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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 25 of Security Council resolution 2179 (2014), in which the Council requested that I continue to inform it of progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), and to bring to its attention any serious violation of the Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, of 20 June 2011 ([S/2011/384](#), annex). It provides an update on the situation in Abyei as well as on the deployment and operations of UNISFA since my previous report, of 1 December 2014 ([S/2014/862](#)). It also presents the progress made in the implementation of the additional tasks mandated to UNISFA under Security Council resolution 2024 (2011) related to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and provides recommendations on the adjustment and extension of the UNISFA mandate.

II. Security situation

2. During the period under review, the Government of the Sudan continued to maintain from 120 to 150 oil police personnel inside the Diffra oil complex (northern Abyei), in violation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and multiple Security Council resolutions. In addition, despite the mission's efforts to prevent incursions of armed groups into the area, several incidents occurred during the reporting period, causing civilian injuries and fatalities and increasing significantly the level of tension between communities.

3. As previously reported, the southwards migration of Misseriya nomads through the Abyei Area started peacefully in mid-October 2014, following a pattern consistent with preparatory consultations between UNISFA and the Misseriya community leaders. During those meetings, while stressing the need for UNISFA to guarantee the respect of their traditional migration corridors, the Misseriya nomads agreed on the necessity of a gradual movement, related to the progressive reduction of available water and pasture in northern Abyei during the dry season. However, in November and December, UNISFA observed an unjustified acceleration of the pace of the southwards migration, mainly through the central corridor, despite the availability of considerable water and pasture in other areas of northern Abyei. On 26 November, UNISFA met Misseriya leaders to discuss the pace of migration, and



urged them to use and exhaust all available grazing resources of the eastern and central corridors before moving south, and to avoid using the central corridor where the majority of internally displaced Ngok Dinka are resettled.

4. As at 26 January 2015, approximately 35,000 Misseriya nomads had entered the territory, concentrated mainly in the northern areas of Diffra, Mekines, Farouk, Dumboloya and Goli. With regard to Ngok Dinka previously displaced within Abyei, there was no significant increase in the number returning to their place of origin. Their total number remained at approximately 81,000.

5. During the reporting period, UNISFA continued to implement its multifaceted conflict prevention and mitigation strategy, which aims at preventing inter-communal clashes during the migration season. This strategy consists of the establishment of a disengagement area between the two communities supported by constant monitoring and early warning assessments of their respective location and movements; the deployment of troops in potential flashpoint areas; robust day and night deterrence patrols; aerial monitoring; and frequent engagement with local communities and the authorities in the Sudan and South Sudan to address differences and remind them of their responsibilities. Three new company operating bases were deployed in Noong and DOUNGOP in the central sector and in Marial Achak in the southern sector. In December, following reports of sporadic incursions of an unknown militia group in the vicinity of Um Khariet, in the northern sector, UNISFA maintained a standing patrol in the area until the deployment of a company operating base in the first weeks of January. On 14 January, the mission completed the deployment of a company in Alal in the northern sector.

6. During the period under review, the relationship between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities remained tense. On 7 and 9 December, a group of armed men attacked the Ngok Dinka villages of Leu and Mijak in central Abyei, killing a total of seven civilians and injuring two others. An unconfirmed number of cattle were stolen in the attack. UNISFA was able to recover 72 of them in the vicinity of DOUNGOP in central Abyei. According to the investigation undertaken by UNISFA, the perpetrators of these two incidents belong to a Misseriya group from northern Abyei. On 26 January, UNISFA confirmed a report of a shooting incident allegedly by Misseriya militia in Mantenten village, 15 km south-west of Abyei, in which five Ngok Dinka were killed, three were wounded and one child was missing. The armed assailants also stole 25 sheep during the incident. These incidents caused considerable anxiety and anger among the Ngok Dinka community. In order to restore its confidence in the security environment, UNISFA intensified its patrolling in the areas and held meetings of the joint security committees to discuss the best modalities to maintain peace and security within the sectors.

7. On 6 January, the United Nations Mine Action Service reported to UNISFA that one of its teams, consisting of eight contractors in two vehicles, was missing while clearing the road between Dahlop and El-Shamam in northern Abyei. On the evening of the same day, two members of the missing team arrived in Noong and reported that they had been attacked by an unknown Misseriya group. Five other members of the team, who had taken refuge in a nearby forested area during the attack, were located unharmed by a UNISFA patrol on the same day. The Casper mine-protected vehicle used for the route clearance operations was damaged by gunshots during the incident and an ambulance vehicle and communications and survey equipment were stolen by the armed group. On 9 January, the last missing

member of the team was released near El Muglad, South Kordofan, Sudan, and returned home to Kadugli town.

