



Strasbourg
16/04/2019 - 18:32
HR/VP speeches

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Check against delivery!

Thank you Mr President.

The people of Sudan are asking for change. For four months now, they have demonstrated not only against the dramatic increase in the price of essential goods, but mainly and also for freedom, peace and justice.

The image of a Sudanese student – a girl standing in her white dress on the roof of a car, speaking to the crowd – has already become a symbol. She is now called “the Sudanese statue of liberty”. We, Europeans, want to support this aspiration to liberty. The Europeans want the people of Sudan to succeed. We want their call for liberty to be heard, and to translate into real change for a country that has already suffered too much.

Last week, the Sudanese military took over power and put [Omar] al-Bashir [former President of Sudan] under house arrest. As you all know, [Omar] al-Bashir has been indicted by the International Criminal Court, and we have repeatedly asked to execute the arrest warrant.

The military leaders initially announced a 2-year transition, to be led by a Transitional Military Council composed of different strands of the security forces. This announcement was quickly rejected by both

the protesters and the opposition parties. They asked for concrete guarantees of a much quicker civilian transition.

We have supported this request, indicating that the Military Council would not provide the right answers to the people's demands, and requesting a swift handover to a civilian transitional government.

Over the last few days, the military establishment has tried to bridge the gap with a certain show of goodwill: the Head of the Transitional Military Council was changed, the Head of National Intelligence and Security Service resigned, and some political detainees were freed. These steps have signaled that there may be the space for a negotiation.

It is clear that, without a true transition, the crisis in Sudan is likely to continue. To prevent such scenario, there has to be a swift handover to a civilian transitional government, with real decision-making authority. This would open the way for a peaceful, credible and inclusive political process – to finally address the Sudanese people's demand for political and economic reforms.

Our first priority must be to prevent further violence. We welcome the lifting of the curfew, established on the day of the coup, and we call on all parties to refrain from the use of force and any form of provocation. We also expect further confidence-building measures to be taken by the Transitional Military Council, such as the liberation of all remaining political detainees and the reform of the security sector. Security forces must be held accountable for the deaths and the abuses that have occurred in recent weeks and months.

These measures would help create the right environment for meaningful political negotiations, so that all parties – including the Transitional Military Council, the Sudanese Professionals Association and other political actors – can cooperate in good faith. It is also important that the opposition remains united at this critical moment.

Let me conclude by referring to the fact that in [our statement](#) and in our positions last week, we referred to the position taken by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki. Today I can only subscribe to the position taken yesterday by the African Union's Peace and Security Council.

The African Union has demanded the immediate handover of power to a civilian-led transitional authority, which should happen in the next 15 days. This transitional authority, once installed, should ensure an inclusive and consultative process, to agree on the exact modalities of the transition, towards free, fair and transparent elections.

Just like our African brothers and sisters, we want the transition to be managed by civilians. So we fully support the African Union's demand and position on this issue, as on many others. As long as this is not the case, as long as the transition is not managed by civilians, the European Union will not recognise the legitimacy of the Transitional Military Council.

But, as soon as a civilian transition takes place, the European Union will be ready to accompany it, both politically and also economically.

Thank you.

Link to the video:

Closing remarks

Thank you very much Mr President.

I would like to thank all colleagues for their very clear support to the position we have taken and the work that we are doing. I would maybe answer to a specific question that was raised on what kind of strategy, what kind of alliances we plan to put in place and we are already building to try and achieve this transition towards a civilian government and free, fair and democratic elections.

As I referred to in my opening remarks: as always, whenever our positions converge – which happens often – our first interlocutor here is the African Union. I refer to the very clear position that the African Union has taken in these days, which I believe has been extremely important, also considering the fact that also other colleagues were mentioning, namely that these changes in Sudan are part of a bigger shift – I would say – that is a mix of hope and challenges in the broader region around the Horn of Africa, with some winds of changes that are blowing also in other countries. I think of the opportunities that the opening of talks between Ethiopia and Eritrea is bringing, but also of the very severe challenges that the region is still facing from both security and humanitarian perspectives.

Our role, I think, with the full support of this house – I know I can speak here for the Commission, but also for the Council – is that of accompanying this democratic transition, bringing it to hopefully a civilian outcome and working hand in hand with the African Union and with countries in the region to try and make sure that this happens, and that in particular the women and the young people of Sudan find their aspirations met in this transition. But, as all transitions, this is difficult. It bears some opportunities but also some risks and challenges.

I would also personally like to thank colleagues that have taken the opportunity of their last interventions in this last session of the plenary to thank me. I want also to reciprocate this and say that it was a pleasure to work with this Parliament and, in particular, with those colleagues that are most involved in foreign and security policy issues. But I will be with you until Thursday's votes – so until the very last session – and I guess that we will have other opportunities to say good-bye and to thank each other for the good cooperation that we have had during these five years.

Thank you very much.

Link to the video:

Press contacts

Press Contacts:

Daniel PUGLISI

[Daniel PUGLISI](#)

Press Officer for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management

+32 (0)2 29 69140

+32 (0)460 767374

Xavier CIFRE QUATRESOLS

[Xavier CIFRE QUATRESOLS](#)

EEAS Press Officer

+32 2 297 35 82

+32 460 75 51 56

Maja KOCIJANCIC

[Maja KOCIJANCIC](#)

Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

+32 (0)2 29 86570

+32 (0)498 984 425

www.eeas.europa.eu

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