AU Center for Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development in Cairo, especially considering the strong working relations between Sudan and Egypt. Improved cooperation on peacebuilding in Darfur would also give the UN and AU an opportunity to operationalize their 2017 memorandum of understanding, which prioritizes "conflict prevention, political dialogue, national reconciliation, democratic governance and human rights," all of which are valuable in Darfur.[143]

INTEGRATING HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROTECTION INTO ALL AREAS OF WORK

Protecting civilians and promoting human rights will continue to be a challenge throughout the transition. UNAMID's consolidation has already reduced the number of human rights and civil affairs officers in Darfur, limiting community engagement and the flow of early-warning information and analysis. Removing peacekeepers altogether will eliminate the UN and AU's strongest tool for preventing and countering threats to civilians. Even with the creation of an OHCHR satellite office in Darfur, any follow-on presence will likely fall short of UNAMID's capacity and resources in these areas. To counter this challenge, human rights and protection issues should feature prominently in all areas of the UN and AU's work moving forward.

The UN and AU should integrate protection and human rights into all their political engagement at the national and subnational levels. Approaching these issues exclusively from a security or operational perspective minimizes opportunities to address structural drivers. Consistent dialogue on protection issues with both civilian and military leaders could help anchor the UN and AU's political strategy in day-to-day work, in line with the UN's policies on the protection of civilians.[144] Building on the diverse relationships forged through the SLFs, the UN and AU could hold regular fora with government officials, police, military and intelligence officers, civil society organizations, and community representatives. Such fora could help build relationships between these constituencies, foster a shared understanding of threats to civilians in each community, and ultimately help shift the responsibility for protection from the UN mission back to Sudanese authorities. They could also link to existing

140 AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCLXXVIII (June 11, 2018), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCLXXVIII), para. 12.

141 UN Peacebuilding Commission, "Transition of UN Missions: What Role for the PBC?" December 2014; Forti and Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying," pp. 10–11, 20–21.

142 For an example of what this looks like in practice, see: Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding, and Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development, "Operationalizing the African Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy in the Sahel Region: Charting the Way Forward," October 2018.

143 United Nations, "Joint Communique on United Nations–African Union Memorandum of Understanding on Peacebuilding," September 18, 2017.

144 See tier I (dialogue and engagement), in: UN Department of Peace Operations, *Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping*, UN Doc. Ref 2019.17, November 1, 2019, pp. 10–12.

community-based protection committees and help Darfuri communities establish their own local early-warning networks and response mechanisms.

The UN should also ensure that protection and human rights issues are addressed through a whole-of-system approach and not just delegated to the follow-on configuration and the new OHCHR office. A UN-wide approach to protection could help guide a long-term shift from "protecting through presence" to "creating an enabling environment for protection."[145] UN agencies operating in Darfur should continue integrating these issues across their analysis and programming.[146] These efforts would also complement ongoing programs to strengthen the capacity of state-level authorities to adhere to international human rights and humanitarian law.

Ongoing efforts to strengthen rule of law institutions—especially the criminal justice system and rural courts—should remain priorities.[147] OHCHR's new satellite office in Darfur will undertake complementary work in this area and should be positioned to coordinate system-wide support and expertise. The UN Department of Peace Operations and UNDP's Global Focal Point for Rule of Law could also explore opportunities for expanding the deployment of mobile monitoring teams outside of Darfur's state capitals.

Given the UN's decreased presence throughout Darfur, it should evolve and diversify existing approaches to early warning. UNDP could establish a crisis-risk dashboard for Sudan, whether or not there is a follow-on mission.[148] The AU's Continental Early Warning System and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) could be expanded into Darfur, as they are well known and established platforms that can work with both state and non-state institutions.[149] CEWARN's focus on cross-border and pastoralist conflict would be especially valuable for Darfur. Stronger engagement between these institutions, the Sudanese government, the UN, and Darfuri communities could make them more effective without unduly placing the burden on one institution.