8. On 25 January, a Mine Action Service contractor vehicle was carjacked at gunpoint while returning to Diffra after a mission to Goli in northern Abyei. No casualties were reported during the attack. The perpetrators are believed to be from the same Misseriya group involved in the attack of 6 January, operating in an organized manner and well informed on the activities and movements of the Service. Following the attack, UNISFA intensified patrolling, reconnaissance and search activities in the area. The Force instructed all personnel, partner agencies and contractors to request mandatory security clearance and force protection before any movement to northern Abyei.

9. In the absence of law and order institutions in the Abyei Area, the mission has supported the establishment of community protection committees with Ngok Dinka communities and has proposed establishing them in Misseriya communities. In addition, UNISFA police advisers organized workshops in Abyei town and Diffra, during which issues related to gender equality and protection of civilians were discussed. More than 250 participants, including women, attended the workshops.

III. Political developments

10. On 4 December, consistent with the announcement made during the Khartoum summit of 4 November, President Salva Kiir issued a decree appointing Deng Mading as the new Co-Chair for South Sudan of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. Mr. Mading was deputy Co-Chair to the previous incumbent, Edward Lino, and has been acting Co-Chair since Mr. Lino withdrew from the position after expressing dissent with President Kiir following the outbreak of violence in South Sudan in December 2013. In the same decree, President Kiir appointed Nyakuch Ngor Chol, the current mayor of Abyei town in the informal Ngok Dinka administration, as the new deputy Co-Chair. No meeting of the Committee has, however, been held since 3 May 2013 and the African Union Commission is consulting with the parties for the holding of the next one.

11. Following the visit, from 31 December to 2 January 2015, of the Sudanese co-Chair of the Joint Oversight Committee, Hassan Ali Nimir al-Julla, to northern Abyei, the Paramount Chief of the Ngok Dinka community accused him through the media on 4 January of preparing the massive settlement of Misseriya and other Sudanese Arab tribes in northern Abyei ahead of the elections to be held in the Sudan in April, with the support of oil police deployed in Diffra. In response, Mr. Nimir indicated that the purpose of the visit, which was his first to Abyei since his appointment in September 2014, was a courtesy call on members of the Misseriya community and to assess the humanitarian situation in northern Abyei.

12. On 8 January, Sudanese media reported that the Deputy Chairman of the ruling National Congress Party and presidential assistant, Ibrahim Ghandour, had reiterated that the April legislative and presidential elections would be held in Abyei. The announcement was immediately criticized in the South Sudanese media by Justice Deng Biong, focal point for the Abyei negotiations in the Office of the President of South Sudan. Justice Biong alleged that more than 5,000 cards bearing Sudanese national numbers had already been distributed to Abyei communities and accused the Government of the Sudan of backing a resettlement project of Misseriya

tribesmen in Abyei, in violation of agreements signed between the Juba and Khartoum Governments.

13. From 11 to 15 January 2015, the new Force Commander of UNISFA, Major General Birhanu Jula Gelalcha, travelled to Khartoum and Juba for courtesy visits with officials of the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan. During his meetings, he encouraged both sides to resume dialogue and work constructively towards resuming the implementation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 in the Abyei Area, including by immediately reconvening the meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and exploring traditional mechanisms for the settlement of the dispute over the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief, Kuol Deng Kuol, on 4 May 2013.

14. The Sudanese Co-Chair of the Committee reaffirmed the Sudan's commitment to cooperating with UNISFA and implementing the Agreement of 20 June 2011, including the establishment of the joint temporary institutions. However, he voiced his Government's concern regarding what he described as unilateral measures taken by the Ngok Dinka community and the Government of South Sudan over the administration of Abyei. He stated his readiness to attend any new meeting of the Committee and stressed that the settlement of the issue of the killing of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief should not be a precondition for the holding of those meetings. He also stated that his Government was, in principle, ready to consider traditional mechanisms to settle the issue, within the framework of inter-communal dialogue between the respective leaders of the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities.

15. With regard to the UNISFA conflict prevention and mitigation strategy, he expressed his Government's concern that the disengagement areas established by UNISFA to prevent security incidents between the two communities could affect the ability of the Misseriya nomads to migrate through Abyei, and gain access to sufficient water and grazing land for their livestock.

16. Government of the Sudan interlocutors also reiterated their Government's view that Sudanese oil police units should remain inside the oil complex in Diffra until the formation of the Abyei Police Service provided for in the Agreement of 20 June 2011. In their view, the police units do not constitute a security threat as their role is to protect the oil complex.

