

**Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
Press Conference  
Juba**

I want to start by acknowledging the breaking news coming out of Khartoum where an explosion has reportedly hit a convoy carrying Prime Minister Hamdok. I don't have any more information than you do, at the moment, but I wanted to express my concern at the situation and welcome the news that the Prime Minister is apparently safe and well.

Back here, in Juba, I would like to touch on a couple of issues, including the rapid changes we have seen in the political landscape in recent weeks and the sudden outbreak of intercommunal violence in Jonglei.

You'll be aware that I addressed the Security Council a few days ago about some of the positive political developments that we have seen recently.

I

particularly highlighted the compromises made by President Salva Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar which enabled the transitional government to be formed. Essentially, these two leaders showed they had the political will to put the interests of their country and people first.

As I said in my statement to the Council: "We often speak of courage in war and battle. But peace also requires courage."

The Security Council also issued its own statement describing the developments as a "significant step towards sustainable peace".

While there is a sense of relief that the new government has formed, there is still much to be done, and many challenges ahead that will test its unity.

There have been ongoing negotiations over ministerial and other appointments over the past two weeks. I understand from speaking to those involved, that while tough, they have been carried out cordially. There is some optimism amongst parties that an announcement may be possible by the end of this week.

The filling of the governor positions is particularly urgent. The absence of authority at the state level has caused a vacuum of power and decision-making – as we have seen in Jonglei – emboldening those involved in the recent violent intercommunal clashes. I'll say more about that situation shortly.

There is also an urgent need to move on transitional security arrangements. Implementation is dangerously lagging, made worse by the absence of the NPTC. New lines of authority need to be set up by the government to lead this process.

UNMISS is assisting where it can, including transporting more than 300 metric tonnes of supplies to training locations to plug urgent gaps. But across the sites, a shortage of supplies remains. There is no registration and no substantial training underway.

Moving onto Jonglei where people continue to suffer from the devastating floods last year. Crops and livestock were destroyed at that time. Water supplies were contaminated which worsened health conditions.

This situation, as well as the absence of political leadership in the area, has contributed to the recent outbreak of intercommunal violence.

This fighting has caused significant casualties and the displacement of thousands of families, particularly in areas around Pibor and the villages of Likuangole, Waat, Manyabol and Anyidi. We have reports that women and children have been abducted by both sides. This is unconscionable. These people must be returned immediately. UNMISS is ready to support efforts by the communities to help calm the situation.

I flew into Pibor on Friday to see the situation for myself and to speak to some of those families affected by the violence. I also met with local authorities to understand what they are doing to deal with the conflict and to increase security in the area.

More than 8,000 people are currently living in makeshift shelters next to the UN base in Pibor. UNMISS responded immediately to the violence by reinforcing that base with additional peacekeepers and carrying out a series of patrols to hotspots. Temporary bases have also been set up in Anyidi, Gumuruk, Manyabol, Yuai and soon in Waat.

Sadly, the towns of Manyabol and Likuangole have been almost totally destroyed.

Our Indian and Ethiopian troops carry out daily patrols to provide a protective presence, deter violence and assist humanitarian activities.

I really would like to thank the troops for their rapid response.

This action is having a very real and positive impact. Many people I spoke to on Friday thanked me for the UNMISS presence, for making them feel safer and giving them hope that they can begin to return to their homes.

This is the kind of nimble and proactive action that we want to be in a position to do more often in future.

Since the signing of the peace deal and the ceasefire, the protection environment has changed. While intercommunal conflict remains a concern in some areas, the risk of political violence has certainly lowered, including the threat to those living in UN Protection of Civilians sites. This means that UNMISS can change its protection priorities as well.

For example, improving security in Bor means that we have reduced our military presence in the POC site by 70 percent. This frees up troops to carry out those life-saving patrols that I just mentioned to deter intercommunal violence across Jonglei.

Essentially, we can now prioritize deploying peacekeepers to hot spot locations and areas where we expect thousands of displaced families to return to rather than tying them down to static duties at protection sites.

In the past weeks, the parties have shown leadership and we hope that will continue.

It is imperative there is no renegeing of the peace agreement or, most importantly, of the ceasefire.

Finally, the international community, including the UN, must continue to support the peace process. While there will be caution because of past mistakes, we cannot step back. Instead now is the time to fully engage.