



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit

Communications & Public Information Office

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Government of South Sudan and UN launch Children, not Soldiers campaign

The Government of South Sudan, with the support of the United Nations, today launched the “Children, not Soldiers” campaign nationally, marking the country’s renewed commitment to end the recruitment and use of children by its army.

The campaign is led jointly by Ms. Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the UN Mission in South Sudan and UNICEF with the support of other partners and aims to end the recruitment and use of children by the Government security forces in armed conflict by the end of 2016.

“The Government of South Sudan will no longer allow children to join the military,” said the Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs Kuol Manyang Juuk. “Children should be learning how to read and write, not carry weapons – we know education will make us better as a nation.”

In June, the Government formally signed its Recommitment to the Action Plan – first signed in 2009 by the SPLA - which outlines 18 measures the Sudan People’s Liberation Army needs to put in place to make its army free of child soldiers and to end grave violations against children in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law.

In preparation for today’s launch, the government has taken some steps, including issuing punitive orders for all SPLA commanders to stop deploying children; disseminating radio messages by the Ministry of Defence; and submitting legislative amendments to the Ministry of Justice to apply sanctions to the recruitment of children by army commanders.

“It’s encouraging to see that the Government is taking steps to protect the country’s children and the United Nations will continue to support them,” said Ms. Zerrougui. “We now need to see children released from the ranks of the SPLA and those who have recruited them must be held accountable.”

As part of the Recommitment, the United Nations, the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission and partners will support and assist in the identification, verification and release of children associated with the SPLA. Children will be given psycho-social services,

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educational and vocational training and other services aimed at allowing them to resume life in their communities.

“Now the real work begins, the commitments have to translate into action,” said Ellen Margrethe Loej, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for South Sudan. “The United Nations stands with the Government of South Sudan to work towards building a child soldier-free army, and most importantly, we look forward to assisting children as they return to their families, their friends and to their education.”

The United Nations, in support of the Government, is putting into place detailed plans and activities for these children. Decades of experience have shown that the process of reintegrating children is a complex one, requiring technical expertise, coordination and political commitment, monitoring and verification of progress – and massive resource mobilization.

Note to Editors:

The other six countries that are part of the Children Not Soldiers campaign, listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict are: Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. Six of them have expressed their commitment to child-free security forces by signing Action Plans with the United Nations. Dialogue to develop an Action Plan with Sudan is ongoing.

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