17. In Juba, Government of South Sudan officials reiterated on their part that given the Ngok Dinka community's hostility towards the Joint Oversight Committee, it could meet only at a neutral venue outside Abyei. They added that the Committee's only purpose should be to coordinate efforts of the two countries with respect to the management of the area, but not to administer it.

18. They stressed their support of the Ngok Dinka community's opposition to the establishment of joint interim institutions provided under the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and called on UNISFA and the international community to recognize and cooperate with the informal Ngok Dinka administration present in Abyei. They reiterated that the Ngok Dinka community of Abyei would continue to seek national and international recognition of its unilateral community referendum of October 2013; that inter-communal dialogue could not proceed without the satisfaction of a number of preconditions, including the resolution of the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief through traditional compensation mechanisms and

acknowledgement by the Misseriya community of its responsibility for the assassination; and the immediate withdrawal of the Diffra oil police. The Government of the Sudan and the Misseriya community would also have to recognize that the Abyei Area belonged to the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms.

IV. Humanitarian and recovery situation

19. Humanitarian actors continued to provide assistance to approximately 81,000 people in the Abyei Area, in particular in the sectors of food security and livelihoods, health, nutrition, education, protection, shelter and non-food items, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene. Key activities in the food and livelihoods sector included livestock vaccination, food distribution, vocational training for women and youth and agricultural training for farmers. There were disruptions to food distributions during the reporting period due to difficult road conditions and crime-related insecurity in the Ngok Dinka areas.

20. In the health sector, partners provided basic medicines and HIV/AIDS treatment services, in addition to supporting primary health care and mobile clinics. Support for education continued with rehabilitation of school buildings and the provision of basic school supplies. Partners also provided nutritional treatment to children and promoted good nutritional practices. Levels of safe water supply to internally displaced persons, host communities, returnees and nomads (in northern Abyei areas) remained satisfactory, while the rehabilitation of additional water points continued, alongside the promotion of safe sanitation practices. During the reporting period, partners rehabilitated hand pumps sufficient to ensure safe drinking water for at least 4,250 people in several locations in southern Abyei as well as in Alal in northern Abyei. A water sampling and water source mapping exercise is also ongoing, with 105 water points mapped so far.

21. With improved road conditions, protection actors have enhanced their monitoring missions to most return areas and internally displaced person sites, including Magar and Mijak Deng Kaya south of the Abyei Area. No new major protection concerns have been reported, and assessments and verification of needs for vulnerable families and individuals continued in southern Abyei.

22. In northern Abyei, an inter-agency humanitarian and recovery needs assessment was carried out from 20 to 24 December, with the participation of United Nations agencies and a Sudanese national non-governmental organization. The Government of the Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission and a Sudanese representative of the Joint Oversight Committee also took part. The assessment team covered seven representative locations with sector-specific and mainstreamed recovery-related questionnaires. It is anticipated that a final assessment report, covering eight humanitarian sectors and subsectors, will be available early in February 2015.

V. Status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

23. None of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism aerial patrols scheduled during the reporting period took place, due to various factors,

including the temporary unavailability of aircraft, the denial of security clearances by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, and the tense security situation in the vicinity of Kadugli. No meeting of the Joint Political Security Mechanism was called to address the remaining disputes on the location of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, despite the readiness expressed by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and President Salva Kiir when they met on 4 November in Khartoum to support the holding of such a meeting.

24. The security situation at the headquarters of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Kadugli deteriorated in mid-December, following an escalation of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-North). From 10 to 12 December, the Mechanism headquarters reported shelling and artillery fire between the armed forces and SPLM-North in the vicinity of Kadugli town.

25. The Joint Border Mechanism headquarters as well as the sector headquarters in Kadugli and Gok Machar are now fully operational and ready to accommodate two additional force protection companies, scheduled to be deployed from 7 to 19 February. The pre-deployment verification of the two additional force protection units was concluded on 24 January in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa in Ethiopia. During the reporting period, the United Nations Mine Action Service provided training for 20 personnel of the Joint Border Mechanism on United Nations safe and secure approaches in field environments, including to military observers and national monitors from the Sudan and South Sudan.

VI. Personnel deployment and mission support

26. As at 26 January, the UNISFA military component stood at 4,036 (96 military observers, 95 staff officers and 3,845 troops) of the authorized strength of 5,326 (see annex I). The mission has completed its 2014/2015 dry season deployment plan (see annex II). Besides the locations included in the previous year's plan, the mission established six additional temporary operating bases to increase its coverage of the area of operations.

