

Landmark South Sudan deal offers hope, but trust 'still lacking' between parties – UN envoy

Rebuilding trust and overcoming suspicion will be key to ensure the success of Thursday's landmark peace agreement between the South Sudanese Government and main political opposition, the top United Nations official in the country has said.

The agreement, reached between President Salva Kiir and his former Vice-President Riek Machar, is the latest hope to end a bitter conflict plaguing South Sudan – the world's youngest nation – for much of its short existence.

Over 50,000 people have been killed and millions displaced from their homes in almost five years of bloody fighting.

[According](#) to David Shearer, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and the head of the UN Mission there, the greatest challenges are yet to come during the implementation phase.

“The key ingredient still lacking is trust. The personalities signing the agreement have in the past been former friends and foes. From my discussions with all parties, suspicion is widespread... These people have got animosities that go back two decades, three decades even.”

It is beholden on all of us here today to help encourage trust between parties – *David Shearer, head of UNMISS*

Resolving those differences is vital for a better future of the country, he said, underscoring that it is “beholden on all of us here today to help encourage trust between parties.”

UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) also highlighted the challenges ahead and called on the international community to “remain seized” of the situation in South Sudan throughout the implementation of the peace agreement.

In a [statement](#) from his spokesperson, the UN chief said that the Organization stands ready, in close coordination with the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD, an eight-country trade bloc in Africa) and the African Union (AU), to assist the parties in implementing the agreement.

The peace agreement – signed on Wednesday at the main UN office in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa – follows 15 months of negotiations led by the IGAD and the Governments of Sudan and Ethiopia.

The regional leadership was crucial in bringing the parties together,

highlighted Mr. Shearer, noting the role the UN and the international community will be expected to play in assisting with genuine reconciliation and peacebuilding activities.

“However, we need to be persuaded by the demonstration of collective political will of the parties to implement an agreed and realistic implementation plan,” he stressed.

The new agreement comes in the aftermath of a series of failed peace deals, including a similar one between the two political rivals in 2015. Under the new agreement, Mr. Machar – who has lived in exile since 2013 – will return to South Sudan and be reinstated as Vice-President under a power-sharing arrangement.

[FROM THE FIELD: Rwanda's Green Villages benefit poorest](#)

An innovative approach to supporting the poorest and most vulnerable in Rwanda, is helping to address environmental problems and achieve ambitious development goals there, according to the UN Development Programme, [UNDP](#).



UNDP Rwanda/Gabrielle Tillberg

The “Green Village” concept, a Rwandan government initiative which is supported by UNDP, aims to tackle the African country’s growing natural resource challenges – including deforestation, soil erosion, access to water and unsustainable land use. It also ensures that the poorest Rwandans have access to homes, schools, water, gas and electricity.

Rwanda’s impressive 8 per cent economic growth-rate in the first 14 years of the new millennium, has helped to boost recovery in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, however 40 percent of the population still lives in poverty.

People living in the Green Villages, which are located in the most

disadvantaged rural areas, are provided with rain water collectors, improved sanitation, biogas facilities as well as one free cow per family.

Visit Kabeza, one of Rwanda's 44 Green Villages [here](#).

[Scourge of genocide remains a 'threat and a reality' today: UN human rights chief](#)

Genocide remains a "threat and a reality" in the 21st century, UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said on Thursday, in an appeal to States to do more to act on the "warning signs" that often precede grave violations of international law.

At an event at the [Human Rights Council](#) in Geneva to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the [Genocide Convention](#), Ms. Bachelet highlighted the findings of a UN probe into "the military-led campaign of murder, rape and assault" against Myanmar's Rohingya people, as well as brutal acts committed against the Iraqi Yazidi community by ISIL.

"This leaves us in no doubt that the genocide convention matters as much today as it did on 9 December 1948," she said. "The day it became the very first human rights treaty to be adopted by the UN General Assembly – followed the next day by the adoption of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)."

Insisting that it was time to "take stock" of recent violations in Myanmar and Iraq, Ms. Bachelet also welcomed last week's decision by the International Criminal Court (ICC) that it had jurisdiction to rule over the alleged mass deportation of some 750,000 Rohingya, from Rakhine state.

