

**Remarks by Mr. Nicholas Haysom
Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of United Nations Mission in
South Sudan (UNMISS)
United Nations Security Council
5 February 2025**

As Delivered

Mr President

Thank you for the opportunity to brief on developments in South Sudan.

February 2025 marks the beginning of the extended transitional period. That is, the fourth extension of the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement. While the people of South Sudan have been patient, there is no appetite for another extension. There is a strong desire for the leaders to focus on the benchmarks set out in the Peace Agreement - without further delay.

The Tumaini talks continue in Nairobi and public expectations for a swift resolution on outstanding points of difference are high. I note the continuing divergence of positions and urge the parties to engage constructively to enable progress on a more inclusive agreement.

Since my last briefing, I note progress in the following four areas.

First, on civic and political space in South Sudan, I note the commitments made at the 2024 Governors Forum, including a resolution calling for the repeal of sections 54, 55 and 57 of the National Security Services Bill in support of civic and political space. I welcome the declarations of governors, both individually and collectively, to expand civic and political space in their respective states. UNMISS will continue working with government institutions, political parties, women, youth, and people with disabilities, to facilitate critical nation-building conversations on constitution-making, transitional justice and accountability, and federalism, amongst others.

The second area is expanded access to justice, inter alia, through mobile courts. In Bentiu, the Unity State government deployed a mobile court for the first time using its own resources. This is a shift from the reliance on ad hoc, Juba-based interventions to a more sustainable, localized justice delivery system. An UNMISS-supported mobile court has recently been deployed to Renk. It will hear more than 100 cases, including on sexual and gender-based violence.

In the context of transitional justice, I welcome the enactment into law of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing and the Compensation and Reparation Authority Acts (2024). The Mission looks forward to the implementation of judicial reforms, contemplated in the Judicial Reform Committee report.

Third, on security arrangements, I report the long-delayed adoption of the framework for the management of the security sector. This would eventually provide for the institutional management and civilian oversight of the armed forces. I also welcome the adoption of a National Community Violence Reduction Strategy.

Fourth, on electoral preparedness, I note progress in the operationalisation of the National Elections Commission (NEC). The NEC has launched its website, developed a legally mandated code of conduct, is rolling out a Civic & Voter Education Strategy, and is holding stakeholder consultations with political

parties and civil society groups. UNMISS is supporting the presence of the State High Elections Commissions by providing infrastructure in all ten states. Election security training and intra-governmental coordination is forging ahead between the National Police Service and civil society with support from the UN Integrated Electoral Assessment Team and UNPOL.

These are important achievements. However, none are sufficient to significantly move the needle on the ten critical conditions required for holding elections and adopting a new constitution. Nor do they fully address, of these, what we call the six “low-hanging fruits” on measures that could be taken to signal political will. These include: the full deployment of the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF); civic education; voter registration; amending the National Security Services Bill; delivering on a code of conduct between political parties, civil society and the media; and finally, responding to the shared role on electoral security.

The clock is already ticking on the extended transitional period. Decision-makers need to tackle several issues simultaneously and immediately. We have not yet seen the previously promised harmonized workplan with an operational timetable for elections. The constitution-making and census timelines do not currently fit into the framework for a December 2026 election. The lack of government funding and delayed legal and political decisions are slowing these processes down. Neither UNMISS, nor the international community, or the electoral management bodies can provide the full measure of support if these critical decisions are not taken. No explanation has been forthcoming as to why the necessary decisions have not been finalised nor when they will be finalised.

A unified approach by the regional and international community should be clear to all the stakeholders on the need to avoid another extension. The parties should be under no illusion that there will be resources from the international community to sponsor the implementation of the peace agreement, ending with elections, if there is no evidence of political will to accelerate implementation of the key benchmarks nor a contribution of government resources. In this regard, I acknowledge the recent solidarity visit to Juba of the African Union Ad hoc High-level Committee for South Sudan, known as the C5, and welcome the C5’s intent to convene a meeting on the margins of the AU Summit at the Heads of Government level, in part, to rally the parties around the need for effective implementation of the preparations for elections.

Mr President,

South Sudan continues to grapple with humanitarian, economic and security stressors. Communal violence remains the primary driver of conflict affecting civilians, which has a disproportionate effect on vulnerable populations, including women, children, and marginalized groups.

Recent incidents demonstrate the need to implement the Transitional Security Arrangements, including clashes between the major forces in Tambura and Nagero, Western Equatoria, which themselves classify as a violation of the ceasefire. It seems the two pre-eminent armed parties are unwilling to engage each other in dialogue on security-related issues, which risks further standoffs in due course. I call upon the military leadership of the SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO to come to mutually agreeable terms on dismantling illegal checkpoints.

UNMISS continues to implement our protection of civilians mandate through an integrated approach focusing on high-risk areas. Our deployment strategy balances the requirements for mobility with static presence in conflict hotspots. We have launched a new initiative to deter conflict-related sexual violence, working with communities on early warning and patrolling. Here, I acknowledge the important role of our troop- and police-contributing countries in carrying out our mandate. Our latest perception survey shows that South Sudanese continue to value UNMISS’ presence and impact. However, we note a softening of

overall support (from 94 to 74 percent). This may align with a reported spike in security concerns, declining optimism in the peace process, concerns about barriers to elections, and repression when people do not feel free enough to express their opinions.

Meanwhile, the toxic effects of the Sudan conflict are spilling over into South Sudan, as witnessed by the unrest, in Juba and beyond, following the reported killing or execution of South Sudanese in Wad Madani. I acknowledge the South Sudanese government for its swift response in providing safety for Sudanese nationals seeking refuge from potential retaliatory attacks. Notwithstanding limited reports of looting by some security officials, it did demonstrate this government's capacity to protect civilians when necessary.

South Sudan has been a haven for people fleeing the Sudan conflict since April 2023, with refugees and returnee arrivals passing the one million mark in the period under review. They join around 9.3 million people already in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, with conflict, climate and the economic crisis keeping too many people on the very edge of survival.

The recent unrest also reflects public frustration over the economic crisis. The cost of an average food basket has risen by 200 percent, the inflation rate stands at 107 percent, and approximately 10 months of government salaries are unpaid. I note the government's recent announcement that the flow of South Sudan's oil has resumed. We hope that this will lead to the availability of resources for social services and the overall transitional process – but note that this had not been the case prior to the disruption of oil flows in 2024.

Cholera was exacerbated by the 2024 floods and has resulted in over 23,000 reported cases. While treatment, water and sanitation campaigns, and vaccinations have contained the cholera outbreak in several locations, the disease continues to spread, particularly in hard-to-reach regions.

The 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan aims to reach 5.4 million people with life-saving assistance and protection. The plan was jointly launched with the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management and seeks funding of \$1.7 billion. Resource mobilisation remains critical in 2025.

Mr President

I must report that UNMISS has received a request from government for the Mission to vacate part of its headquarters. This request, on a 45-day notice period, comes at significant cost and a logistical timetable that we do not currently have the resources to accommodate. The Mission is offering a collaborative approach in response, but I note the outcome would be guided by operational necessities and, in the long term, resource availability. Our operational environment is also constrained by movement restrictions on peacekeepers in some parts of the country. UNMISS will continue to pursue constructive dialogue with our host government on those issues through the High-Level Coordination Committee, a joint discussion and consultation forum.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that UNMISS stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of South Sudan on their journey from conflict to stabilisation and democratisation. The situation will remain fragile as an electoral period draws nearer. The role of the United Nations is to help make peace gains irreversible, in a region that is rife with humanitarian and security challenges. We appreciate this Council and all our partners for their continued support.

I thank you.