27. As at 26 January, the strength of the UNISFA police component stood at 26 police officers from seven different police-contributing countries out of the authorized strength of 50. Two officers are expected to arrive in the mission area by the end of January. UNISFA police plan to expand operations in line with their strategic deployment plan by deploying officers in Diffra and Bantun team sites and to strengthen its capacity and readiness at Agok and Abyei.

28. During the reporting period, UNISFA continued to repair the supply routes inside the Abyei Area. All access routes to the six dry season deployment sites (Noong, DOUNGOP, Alal, Marial Achak, Um Khariet and Agany Tok) have been repaired and deployment of troops to the sites is ongoing. A borehole contractor has completed the drilling of two additional boreholes at the Force headquarters. The drilling of the third one is in progress.

29. In support of UNISFA troop redeployment in the dry season, the Mine Action Service completed the clearance of five operating bases in DOUNGOP, Agany Tok, Noong, Alal and Um Khariet, covering a total area of 201,300 m². In addition, Mine Action Service teams conducted non-technical surveys in Abyei, gathering

information about existing explosive hazards and resulting in the removal of 12 explosive remnants of war from communities. The Route Verification and Clearance Team continued its operations, verifying 43.3 km and clearing 8 km of UNISFA priority routes of explosive hazards.

VII. Follow-up to the strategic review of UNISFA

30. Regarding the follow-up to the recommendations of the strategic review of the UNISFA mandate (see [S/2014/862](#)), the recruitment of new substantive civilian personnel is under way to strengthen the military and police components' community liaison activities in promoting inter-communal dialogue and coordination with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. In support of the small arms control recommendation of the follow-up mission on the strategic review (*ibid.*), UNISFA directed sector commanders to adopt a robust posture in disarming individuals and in confiscating their weapons for destruction, consistent with the decision of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee of 3 May 2013 to make Abyei a "weapons-free zone". Measures are also being coordinated with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to strengthen recovery and resilience programming in Abyei and to develop a collective framework around a shared set of early recovery objectives.

VIII. Financial aspects

31. The General Assembly, by its resolution 68/258 B of 30 June 2014, appropriated the amount of \$318.9 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNISFA beyond 28 February 2015, the cost of maintaining the Force would be limited to the amount approved by the General Assembly for the 2014/15 financial period.

32. As at 20 January 2015, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNISFA amounted to \$28.1 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to \$2,849.8 million.

33. Reimbursement to the contributing Government for troop-owned and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the periods up to 30 October 2014 and 30 September 2014, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

IX. Observations

34. The Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan have paid minimum attention to their responsibilities regarding the management of the Abyei Area during the reporting period. However, for Abyei not to become more contentious, divisive and destabilizing in the coming months, the two countries must resume dialogue and cooperation to bring about a political environment conducive to the prevention of violence, inter-communal dialogue, and ultimately to the resolution of the Abyei dispute.

35. The lack of political dialogue, aggravated by dangerous security incidents, has increased inter-communal tensions and forced UNISFA to restore a disengagement area between the two communities. It has also led to unilateral initiatives by both parties, creating additional tensions. While the Government of South Sudan is seeking support and recognition for a Ngok Dinka administration over Ngok Dinka communities, the Government of the Sudan is proceeding with the preparations for the organization of its national elections in Abyei. This is clearly unsustainable.

36. Stabilization of the Abyei Area requires the Sudan and South Sudan to ensure the full and permanent withdrawal of all unauthorized forces from the area, the reactivation of the Joint Military Observer Committee and Joint Military Observer Teams, the reconvening of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and the resumption of inter-communal dialogue to address key issues, including the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief, and a security environment conducive to peaceful migrations.

37. To address the deteriorating security environment in the Abyei Area, UNISFA plans to invite once again both Governments to a high-level security meeting in the coming weeks. I urge the Government of the Sudan to participate in that meeting and agree to undertake, with UNISFA, a joint assessment of the security requirements for the Diffra oil complex. On that basis, proposals could be developed to enable the withdrawal of its oil police units from the Diffra oil installations, while ensuring the security of the oil installations, in accordance with the Agreement of 20 June 2011.

38. I also urge the Government of South Sudan to support the resumption of and participate in meetings of the Joint Oversight Committee without preconditions. Finally, I urge the African Union Commission to make public the outcome of its investigation into the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief, so as to enable the two communities to find closure on this issue.

