



United Nations Mission in South Sudan

Press Release

24 October 2019

Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

United Nations Day 2019

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deng Dau Deng.

Ambassadors, Heads of Missions and representatives of the diplomatic community.

Heads of UN Agencies and NGOs.

UN personnel.

And citizens of Juba.

Welcome and thank you for being here to celebrate UN Day.

On this day in 1945, the UN Charter was signed.

The first line of that charter – “we the peoples’ of the UN” - united us as one people – not only as citizens of our respective nations but also as citizens of the world.

That line also fits neatly with the today’s theme of “Unity in Diversity” as we celebrate the UN’s work in South Sudan and around the world to:

End war;

Fight for human rights;

Tackle climate change, humanitarian and health emergencies;

And much more.

The work we do makes a real difference to the lives of millions of people.

Here in South Sudan, we work with communities as an impartial partner in peace and development.

We all know that, without peace, there cannot be sustainable development.



As you'll be aware, a high-powered Security Council delegation visited Juba on Sunday on a special mission to support the peace process.

UNMISS's presence in South Sudan and our activities are determined by the United Nations Security Council. We operate under the mandate it sets us.

So, the fact that 15 representatives travelled here together demonstrates how passionately they feel about South Sudan successfully transitioning from conflict to peace for the sake of its citizens.

Their visit came at a critical time in the peace process with less than three weeks until a unified transitional government is due to be formed – as was agreed by the parties themselves following a six-month extension of the pre-transitional period.

During their visit, the Security Council heard moving stories from those who have suffered most during the five-year conflict – women, youth and religious groups. These people described a failed economy, a humanitarian tragedy with persistent insecurity and their perception of country where the common man and woman are too often ignored.

Despite that suffering, they remain immensely proud of their country. Their enthusiasm for peace is palpable. And they urged the Security Council to tell the country's leaders, on their behalf, to focus on people rather than how to divide power among themselves.

The Security Council also heard in great detail from South Sudan's leaders, spending nearly four hours with President Salva Kiir and his Ministers, Dr. Riek Machar and other Opposition parties.

Council members were, therefore, fully aware of the challenges and different points of view when it clearly laid out its position at the end of the visit.

It called for parties to:

- Expedite the implementation of transitional security arrangements;
- Continue discussions to resolve states and boundaries;
- Recommit to the permanent ceasefire;
- Speak the language of unity and compromise; and,
- Peacefully form a credible and inclusive government by November 12.

I deliberately listed all of the Council's points because the media focus has very much been on the date of November 12 – much less air time has been given to the outstanding issues of peace agreement that the Council noted needed to be resolved.



Their statement was very much in line with the many and diverse groups such as – the AU Peace and Security Council, the Troika, civil society, women and youth groups as well as religious leaders.

But, ultimately, we all know that successfully securing durable peace is much bigger than just a date.

There is, no doubt, frustration among the parties who are working hard to implement the agreement.

It is important though because shifting to the transitional period also signals the beginning of preparations for elections.

It is the opportunity to resolve differences through democratic rather than violent means and give citizens the right to select their own leaders and hold them to account.

This is a right people fought hard for and won when they achieved independence eight years ago. The time has come for them to finally exercise that right.

That will require political space – the freedom for parties to campaign, organize even, criticize. That environment does not yet exist.

We know that 100 percent of the pre-transitional tasks will not be met in two weeks' time. But that does not mean that we should sit back or give up.

Collectively, we have a responsibility to maintain momentum so that the transformative process that began with the signing of the agreement 13 months ago will be fully realized.

As always, the UN will be right alongside the parties working as an impartial partner in peace.

Our activities in South Sudan are many and diverse. Our uniformed personnel protect civilians and deter violence. The Mine Action Service has destroyed more than one million explosive devices left as a deadly legacy of war.

We help prevent and resolve intercommunal conflict, have disseminated tens of thousands of copies of the peace agreement and continue to bring national leaders and communities together at grassroots peace meetings around the country.

Our humanitarian colleagues show great courage and determination in reaching communities in need, delivering aid, providing access to clean water, to healthcare and education as well as building resilience so that people can ultimately sustain themselves.

I'd like to thank all UN personnel here today and around the country for your dedication to serving and supporting the citizens of South Sudan.

Today is about celebrating those efforts. But we also wanted you – the members of the community – to be part of this event because, without your support, we could not carry out our work.

We have a truly spectacular afternoon of entertainment ahead of us with performances by the legendary Emmanuel Kembe, Isaka Number One and Neetah Beibe as well as a fantastic cultural display by Rwandan peacekeepers.

So please sit back and enjoy the concert which honors the UN and our strong and enduring relationship with you, the people of South Sudan.