

U.S. & Russia clashed in the UNSC over a response on agreement between Sudan & South Sudan

The United States and Russia clashed in the U.N. Security Council on Tuesday over a response to the latest agreements between Sudan and South Sudan on restarting the flow of oil and pulling troops back from their tense border.

U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice told reporters after closed council consultations that she blocked a press statement drafted by Russia welcoming these agreements because it ignored the "dire" humanitarian crisis in Sudan's conflict-wracked provinces of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and the disputed region of Abyei.

Rice said the council has been negotiating a U.S.-drafted presidential statement on Sudan and South Sudan that included these issues. But she said "unfortunately, perhaps in the interest of derailing" this broader statement, Russia tabled a narrow statement just on the latest agreements.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said that he wanted the council to respond positively and quickly to the new agreements and accused Rice of "trying to find all sorts of ulterior motives and come up with various outlandish accusations" to prevent any council action.

The spat was the latest confrontation between the United States and Russia in the U.N.'s most powerful body. For nearly two years, they have clashed repeatedly over Syria, where peaceful protests have escalated to civil war. Russia, the closest ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, and China have blocked three Western-backed Security Council resolutions aimed at pressuring the Syrian government to end the violence.

Despite those differences, the U.S. and Russia have agreed on important issues including sanctions against North Korea.

Tuesday's clash was sparked by the agreement between Sudan and South Sudan on Friday on a timetable to pull back their troops from the border to pave way for the establishment of a demilitarized zone. That was followed Tuesday by the deal to restart the oil industry, which is critical to the economy of both countries.

Rice said the United States and many council members welcomed the agreements, but she said "there've been many agreements signed but too few implemented."

Churkin said Russia would examine an updated draft presidential statement promised by the United States.