

Briefing to the African Union Peace and Security Council

Deputy Special Representative (Political) UNMISS - Mr. Guang Cong

25 January 2022

Excellency Ambassador Amma Adomaa Twum-Amoah of Ghana and Chair of the AUPSC for January

Excellencies Members of the AUPSC

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Thank you for this opportunity to brief on developments in South Sudan, on behalf of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom.
2. Right at the outset, I wish to acknowledge that the permanent ceasefire continues to hold. Political violence has decreased, and most of the critical institutions of government at both national and state levels, including the TNLA and state assemblies, have been established. The parties remain committed to the Revitalized Agreement and in President Salva Kiir's New Year message to the nation, he reiterated the need to create permanent stability in South Sudan through full implementation of the Revitalised Peace Agreement. This is encouraging.
3. Taking stock of recent progress, I note the recall of parliament in December and commend its adoption of the National Constitutional Amendment Bill

(2021). This paves the way for the incorporation of the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement into the constitution.

4. I further encourage legislators to address the ‘logjam’ of critical bills to facilitate elections preparations, the establishment of national justice institutions, and the adoption of a national budget. I am pleased to highlight that UNMISS and its partners have already intensified support for legislative and constitution-making processes, including capacity-building support for women parliamentarians and the National Constitutional Amendment Committee.
5. I welcome efforts to jump-start the transitional security arrangements. After receiving funds from the National Transitional Committee (NTC), the Joint Defence Board (JDB) commenced its screening of the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF) in December. What is needed now is a clear plan for the graduation and deployment of forces, and an agreement on command structures. This is only an initial step in a complex but essential process of constructing a national army—one that is a symbol and mirror of the unity of its people. UNMISS is providing technical and logistical support to advance these efforts.
6. On the peace process more generally, I note the readiness of the government and South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA) to re-engage in the Sant’Egidio process. I encourage the holdout groups, especially the National Salvation Front (NAS), to join talks without preconditions.
7. These are important achievements that need to be fully acknowledged.

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8. While the steps taken so far to implement the Revitalized Peace Agreement are welcomed, they are—however—not sufficient if the momentum to realise peace is to be sustained.
9. This year presents a dramatic challenge if South Sudan is to complete its transition. It demands a sense of urgency in implementing all aspects of the peace agreement. While the President has announced that the elections will be held in 2023, members of presidency are yet to coalesce around an electoral timetable. The path towards elections will require both technical and political preparation, including an agreement on the constitution as well as on the rules governing the election to ensure the conduct of a free, fair and peaceful process.
10. It's clear there are headwinds in all of these tasks. I urge the parties to muster a renewed sense of political will and to build trust, so as to avoid a state of paralysis, and, in a worst-case scenario, a collapse of the peace agreement. The challenge at hand is underscored by multiple regional crises that are reducing the political bandwidth for international attention on South Sudan, at a time when international support is urgently needed.
11. In that regard, I welcome the decision by the President of Uganda to host a leadership retreat in Kampala over the coming month. We hope this format can address remaining roadblocks to the peace agreement, and help to build consensus around the constitution-making process and elections.

12. Against this backdrop, intercommunal conflict continues in South Sudan—perpetuating cycles of trauma and revenge that undermine the prospects for longer-term reconciliation and social healing.

13. The Mission is doing all that it can, within our capabilities, to support the government in its primary responsibility to protect civilians. Our concern is to rise above firefighting modalities and build more durable solutions to conflict. We are adapting our strategy to prevent and respond to hotspots in an integrated manner, including through the flexible deployment of Temporary Operating Bases. In part due to our efforts, as compared to the previous year, there has been a marked decrease of about 43 percent in the number of recorded civilian victims of violence in 2021. Nevertheless, civilians still overwhelmingly bear the brunt of conflict in South Sudan.

14. The Mission also continues its support to building the justice chain, including through the deployment of mobile courts, without which our efforts to promote criminal accountability and contain extrajudicial killings would be difficult.

15. Further to this, flooding, insecurity, and Covid-19 all continue to impact the humanitarian situation in South Sudan. Since May, an estimated 835,000 people have been affected by unprecedented flooding—this demonstrates South Sudan’s increasing vulnerability to climate change. Early analysis for 2022 indicates that overall humanitarian needs are continuing to grow; yet the appetite of donors to furnish additional funding is trending in reverse.

Excellencies,

16. The support of regional partners remains critical for UNMISS in carrying out our mandate. Our mission considers the AU and its policy organs to be a preeminent partner in our collective efforts in South Sudan. We therefore continue to engage the AU Commission and the African Union High Level Committee on South Sudan, also known as the C5, as well as IGAD. It is imperative to have more engagement by the C5 and for the AU to dispatch a needs assessment mission to South Sudan before the election period picks up momentum.
17. For its part, the United Nations conducted its electoral needs assessment which recommended that United Nations should continue its support to the peace process through political engagement with IGAD, with the African Union, with the Troika' and the wider diplomatic community, with a view to promoting dialogue and confidence-building between and among political actors.
18. As Mission, we deeply value our collaboration with the African Union Mission in South Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Liaison Office in Juba, and Reconstituted Joint Mechanism Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), and the Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangements, Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM). The joint high-level missions to Pibor and Tambura in 2021 demonstrated our effectiveness when working together.
19. As the broader Horn of Africa region, faces complex political, security and humanitarian challenges, it is essential now, more than ever, to ensure that

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South Sudan remains stable. I urge for this Council's continued advocacy and support of the parties to implement the peace agreement, so that the preconditions may be satisfied for a free, fair and peaceful electoral process.

20. What's at stake here is the continued viability of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. Allow me to re-affirm the commitment of UNMISS and the entire UN family to the people and government of South Sudan to this endeavour.

I thank this Council for its consistent support.

Thank you.