Conflict in South Sudan affecting food security in “stable states”

The ongoing conflict in South Sudan is affecting food security in some of the country’s more “stable states,” the head of UN peacekeeping in South Sudan, UNMISS, has said.

David Shearer, the UN’s most senior official in the country, was speaking during a visit to Aweil in the north of South Sudan.

“Dwindling provisions arriving in the town and skyrocketing food prices have meant that places like Aweil, which are generally peaceful, have suffered the effects of the conflict taking part in other parts of the country,” he said, adding that “it is imperative that fighting stops, so the citizens of the world’s newest nation can live in peace and enjoy the benefits of independence.”

The insecurity has directly affected the cost of goods in greater Aweil. Mr Shearer heard from UN humanitarian agencies working in the region how many families had migrated north to Sudan because they could either not produce crops or could not afford the high price of staple foods in the market.

Those agencies have stepped in to provide emergency humanitarian aid in a region where the UN Food and Agriculture Agency (FAO) says 52 per cent of people are “food insecure.”

Speaking to Mr Shearer, the Governor of Aweil State, Ronald Ruay Deng, said his administration was doing all it could to “move our people from dependency on emergency food aid to a more resilient rural agricultural” model of production, including the piloting of a new community farming approach to feed the most vulnerable people.

Mr Shearer also heard about the efforts under way to build peaceful understanding between communities, particularly pastoral communities who arrive on a seasonal basis from Sudan to share water and grazing land with the residents of greater Aweil.

UNMISS is facilitating improved inter-communal understanding through dialogue, an initiative supported by Aweil East Governor Deng Deng Akeui.

In relation to food insecurity in the area, Mr Shearer said “I fear for the immediate future of the people here particularly their ability to cope during the imminent rainy season while their crops are growing. However, I am optimistic that building a good relationship between the local authorities, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, will enable us to tackle the food security challenge.”