Accelerated strategic planning for the security transition between UNAMID's military and police components and their Sudanese counterparts should be another focus. Multiple UN officials lamented the comparatively limited progress on planning prior to August 2019; the installation of the new transitional government provides an opportunity for reengaging. This planning is critical for ensuring long-term protection in Darfur's IDP camps and settlements, and future updates to the two councils should prominently feature assessments of progress in these areas. Frequent evaluations of closed team sites by UNAMID and the Sudanese government could assess the drawdown's impact on civilians and ensure these sites are being repurposed exclusively for civilian use.[150] Concurrently, scaling up community policing initiatives and increasing the number of police officers collocated in the SLFs could provide tangible, immediate security gains.[151]

SUSTAINING FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION

Financial cliffs and waning international attention routinely accompany peacekeeping transitions; UNAMID's transition will likely be no different.[152] Despite years' worth of international investment in

145 See tier III (establishment of a protective environment), in ibid., pp. 16-17

146 Alice Debarre and Namie Di Razza, "Pursuing Coordination and Integration for the Protection of Civilians," International Peace Institute, February 2019, pp. 10–11.

147 UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/816, October 17, 2018, para. 28

148 UNDP's crisis-risk dashboards aggregate open-source data and reporting from UNDP colleagues to track conflict indicators, monitor patterns, and produce visualizations. UNDP Tanzania's crisis risk dashboard is a prominent example. See: UNDP Tanzania, "Early Warning and Response System: The UNDP Tanzania Crisis Risk Dashboard," March 2018.

149 Institute for Security Studies, "The Horn of Africa Should Improve Citizen Engagement," May 15, 2019; Ejeviome Eloho Otobo, "Regional Economic Communities and Conflict Prevention in Africa: An Overview of Capacity Gaps and Priority Needs," UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2018, pp. 17–19.

150 This could be done in line with the concept outlined in: UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2019/816, October 17, 2019, paras. 23–24.

151 Marina Caparini, Festus Kofi Aubyn, Olivia Victoria Davies, Meressa K. Dessu, and Mateja Peter, "The Role of the Police in UNAMID," Institute for Security Studies, April 2015.

152 Forti and Connolly, "Pivoting from Crisis to Development."

Darfur, UNAMID's exit may cause some member states to turn their attention to other urgent crises around the world. Senior UN and AU officials have sounded such alarms since 2017, pleading for member states to continue engaging beyond UNAMID's closure.[153] While some member states have committed to avoiding such a cliff, the transition will now enter its final stages in a broader environment of donor fatigue and competing economic priorities for Sudan.[154] A lack of funding could limit the UN's operational capabilities and inhibit the extent to which any reconfigured presence can undertake the full range of programming.

The transitional government's immediate priorities are to alleviate Sudan's macroeconomic crisis and convince the US to remove Sudan's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. Although this designation does not inhibit all forms of development cooperation with Sudan, it is currently perceived as a significant symbolic roadblock. Furthermore, until the US government lifts this designation and the Sudanese government repays arrears to international financial institutions (estimated at approximately $2.6 billion), the World Bank and International Monetary Fund will not be able to provide concessional loans.[155] While there is growing political support for removing the designation, the necessary political and bureaucratic steps will take months, if not longer.[156]

While there are no straightforward ways to immediately prevent a financial cliff following the peacekeeping transition, continuously drawing attention to it is an important first step. Beyond this, addressing the challenge in both the short and long term will depend on the follow-on configuration. A UNSC-mandated special political mission would provide more predictable funding in the immediate future. If there is no follow-on mission, member states should follow the UN secretary-general's proposal for voluntary contributions equivalent to 15 percent of a closing mission's budget to support programming for two years.[157]

For the UN, creating a single donor framework to cover all the financial needs for transition-related support could help ensure coherence among parallel funding streams. International donors often become overwhelmed by separate funding requests for similar work; ensuring cohesion between frameworks such as the UN development assistance framework, Peacebuilding Fund, and Darfur Development Strategy and presenting funding needs through a single vehicle would help combat donor fatigue and facilitate donor coordination. These efforts could go hand in hand with an international donor conference for Sudan bringing together major bilateral donors, members of the Paris Club of creditors, the World Bank, the EU, the African Development Bank, and other regional development banks.[158] While such conferences are not panaceas, this forum would allow the Sudanese government to communicate its financial and development priorities and better understand the funding priorities of partners.

