

**Civil Society Recommendations to the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) on the
Situation in Sudan
11 December 2023**

Brief context of the current situation in Sudan

Almost 8 months since the conflict in Sudan broke out, Sudanese civilians continue to face a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, mass atrocities, and a looming risk of genocide with no end in sight. Children, women and girls, are bearing the heaviest brunt of the war. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Sudan has the world's largest displacement rate; with more than 7 million people displaced inside and outside Sudan. According to UN OCHA, more than 12.190 people have been reported killed since the fighting broke out.

The conflict and political dynamics have been shifting rapidly. The main two belligerent factions have continued escalating attacks in different strategic regions in Sudan to gain more territory and supremacy: including in Darfur, Kordofan and Khartoum. The conflict is becoming protracted and expanding to the borders of South Sudan. It is an overall situation of chaos and terrorizing civilians. Sudan is no longer solely an internal conflict as it has clear regional ramifications and therefore is a matter of regional stability and international peace and security. Various reports suggest that external powers are fueling the conflict in Sudan through supporting the belligerents, including allegations of supply of weapons.

A myriad of regional and international initiatives to address the conflict in Sudan have emerged, but the impact has been limited and inadequate given the scale of the crisis and the magnitude of its impact on civilians, and other regional countries. The interventions have been characterized by some degree of lack of transparency and coordination, continued exclusion of women and youth, and very slow in securing a meaningful and sustainable ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreement.

The cycle of impunity in Sudan needs to end and accountability is an important aspect of the peacebuilding efforts. This requires documentation and investigation of human rights violations by all belligerents. The current context of the conflict in Sudan calls for a more robust intervention by the AU, IGAD, regional actors and the international community. The outcomes of the 41st extraordinary Assembly of the IGAD Heads of States on the situation in Sudan held on 9th December 2023, are laudable. However, implementation, with support from the AU and other regional actors is most critical. It is, therefore, imperative for the AU to take leadership and urgently ensure an effective and coordinated framework for peacebuilding efforts in Sudan. In light of the above, **a group of Sudanese and regional civil society recommends** the following to the AU Peace and Security Council for consideration at its next meeting on Sudan:

Recommendations:

1. The AU should ***urgently implement a robust and coordinated plan to respond to the extremely dire humanitarian needs*** of Sudanese people in collaboration with neighboring states and international actors with an emphasis on an urgent call for increased humanitarian funding and commitments from the warring parties to allow access in order to meet the rising needs of those affected.
2. The AU must consider all the tools at its disposal, including provisions within its Constitutive Act and the Protocol on the Establishment of the PSC, to ***protect civilians*** against continued mass atrocities including acts prohibited under Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act, as a priority before the political process can move forward. In particular, there is scope under Article 4(h) for the AU to authorize and deploy a ***peacekeeping mission*** to Sudan, with a clear mandate and adequate resourcing to deliver on civilian protection. The mission should have a political and human rights component to ensure robust documentation of human rights violations and reporting to the AU PSC. The mission's human rights mechanism should work in cooperation with the UN Human Rights fact-finding mission. The current profile of Sudan's war with already dire regional implications makes it an international peace and security matter and therefore calls for the full (financial and diplomatic) support of the UN in resolving it.

3. The AU, in coordination with other members of the expanded mechanism and particularly the UN, must consider imposing **targeted individual sanctions** on key belligerents and impose **an arms embargo beyond Darfur** to the whole of Sudan to curtail the flow of weapons into the country and towards ensuring future accountability for the supply of weapons which is contributing to fueling the war. Individual sanctions need to be issued and applied in a cohesive and consistent manner by all stakeholders. The question of accountability needs to be addressed as a priority issue within the existing peacebuilding efforts.
4. The AU, must reaffirm its commitment to and expedite implementation of the PSC decision taken during the 1156th meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government held on 27 May 2023, to establish a **Roadmap for the Resolution of the Conflict in Sudan** which provides a holistic framework towards an end to the fighting through a cessation of hostilities agreement, unhindered humanitarian access, an inclusive and Sudanese owned political dialogue and process which puts Sudan on the path to a democratic, civilian-led government.
5. The proposed establishment of a **High-Level Ad hoc Panel on Sudan** is welcome and much needed. The panel should comprise of influential and respected African leaders with the stature, influence, gravitas, and expert understanding of the historical and current situation in Sudan and the region, and who have the capacity to put their full attention and effort in resolving the conflict in Sudan; the AU could consider appointing former presidents Thabo Mbeki, Muhammadu Buhari, and Catherine Samba-Panza, and working closely with the UNSG personal envoy on the Sudan crisis, Ramtane Lamamra. This panel should be well resourced and coordinated with the IGAD mechanism, and diplomatic assets with existing mandate and jurisdiction including Mohamed Ibn Chambas (AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns), Janet Sallah-Njie (Commissioner ACHPR and Sudan focal point), Bineta Diop (AU special envoy for Women, Peace and Security), Mohamed Belaiche (AU Commission chairperson special representative for Sudan).
6. In ensuring a **single, inclusive and coordinated peace process for Sudan**, and to address the proliferation of initiatives which has encouraged forum shopping by the warring parties, the AU must establish an **integrated AU - IGAD mechanism**, which also brings together representatives of the expanded mechanism and Jeddah process, and which meets on a regular basis, at least once a month, to closely monitor progress and implementation of the peace process. Civil society should also be called upon to brief the mechanism on their experience of progress on the ground and priorities for progress and impact. The PSC should also make clear the relationship and respective roles of the mechanisms and the high-level panel.
7. The AU PSC should work closely with Sudan's neighbors, African states, other regional powers beyond Africa, and the international community to constructively use their influence to support peacebuilding efforts in Sudan, and to profoundly urge them to **remain neutral with regards to any military and or financial support to the belligerents in Sudan**. It is imperative for the AU to ensure that the conflict in Sudan does not become a full-blown proxy war that would contribute to the balkanization of the country.
8. The AU should take leadership, maximize and maintain the current momentum to address the conflict in Sudan, **and should ensure that the single and coordinated peace process, under the auspices of the AU and IGAD**, and with the support of the other members of the international community; is guided by the **principles of transparency, impartiality, and inclusivity** on the part of all stakeholders.
9. The AU must ensure **inclusion and meaningful participation of women and youth** from all parts of Sudan, at the onset and throughout the peacebuilding efforts and political process.

Signatories:

- *African Center for Justice and Peace Studies*
- *Atrocities Watch Africa*
- *Fikra for Studies and Development*
- *International Refugee Rights Initiative*
- *Pan African Lawyers Union*
- *The Strategic Initiative for the Horn of Africa*