

7th Governors' Forum
27 November to 1 December 2023

"Fostering National Cohesion: South Sudan's Path to Peaceful Transition to Democratic Governance"

Statement by Mr. Nicholas Haysom
Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMISS

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[As delivered]

*His Excellency First Vice President of the Republic and the Vice-Presidents
Rt. Honorable Speaker and Deputy Speakers,
Governors and Chief Administrators
Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Members of Parliament and the Council of States,
Traditional leaders and Representatives of Civil Society Organisations*

Excellencies and distinguished guests,

I am honoured to address the opening of the Annual Governors' Forum once again. I look forward to hearing your feedback on how the actions taken at last years' conference have advanced the Revitalized Peace Agreement, specifically, and good governance generally.

At the outset, let me take this opportunity to congratulate President Kiir and the people of South Sudan for South Sudan's assumption of the Chairpersonship of the East African Community.

UNMISS hopes that this week's forum will offer a platform for problem-solving on the challenges that you face before you as a nation as you enter your final year of your transition. We think it's important to take advantage of your collective presence here in Juba to discuss a united approach on the consolidation of peace and stability in the remaining transitional period.

UNMISS remains concerned that the basic human security needs of South Sudanese citizens are unmet in many parts of the country – particularly outside Juba. Civilians are bearing the brunt of inter-communal violence. And this is prolonging the humanitarian emergency in South Sudan, one that has been made a lot worse by the conflict in Sudan, to the north, as well as the impacts of climate change, and an overall reduced pool of humanitarian assistance.

I wish to welcome the recent deployment of the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF) to Upper Nile State and I note the strong expectation of citizens that there will be further deployments. A further deployment that would hope to improve security and build the required foundation for a conducive electoral environment. I reaffirm the support of UNMISS to the Transitional Government of National Unity as it carries out its responsibility to protect its civilians in South Sudan.

I share the concern of all Governors and Chief Administrators over the continued proliferation of arms. Some of you were able to implement partial disarmament in your states in line with the recommendations of you had issued at the last meeting November 2022. UNMISS supports your calls for a comprehensive national programme of for peaceful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

We would further encourage you to consider community violence reduction initiatives. These initiatives foster inclusive economic growth around productive activities that generate livelihoods, that remove incentives of conflict, and contribute to the reconstruction and rebuilding of communities.

Similarly, I call for the full implementation of the suite of resolutions from the 2022 National Livestock Conference on Cattle- and Migration-Related Conflicts, which we think provided an excellent blueprint for national cooperation on longer-term solutions for this real and serious conflict driver.

Addressing all these challenges requires coordinated intervention from the national and subnational levels. I want to emphasise the role of Governors and Chief Administrators as a connecting force between the national and the local. UNMISS has been proud to partner with you in many joint efforts – these include in bringing communities together to resolve the conflicts which divide them; increasing safe access to agricultural land through mine action services; supporting the construction of roads, schools and health facilities; increasing the meaningful participation of women in political life; mitigating the impacts of climate change, such as flooding; and in supporting the delivery of humanitarian aid.

In that regard, I am pleased to share that in 2024, UNMISS will be implementing 70 quick impact projects across the 10 states to support the protection of citizens as well as the delivery of public services and local infrastructure.

We particularly appreciate the constructive role of Governors in addressing the plight of returnees and refugees from Sudan and Ethiopia and call for increased cooperation on humanitarian and social protection in the northern border areas.

Excellencies

UNMISS places a premium on the role of Governors and Chief Administrators in exercising political leadership to promote harmony, unity, and peaceful co-existence – including through consistent presence of yourselves and your government in your respective jurisdictions.

Completing the final leg of South Sudan’s transitional period requires strong partnerships: partnerships between the national and subnational levels of government. Strong strategic partnerships with the international community, and partnerships with local communities and civil society, particularly in engaging in critical policy discussions on good governance and service delivery.

There is now a great sense of urgency to accelerate these conversations so that South Sudan is well positioned for its forthcoming electoral process – including to ensure there is sufficient political and civic

space for a process that will ground South Sudanese in a process which is nation-building as opposed to deepening division.

In concluding, I join in supporting your efforts to deliver public services, to maintain your presence and accessibility in your jurisdictions and for your championship of the protection of civilians. UNMISS will continue to jointly work with you to foster national cohesion on South Sudan's path to a peaceful transition to democratic governance, underscored by the credible elections you face in just over a years' time.

With that, I thank you and wish you fruitful deliberations.