Efforts to promote greater coherence in donor support should also be accompanied by more dedicated engagement with existing multilateral channels. The Peacebuilding Fund can provide a lifeline of support, especially as it is increasing its focus on UN mission transitions; the UN secretary-general declared Sudan eligible for additional funding from the fund in October 2019.[159] The UN Darfur Fund, the multi-partner trust fund used for financing projects under the Darfur Development Strategy, could complement support from the Peacebuilding Fund. While some member states

153 See: UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Strategic Review of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2018/530, June 1, 2018, paras. 57–59; and UN Security Council Resolution 2429 (July 31, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2429.

154 UN Secretary-General, "Note to Correspondents: Chair's Summary of High-Level Event on the Transition from Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding and Development in Darfur," September 28, 2018; UN Security Council, *Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan*, UN Doc. S/PV.8513, April 17, 2019.

155 "Sudan: Finance Minister Announces Formation of Committee for Restoring Looted Money From Abroad," Sudan News Agency, September 24, 2019.

156 US Department of State, "Friends of Sudan Supports the Planned Reforms of Sudan's Economy," October 22, 2019.

157 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, para. 49 (C).

158 These could include delegations that attended the July 2019 meeting of the Friends of Sudan contact group: the AU, Egypt, Ethiopia, EU, France, Germany, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, UK, UN, and US. EU External Action, "EU Chairs Informal Coordination Meeting on Sudan," July 22, 2019; International Crisis Group, "Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution."

159 UN Peacebuilding, "Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund: Strategic Plan 2017–2019," p. 3.

prefer making bilateral contributions rather than contributing to multi-partner trust funds, the UN Darfur Fund is an established mechanism familiar with the region's needs and operating environment.

In preparing for this financial cliff, the UN should also be frank in its assessments of how much financial support it will receive. The UN should prepare and evaluate different scenarios, including those where funding levels fall below even modest expectations. These worst-case situations would require the mission and UNCT to identify programming priorities, assessing which areas could be scaled back and which could be funded in part through other means.

Sustaining international political support for Darfur throughout UNAMID's transition may be easier than navigating the financial cliff but is no less important. The popular uprising and the transitional government's efforts to normalize Sudan's diplomatic relations are fostering goodwill with many countries; some of this goodwill could be channeled to Darfur. In her speech to the September 2018 high-level meeting on the transition, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed called for the creation of a Group of Friends on the Transition in Darfur.[160] Such an informal grouping of member states, like a possible Darfur-specific configuration in the Peacebuilding Commission, could regularly bring together a range of Sudanese stakeholders to discuss the transition. It could also coordinate with the Friends of Sudan contact group, which has met regularly since April 2019.

Conclusion

UNAMID's peacekeeping transition is one of the most complex mission reconfigurations ever undertaken by the UN. Over the past three years, UNAMID has worked with the UNCT to prepare for its eventual drawdown and exit while continuing operations in a challenging environment. Limited progress on central political issues and persistent threats to civilians suggested that prior to April 2019, UNAMID's departure would have left behind a region vulnerable to relapse into conflict.

However, Sudan's momentous but fragile political transition and the new government's commitment to a comprehensive, nationwide political solution offer the AU, the UN, and their partners a new opportunity to help Sudan begin its journey toward sustainable peace. But with international attention rightly gravitating toward the country's new political moment, a decade of engagement in Darfur should not be left to fall by the wayside, and UNAMID's transition should not get lost in the shuffle. The UN's ability to adapt this peacekeeping transition to these monumental changes is a test of its capabilities.

