

As South Sudan celebrates, UN envoy cites trust as future 'key ingredient'

Thousands of elated citizens gathered in South Sudan's capital of Juba on Wednesday to celebrate an agreement signed in September between the President and his former deputy, which it is hoped will finally end years of brutal conflict across the world's youngest country.

"To see parties that have previously been divided by violence coming together here in Juba, in a [public sign of unity](#), sends a strong signal to the citizens of this country that you are genuinely committed to end the suffering and building durable peace," remarked David Shearer, UN Special Representative and Head of the [UN Mission in South Sudan](#) (UNMISS).

In a gesture of reconciliation, President Salva Kiir announced the imminent release of former deputy and opposition leader Riek Machar's spokesperson, who has been detained since late 2016 on charges of treason.

Alongside President Kiir and Mr. Machar, other Heads of State, high-level representatives and leaders from other opposition groups attended the event marking the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict, which was billed as a celebration of "the Dawn of Peace, Appreciating Friends, Cherishing Reconciliation and Unity".

Mr. Shearer also paid tribute to heads of the East African Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the governments of neighbouring Sudan and Uganda for their critical role in securing the peace agreement.

We will prove sceptics wrong by sincerely implementing the agreement fully, in letter and spirit – *South Sudan President Kiir*

After several "false starts" to the protracted peace process, which began with an agreement in 2015, some questioned whether the September deal signed would hold. The UNMISS head cited trust as "the key ingredient needed at every step" moving forward.

"The big challenge ahead is to build trust and confidence between the parties – and between the parties and the people," Mr. Shearer said, adding that it was the responsibility of "all of us here today; officials, civil society, religious leaders and the international community" to do so.

The signatories unanimously stressed their commitment to translating peace-promoting words into action while underscoring the need for the international community to politically and economically support the way forward.

"We will stand alongside the parties as they move forward in peace," Mr. Shearer said. "We will use our resources and our presence across the country

to support reconciliation and peacebuilding.”

President Kiir offered the South Sudanese people something of a mea culpa, saying that “as president, I want to apologize to all the parties of the conflict, and to the people of South Sudan, for our betrayal of the promise of our struggle for independence.”

“We will prove sceptics wrong by sincerely implementing the agreement fully, in letter and spirit,” he said.