

RJMEC Extraordinary Plenary

Statement by Mr. Nicholas Haysom,

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General

18 September 2024

Excellencies and distinguished guests,

I thank the RJMEC for the opportunity to discuss the extension resolution today.

While the UN will endorse the extension of the transitional period, we do so with real regret and disappointment. Two years ago, we were in a similar situation as we are today and gave our support specifically under the condition that there would be no more extensions. Today, it is sadly evident that the country is not ready for elections that we could confidently expect to generate a credible and peaceful outcome, thereby necessitating this extension proposal consideration.

While the modality and timeline for ending the transitional period are the sovereign prerogative of South Sudan, we would highlight that critical decisions regarding the way forward are needed. There is still a mountain to climb. Urgency rather than a pause is required. At the least this demands a clear timeline that would restore confidence in the process.

As noted by the UN Secretary General in April and July 2024, the implementation of a “critical mass” of matters necessary for a peaceful conduct of free, fair and credible elections in South Sudan remains unmet. I reiterate the Secretary General’s call that the parties must commit to take urgent steps together in order to conduct these elections. The peaceful conduct of credible elections and the implementation of the outcome is a shared strategic goal of South Sudanese stakeholders, regional and international partners.

This delay is not for want of support by UNMISS and its partners. Since the first UN South Sudan electoral needs assessment mission mandated by the UN Security Council in 2021 and

subsequent assessments, including the IGAD-AU-UN Trilateral needs assessment mandated by the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) in 2022, we and our partners have extended support to the government, and particularly to the national electoral institutions.

To inject a sense of urgency and prioritization in the process, in July 2023, these efforts found expression in the Trilateral's presentation to the Transitional Government 10 priority areas that needed urgent decision and attention to make elections possible by December 2024. It is telling that as matters stand, only one element of the ten points has been achieved.

I emphasize that the Transitional Government and the South Sudanese political class must take responsibility for the failures of the past two years. The response of the ordinary citizens to these failures and disappointments has been evident in the past couple of weeks. The leadership must, therefore, recognize that confidence will need to be restored.

As we look at the new implementation measures and timelines being discussed by the High-level Standing Committee and the Tumaini Initiative, we would underscore that what has been lacking is not so much new structures and mechanisms but real political will to implement the first elections since independence and bring an end to the transitional period.

Excellencies,

In conclusion, it is time for South Sudan's leaders to prioritize the interests of the nation; rebuild public trust and confidence; open up necessary political and civic space; engage and accommodate all voices and viewpoints, including non-signatory parties in the Tumaini Initiative, all with a view to breaking the cycle of continuous transitions in South Sudan and pave the way towards an inclusive and sustainable peace.

The United Nations stands ready to support the transitional process in South Sudan, including through the many efforts being undertaken jointly with our partners IGAD and the African Union.

Thank you.