UNAMID's drawdown and reconfiguration are the first of many complex peacekeeping transitions the international community will need to manage over the coming years. UNAMID's exit strategy, drawdown, and reconfiguration offer lessons for other transitions in challenging environments characterized by fleeting political settlements and persistent conflict drivers. With sustained support from the Sudanese people and the international community, UNAMID's experiences may offer models for future peacekeeping transitions.

160 UN Secretary-General, "Deputy Secretary-General's Opening Remarks at General Assembly Side Event on the Transition from Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding and Development in Darfur," September 28, 2018.

Annex: UNSC Benchmarks for UNAMID

S/2009/592 November 16, 2009	Benchmarks: (1) A comprehensive political solution through the Darfur Peace Agreement; (2) a secure and stable environment with reduced violence and a cease-fire; (3) enhanced rule of law, governance, and human rights; and (4) a stabilized humanitarian situation. Following the UNSC's request (Resolution 1881), the secretary-general created benchmarks based on the four priority areas discussed in the UNAMID workplan. While some relate to the broader situation in Darfur beyond the activities carried out by UNAMID, the implementation of the mandate and achievement of these benchmarks are closely related.
S/2012/771 October 16, 2012	Benchmarks: (1) A comprehensive and inclusive settlement through implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur with AU and UN support; (2) a stable and secure environment with implementation of cease-fires; (3) enhanced rule of law, governance, and human rights; and (4) a stabilized humanitarian situation with a focus on economic recovery. The UNSC requested updated benchmarks (Resolution 2063) to reflect developments in the Darfur peace process and changed political, security, and humanitarian dynamics. UNAMID's protection of civilians is a crosscutting goal reflected across all four benchmarks.
S/2014/279 April 15, 2014	Benchmarks: (1) A comprehensive and inclusive political settlement supported by broader dialogue with a focus on gender inclusion; (2) protection of civilians through direct action and the creation of a protective environment while ensuring full access for humanitarian personnel; and (3) prevention and mitigation of intercommunal conflict through mediation and measures to address its root causes. In response to an increase in localized conflict and a shift toward streamlining UNAMID's operations, the secretary-general refined existing benchmarks.
S/2018/530* June 1, 2018	Indicators: (1) Implementation of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs for armed groups and communal militias; (2) enhanced rule of law and creation of a transitional justice and reconciliation court and a special court; (3) durable solutions for resettlement with economic and legal components; (4) the immediate delivery of services to IDPs; and (5) the protection of human rights. * These indicators represent the provisions of the Doha Document that were used to measure achievements throughout the proposed two-year time frame for the withdrawal of UNAMID, in line with the letter from the secretary-general to the president of the Security Council (S/2017/747). They were used to assess the drawdown in light of the two-phase reconfiguration of the mission (Resolution 2363).
S/2018/912 October 12, 2018	Benchmarks: (1) The protection of civilians and monitoring of human rights through durable solutions with full access for humanitarian actors; (2) support for mediating intercommunal conflicts through measures to address the root causes; and (3) mediation between the government of Sudan and non-signatory armed movements on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. Following the UNSC's decision to begin drawing down the mission (Resolution 2363), the secretary-general rearranged the benchmarks to reflect the requirements for a sustainable exit strategy.

The **INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE** (IPI) is an independent, international not-for-profit think tank dedicated to managing risk and building resilience to promote peace, security, and sustainable development. To achieve its purpose, IPI employs a mix of policy research, strategic analysis, publishing, and convening. With staff from around the world and a broad range of academic fields, IPI has offices facing United Nations headquarters in New York and offices in Vienna and Manama.

www.ipinst.org **www.theglobalobservatory.org**

IPI
INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE

777 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017-3521
USA
TEL +1-212-687-4300
FAX +1-212-983-8246

Freyung 3
1010 Vienna
Austria
TEL +43-1-533-8881
FAX +43-1-533-881-11

51-52 Harbour House
Bahrain Financial Harbour
P.O. Box 1467
Manama, Bahrain
TEL +973-1721-1344