

23rd R-JMEC Plenary Meeting
UNMISS Statement by Mr. Nicholas Haysom
Special Representative of the Secretary-General
21 July 2022
[As Delivered]

RJMEC Interim-Chair,
Members of the RJMEC Plenary,
Excellencies and distinguished guests:

I appreciate the invitation by RJMEC to brief this plenary session today.

Since the last RJMEC plenary, I have briefed the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council on the situation in South Sudan. On both occasions, I shared that the end of the transition period is fast approaching and the window of opportunity to implement the key benchmarks is closing. Notwithstanding the slow progress, I encouraged the Councils to continue to demonstrate their commitment and to maintain their attention on the situation in South Sudan.

Allow me first to acknowledge the progress already referred to in the various reports. Last week, the Committee responsible for developing the roadmap presented it to President Kiir. A presidency meeting is now expected to decide on the way forward and we have heard from different groups that they are actively seeking participation in the further development of the roadmap. This represents a positive step and I encourage the inclusion of all parties going forward.

I commend the conclusion of the nationwide consultation of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing (CTRH), the resumption of work of the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC), and the establishment of the ad hoc Judiciary Reform Committee (JRC) following the nomination of representatives of the parties. The establishment of the JRC will allow for recommendations on the judicial reforms to the transitional government.

The launch of the revised National Development Strategy represents progress on the Strategic Economic Development Roadmap required under Chapter Four of RARCSS. This should be an initiative to utilize the resources of this country for long-term stability and prosperity of its people.

The completion of the reconstituted transitional legislature at national and state levels has provided a springboard for legislative activity and political debate. Discussions and contestations have shifted from outside parliament to inside parliament, and the Political Parties and Constitution making bills have passed through this forum. Procedural issues, however, have now resulted in the boycott referred to already in the proceedings, with implications on the peace implementation process. This requires urgent resolution. There are other essential bills awaiting deliberation, particularly the National Elections Act, which is a pre-requisite for launching the electoral and other legislative frameworks.

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The implementation of several other tasks is lagging. Particularly, there has been no progress since the April agreement of the single command structure in graduating the Necessary Unified Forces. Further delays may increase tensions between the different groups with undesirable consequences. Completion of the graduation can contribute to stability and improving security especially now when there are alarming levels of intercommunal conflict across the breadth of this country, from North to South, from East to West.

The devastating effects of subnational violence has resulted in high civilian casualties, compounded by cycles of cattle rustling, abductions, revenge killings, and conflict-related sexual violence. This year, more than 80 per cent of civilian casualties have been attributed to intercommunal violence committed by community-based militias.

As you are aware and at the same time, the country is facing a serious humanitarian crisis with an estimated 8.9 million people in need, including over 2 million women and 4.6 million children. Flooding, for a fourth consecutive year, in Unity State and Jonglei, is worsening food security and causing displacements. The 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan remains under-funded having raised less than 30 per cent of the \$1.7 billion required. One implication is that the World Food Programme can now only deliver rations to the most vulnerable counties.

In the face of these challenges, sub-national conflict, administrative obstacles, and antagonism towards humanitarian workers has hindered services to some of the most vulnerable people. Humanitarians have had to withdraw from some areas, including Nimule in Eastern Equatoria and Tonj North in Warrap, due to safety concerns. I welcome the efforts by senior officials in the government to deploy forces to Rualbet in Tonj North after the incidents to ensure security, engage with UNMISS, and encourage humanitarians to return to the area.

The United Nations is doing all it can on several fronts. For example, following the recent incidents in Kapoeta North in Eastern Equatoria State, which resulted in at least over 100 civilian deaths, the Mission rapidly deployed Peacekeepers as a way of stemming the violence, building confidence amongst community members, and allowing humanitarian services to return, similar to our previous interventions such as Koch, Tambura and Leer where we have established Temporary Operating Bases to function as “umbrellas of safety”. These efforts are however not sustainable solutions, and with the geographic spread of the intercommunal conflict, UNMISS can simply not be everywhere.

Government intervention in conflict hotspots is needed to de-escalate violence and to act, with restraint, against perpetrators, including on cases of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). At this time, I also

recognize the recent efforts in Yei by the SSPDF in organizing the joint special mobile court, with the support of UNMISS, that resulted in conviction of soldiers for cases of SGBV. This is vital in strengthening and demonstrating accountability.

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In the months ahead, it is critical that the parties demonstrate a sense of urgency and political will, backed by adequate resources, to take all necessary steps to bring an end to the transitional period, eventually through the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections.

As called for by the RJMEC, the African Union, the United Nations, and reiterated on the 5th of July IGAD Heads of State communique, an inclusive roadmap with clear benchmarks and realistic timelines should serve to recommit all South Sudanese parties to their own peace agreement and allow the international community to align its support with priority benchmarks.

In closing, I urge the government and parties to expedite the following time-sensitive tasks:

- Graduating and deploying the Necessary Unified Forces
- Facilitating the approval of key legislation for the constitution-making process and national elections, as well as critical reforms of the security, judicial and financial sectors.
- Ensuring a consultative process for an inclusive roadmap that, through clear timelines and benchmarks, will guide towards exiting the transitional period culminating in free, fair, and peaceful elections
- And finally, to expand, not restrict, the political space for South Sudanese to express their fears, hopes and preferences, their values, and their aspirations.

I thank you.