



PRESS RELEASE

**Briefing to the United Nations Security Council
by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head Of UNMISS
Mr. Nicholas Haysom**

**13 December 2022
[As delivered]**

Mr. President,

Thank you for the opportunity to brief this Council on the situation in South Sudan.

Since my last report, there has been some noticeable progress in the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. With the passage of essential bills, such as the Constitution Making Bill, and the ratification of the Roadmap by the Transitional National Legislature, parliament is again functioning. I welcome President Salva Kiir's directive that parliamentarians continue working until critical legislation underpinning the Roadmap is passed, rather than taking an early recess.

The graduation of the first phase of the Necessary Unified Forces is largely complete - with only Bentiu in Unity State remaining, due to unprecedented floods in the state. UNMISS provided critical logistical and transport support to this process. "Phase two" must now receive urgent financial, logistical and political support by the government. It's essential that the ranks of the graduating forces and deployment plans are finalized and implemented so that the force can begin to serve as a truly national army. Some reports of limited deployments of the integrated forces to hotspots in northern parts of Warrap State and Kodok in Upper Nile State are encouraging.

In my recent engagements with President Kiir, First Vice-President Machar, and other national leaders, I have underscored the need for consistent and continued progress on the Roadmap benchmarks - to which the parties recommitted themselves just months ago. We urge stakeholders to conceive of the Roadmap not as a box-ticking exercise but rather a qualitative process to lay the proper foundations for a stable and democratic nation.

In this connection, UNMISS is mindful that legal and technical arrangements for elections should be finalised soon. The National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC) has reviewed the National Elections Act. This is the first step in providing the legal basis for the reconstitution of the National Elections Commission (NEC), which will manage the electoral processes. While I commend the progress of the NCAC in reviewing this Act, I note that the issue of implementation of quotas for women and persons with disabilities remains unresolved. I encourage the parties to reach a compromise on this matter so that this legislation can be finalised at the earliest possible moment.

Further to this, I note with concern that deadlines related to the Political Parties Act, Political Parties Council, the Reconstituted National Constitutional Review Commission, and the establishment of the Constitutional Drafting Committee have been missed. We consistently remind the South Sudanese that the two-year extension should not be regarded as a holiday break. We are concerned that delays are already having a domino effect on subsequent key benchmarks.

As things stand, our position on elections remains consistent with the Needs Assessment Mission's (NAM) which recommended two-phased approach. The first phase (fulfilling legal requirements/preparing grounds and environment for the conduct of elections) is yet to be completed by the parties, and material assistance for their actual conduct should be contemplated only upon completion of the first phase. Accordingly, it is important that the parties receive a unified message from the Security Council and the international community on the criticality of the implementation of the provisions concerning elections.

I'd like to commend the Transitional Government of National Unity for the successful completion of the 6th Governors Forum in Juba, supported by the United Nations family. This platform afforded government officials an opportunity to constructively exchange views on good governance, and the relationship between the centre and the periphery. UNMISS urged the inclusion of civil society voices in the next round.

Mr. President,

Ahead of the dry season, we are particularly concerned by the clashes amongst armed militias, which are causing displacement in northern Jonglei and Upper Nile, the intercommunal violence in northern Warrap, and ongoing cattle-raiding and migration-related conflicts in the Equatorias. On the margins of the Governors Forum, I met several of these Governors to encourage dialogue and development of mutually agreed arrangement towards addressing these challenges.

The security situation in Upper Nile State continues to be a particular concern and has the potential to further deteriorate. This follows a year-long fracturing of the SPLA/IO and splintering of the Kitgwang Group and has manifested in clashes along the strategically important Nile River corridor. Violence in the area has taken on an ethnic dimension, and I condemn the human rights violations and abuses that have included killings, conflict-related sexual violence, pillaging and large-scale displacements. Thousands of civilians have fled towards the UNMISS temporary operating base at Kodok, and to the protection of civilians site in Malakal, which is already congested beyond its capacity. UNMISS is coordinating with humanitarian partners on the ground to accommodate new arrivals and is engaging politically at the state and national levels to bring the needed attention to the conflict and encourage a resolution.

