

'Give peace a chance; give children a chance,' senior UN peacekeeping official says visiting South Sudan

All stakeholders in South Sudan must “engage genuinely and constructively in finding a political solution” to the conflict there, a senior United Nations peacekeeping official said at the end of her four-day visit.

“There is [no military solution](#) to the conflict,” UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Bintou Keita told reporters in the war-ravaged country’s capital, Juba, underscoring the importance of the peace talks facilitated by the regional body, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD).

A key forum led by IGAD to revive the peace process, which will resume soon, offers an important opportunity that needs to be seized, she said, urging warring parties to “adhere scrupulously to the terms of the December 2017 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement” – an accord adopted at the Forum’s previous round held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

“But peace will not be won in Addis Ababa only,” Ms. Keita said, stressing that it must be won in every state of South Sudan where politically motivated intercommunal violence has caused numerous fatalities in the past month.

“The fighting between the government and rebel forces, which broke out in several parts of Greater Upper Nile and the Bahr-El-Ghazal in the past few weeks, has to stop once and for all,” she said.

Ms. Keita said the UN is committed to supporting people-to-people peace initiatives, reconciliation efforts and the national dialogue process “provided they are genuinely inclusive, transparent and offer complementary platforms through the efforts of IGAD.”

“If they are, we will not hesitate to tell the opposition leaders: ‘Think about the country beyond your individual interest. Give peace a chance. Give your children a chance. Every opportunity for peace, every chance to save lives, has to be seized,’” she said.

David Shearer, the Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan, known as [UNMISS](#), highlighted the many ways the Mission is supporting the peace process, internationally and locally, as a part of its mandate.

“We have provided logistical support to get the national dialogue to the places they need to go to, in other words helicopters and planes. We have provided financial support directly to the dialogue,” Mr. Shearer said, in response to a question about what the Mission was doing to support efforts to find a political solution.

“We have provided technical support to bring in the experience of national dialogues across the world. In those ways, we have supported the peace process. It is a critical part of our mission,” he added.

Since gaining independence in 2011, South Sudan has spent much of its short life mired in conflict, as what began as a political face-off between President Salva Kiir and former Vice-President Riek Machar erupted into full-blown war late in 2013.