

**Remarks of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General
and Head of UNMISS,
Nicholas Haysom, to the
African Union Peace and Security Council Meeting on South Sudan
18 March 2025**

Chairperson,

Members of the Peace and Security Council,

Your Excellencies,

We are here today because, as partners in peace, we are concerned that South Sudan is poised on the brink of relapse into civil war, which threatens to erase the hard-won peace gains since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement in 2018. It requires our immediate and collective intervention to ensure that war is averted.

After the takeover of the Nasir barracks in Upper Nile by the White Army on the 4th of March, tensions throughout the country have been extremely high. A number of senior SPLA/IO military and civilian officials have been arrested in Juba, while some have gone into hiding or fled the country. Yesterday, the Government's Spokesperson confirmed the deployment of foreign forces in South Sudan. Meanwhile, airstrikes on Nasir have inflicted civilian casualties. With the proliferation of mis/disinformation in the public domain, hate speech is now rampant, raising concerns that the conflict could assume an ethnic dimension.

Excellencies,

The peace process and its mechanisms remain the key to the restoration of peace, and they are on the verge of collapse.

I welcome and commend the Extraordinary Summit held by IGAD on the 12th of March and its communique which clearly calls for the de-escalation of tensions in South Sudan. It highlights the need to work with all stakeholders to preserve the integrity of the Revitalized Agreement and ensure South Sudan takes the necessary steps to end the cycle of repeated transitions.

Over the last week, I have been engaging the various principals of this Agreement, often in partnership with the AU Chairperson's Special Representative, the IGAD Special Envoy and the Interim Chair of R-JMEC as part of our Quartet mechanism. Together, we have urged the parties to undertake dialogue, build trust and assure their followers of their steadfast commitment to prevent the country's return to civil war.

While we commend President Kiir for reassuring citizens that there will be no return to war, to actualize this commitment, the Parties must take necessary steps and remain steadfast in

implementing the Revitalized Agreement—both in letter and spirit. In this regard, I would seek the support of this Council to:

1. Urge all parties to recommit to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and R-ARCSS, reinvigorating the functioning of its relevant mechanisms.
2. Encourage the two principals to meet and address their differences constructively while addressing the nation together as a show of unity.
3. Call for the release of detained military and civilian officials or their treatment in accordance with legal process.
4. Immediately address the Nasir tensions through dialogue rather than further military confrontation.
5. We welcome the IGAD Extraordinary Summit and encourage the immediate establishment and dispatch of a Ministerial-level sub-committee to Juba. Allow me to underscore the critical role of neighbouring states, as the guarantors of this Agreement, in promoting peace and stability in South Sudan.
6. Encourage the AU C5 and the Panel of the Wise to facilitate dialogue amongst the South Sudanese leadership to ensure active conflict mitigation.

We need to look no further than across the northern border to Sudan for a stark reminder of how quickly countries can descend into catastrophic war. To avoid this outcome in South Sudan, there must be an immediate return by the parties to consensus-based decision-making. There must be intensive dialogue to resolve grievances and rebuild trust and confidence between the Parties and, between the parties and their supporters.

The parties must de-escalate the current political tensions now before it is too late. There is only one path out of this cycle of conflict and that is through the Revitalized Agreement. The overriding imperative now is to direct all our efforts to prevent a relapse into war, support the full implementation of the agreement, and progress the transition towards the country's first democratic elections.

This region cannot afford another conflict.

I thank you.