UNMISS convened a meeting of international partners on December 2, to respond to the ongoing violence and issued a public statement calling for the government to intervene while urging the multiple protagonists to cease clashes and desist from any further human rights violations. We have warned that credible elections cannot take place in such an environment, and that there will be consequences for those promoting the conflict.

Here, I must flag our concern at the militarization of the Nile River. UNMISS is calling on all actors to respect this national asset as a highway for humanitarian assistance and sustainable economic development. Our hope is to deter actors from extortion and looting along this corridor.

Relatedly, I draw your attention to the funding constraints of CTSAMVM, the verification and monitoring mechanism established by the Peace Agreement which is now needed to investigate violence in Upper Nile.

We also express concern at the pause in the Sant 'Egidio process leading the engagement with the holdout non-signatory groups. We urge all parties to embrace dialogue to advance their interests.

We welcome the intended visit of His Holiness The Pope to South Sudan in the first week of February in the hope that it will consolidate peace and understanding between the South Sudanese political leadership.

Mr. President,

Tensions will continue to simmer and intensify as the electoral date draws closer. UNMISS will remain steadfast in prioritizing the protection of civilians in all aspects of our mandated tasks: whether responding to pressing protection needs, like sub-national violence, or supporting a broader peace to take root, one that is underpinned by institutions of justice, human rights and accountability. These efforts will go a long way to support an expansion of civic and political space and a culture of non-violent debate and dispute resolution.

UNMISS is working in a whole-of-Mission approach towards these objectives. This includes support to civil society, academia, and political parties generally while specifically exploring their roles in supporting the constitution-making and electoral processes.

Simultaneously, we're conducting intensive key leadership engagements to encourage the political resolution of intercommunal conflicts, by deploying integrated civilian-military teams to temporary operating bases. These efforts have contributed to the overall reduction in the number of civilian casualties, year-on-year.

We continue our efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence. In 2022, UNPOL has supported over 36 Police-Community Relations Committees, focusing inter alia on SGBV. In supporting national-level efforts, UNMISS joins the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in encouraging the Transitional Government of National Unity to fully implement the 2014 Joint Communiqué, which contains clear and time-bound commitments to tackle conflict-related sexual violence.

We're working closely with international stakeholders to launch community violence reduction (CVR) projects in areas of relative calm that will support ex-combatants and communities to access alternative livelihoods.

UNMISS continues to report routinely on the human rights situation in South Sudan. This year we have released five public reports on violence against civilians. In parallel, we welcome the activation of various investigation committees on subnational violence by the Government of National Unity itself, but I urge these bodies to share their findings and recommendations publicly. This would demonstrate the government's commitment to

accountability for perpetrators, justice for survivors, and a pathway to reconciliation for all impacted communities.

Mr. President,

The worsening humanitarian crisis in South Sudan is a reminder of the imperative for the parties to deliver on their commitments in the Peace Agreement. Next year's projections estimate that 9.4 million people will need humanitarian and protection assistance. This is an alarming figure for a country of roughly 12 million people. The situation is exacerbated by flooding and localized drought. While humanitarian personnel are working tirelessly to offer shelter, health care, food, water, sanitation, and other support, needs continue to outstrip the resources to assist. Humanitarians continue to give their lives in service – with nine personnel killed on duty in 2022. We urge partners to continue responding generously to the Humanitarian Response Plan.

Let me underscore that partnerships continue to underpin the overall strategy of this Mission — and particularly with multilateral institutions of the region. UNMISS is working with the AU, IGAD and the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) in a Trilateral Task Force to support the permanent constitution-making and electoral processes. We've worked closely with these and other partners in Juba, such as the Troika and European Union, in good offices and conflict prevention efforts. I want to thank the Government of South Sudan for their strong support to the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which guides a three-year partnership towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Based on national priorities, it recognises that there can be no lasting peace without sustainable development and there can be no sustainable development without peace in South Sudan.

In closing, we hold the view that the Roadmap is a second mortgage on the Revitalized Peace Agreement—one which must be repaid in good faith and within the stipulated timeframes. As moral guarantors and partners of that Agreement, our collective task is to ensure that the parties have the best possible international support to help them fulfil their commitment to the people of South Sudan. I wish to thank this Council for its continued support towards that goal.

I thank you.

Contact: UNMISS Spokesperson at unmiss-spokesperson@un.org