39. In my report of 1 December 2014, I recommended that UNISFA adopt a more standardized and systematic approach to confiscating weapons from armed groups or individuals, so as to decrease the prevalence of small arms in the Abyei Area. Such an approach would be consistent with the decision of 3 May 2013 of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee to make Abyei a “weapons-free zone”. This recommendation would not have an impact on the mission’s resource requirements. It would also complement the efforts of UNISFA Police to incorporate small arms control mechanisms into the community protection committees. To address rising levels of criminality, I also recommended that the mission support community-oriented crime prevention and crime management mechanisms within the context of its protection of civilians mandate.

40. As it considers the renewal of the mandate of UNISFA, and consistent with the abovementioned recommendations, I request that the Security Council consider the specific authorization of UNISFA to enforce a systematic disarmament policy in the Abyei Area and establish strict controls over the armament of all civilians, residing or migrating through Abyei, with the support of both communities. I also request the Council to consider adjusting the mandate of the UNISFA police component, and explicitly authorize the mission, within its current capabilities and existing resources, to strengthen the capacities of community protection committees throughout the Abyei Area, in order to assist with the management of law and order processes, consistent with international human rights standards and practices.

41. I have appointed Mr. Haile Tilahun Gebremariam, a former State Minister for Defence in the Government of Ethiopia, as my new Head of Mission for UNISFA. Mr. Gebremariam will be deployed in February. In view of the lack of progress of the parties in addressing the ongoing disputes affecting the Abyei Area, and the imminent arrival of my new Head of Mission, I recommend that the Security Council consider another limited four-month extension of the UNISFA mandate, to give the opportunity to my new Head of Mission to assess the situation on the ground, engage with the parties, the Government of Ethiopia and the African Union, and provide to me any further recommendations on the future of the mission.

42. Finally, in view of the total paralysis in resolving the parties' dispute on the location of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, and the lack of progress in the implementation of the border security agreements between the Sudan and South Sudan, of September 2012, I also intend to conduct a detailed assessment of the ability of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism to operate in the current environment, and present, in my next report, recommendations to the Council with respect to UNISFA support to that Mechanism. The United Nations cannot continue to invest in and build the infrastructure of a mechanism which is effectively not being supported by the parties themselves.

43. In conclusion, I wish to extend my gratitude to Major General Halefom Moges, who recently stepped down as acting Head of Mission and Force Commander. I thank him for his service to the United Nations and to the people of Abyei, and wish him the best in his future endeavours. I also would like to express my gratitude to his successor, Major General Birhanu Jula Gelalcha, and his staff for their continued efforts to enhance peace and stability in the Abyei Area, often under very difficult conditions. Lastly, I also commend my Special Envoy, Haile Menkerios, as well as the Government of Ethiopia, and thank them for their active engagement in support of the stabilization of Abyei.

Annex I

**Composition of the military component of the United Nations
Interim Security Force for Abyei, including the Joint Border
Verification and Monitoring Mechanism**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Personnel</i>	<i>Total</i>
Benin	Experts on mission	2	3
	Contingent troop	1	
Brazil	Experts on mission	2	4
	Contingent troop	2	
Burkina Faso	Experts on mission	1	1
Burundi	Experts on mission	1	1
Cambodia	Experts on mission	3	3
El Salvador	Experts on mission	1	1
	Contingent troop	2	3
Ethiopia	Experts on mission	58	3 974
	Contingent troop	3 916	
Ghana	Contingent troop	1	1
Guinea	Experts on mission	1	1
Guatemala	Experts on mission	2	3
	Contingent troop	1	
Indonesia	Experts on mission	2	3
	Contingent troop	1	
India	Experts on mission	2	4
	Contingent troop	2	
Kyrgyzstan	Experts on mission	1	1
Mali	Contingent troop	1	1
Malaysia	Experts on mission	1	1
Mongolia	Experts on mission	2	2
Malawi	Contingent troop	1	1
	Experts on mission	3	4
Namibia	Contingent troop	1	3
	Experts on Mission	1	
Nepal	Contingent troop	2	2
	Contingent troop	2	
Nigeria	Contingent troop	1	1
Peru	Contingent troop	1	1
Russian Federation	Experts on mission	1	1
Rwanda	Experts on mission	1	3
	Contingent troop	2	
Ukraine	Experts on mission	4	6

<i>Country</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Personnel</i>	<i>Total</i>
	Contingent troop	2	
United Republic of Tanzania	Experts on mission	1	1
Yemen	Experts on mission	3	5
	Contingent troop	2	
Zambia	Experts on mission	1	2
	Contingent troop	1	
Total		4 036	4 036

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