The ICC decision did not specifically address the crime of genocide "but it offers real hope" that those responsible will be brought to justice, she noted, while underlining the importance and "preventative impact" of the work of the Human Rights Council and the UN Human Rights Office, OHCHR.

"Accountability matters," the UN official continued. "Prevention and punishment – the explicitly stated twin aims of the genocide convention – can never be seen in isolation from each other. Punishment is key to prevention. Impunity is an enabler of genocide; accountability is its nemesis."

To date, [149 States have ratified or acceded](#) to the Genocide Convention, whose full name is the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

It was signed in the aftermath of World War Two and the Holocaust, when Member States of the young organization drew up an international treaty to prohibit the crime of genocide, which required signatory governments to take all necessary steps to prevent or stop it.

Lack of commitment naïve and puzzling – UN Special Adviser

Forty-five UN Member States have yet to join the international accord – 20 from the African continent, 18 from Asia and the remaining seven from the Americas – Adama Dieng, [Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide](#), told the Human Rights Council.

This lack of commitment of such a large number of States was as “puzzling” as it was naïve, Mr. Dieng said. “What message are those States sending, 70 years after the adoption of the Convention? That genocide could never happen within their borders? That is being naïve. History has shown us time and again that genocide can happen anywhere.”

Insisting that the convention was still relevant and that joining it was a “moral obligation towards humanity”, Mr. Dieng urged Member States to prioritize ratification by its 70th anniversary, on 9 December 2018.

He insisted that the genocide convention, together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the [Rome Statute of the ICC](#), remain “the most important legal standard we have to fulfil the commitment to ‘never again’ that the world made 70 years ago”.

Failure to support the convention risks further disastrous human and economic consequences, Mr. Dieng explained: “enormous loss of life, massive displacement of people, collective trauma that lasts for generations, devastated economies, and development set back by decades.”

[Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan laid to rest in Ghana; Guterres hails ‘exceptional global leader’](#)

Like few today, former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, could “bring people together, put them at ease, and unite them towards a common goal”, said the current UN chief, António Guterres on Thursday, speaking at his predecessor’s funeral in Ghana.

“Since the shock of Kofi’s death, I have been reflecting on what made him so special,” Mr. Guterres told those assembled, saying he was “both one-of-a-kind and one of us.”

He opened the doors of the United Nations, bringing the Organization closer to the world's people –*Secretary-General António Guterres*

The only UN chief to have emerged from the ranks of its staff, passed away after a short illness on 18 August. He was 80.

Speaking of Mr. Annan's time at the helm of the Organization, Secretary-General Guterres cited "a remarkable record of achievement," in which he pioneered new ideas and initiatives, including the [Millennium Development Goals](#) – precursor to the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) – and landmark reforms in his report, "In Larger Freedom."

Mr. Guterres called his predecessor an "exceptional global leader" who saw the UN as "a force for good."

"He opened the doors of the United Nations, bringing the Organization closer to the world's people and engaging new partners in protecting the environment, defending human rights and combating HIV/AIDS and other killer diseases," he spelled out.

"Kofi Annan was the United Nations and the United Nations was him," Mr. Guterres asserted.

On a personal note, the UN chief called Mr. Annan "my good friend," saying they "marched through life together in many ways."

They had come together in supporting the birth of a new nation, Timor-Leste, and then, as the UN Refugee Agency chief, the former Secretary-General had provided him with "unwavering support", he said.

"Now that I occupy the office Kofi once held, I am continually inspired by his integrity, dynamism and dedication," Mr. Guterres said.

Noting that to Mr. Annan, "indifference was the world's worst poison," the UN chief maintained that even after leaving the Secretariat in New York, "he never stopped battling on the front-lines of diplomacy," elaborating that he helped to ease post-election tensions in Kenya, gave his all to finding a political solution to the war in Syria, and set out a path for to ensure rights for the Rohingya of Myanmar.

Turning to his Africa roots and identity, Mr. Guterres pointed out that Nelson Mandela's nickname for Mr. Annan was "my leader."

"This was no jest. Kofi was our leader, too," affirmed Mr. Guterres. "When I last saw him not long ago at the UN, his bearing was how I will always remember him: calm yet determined, ready to laugh but always filled with the gravity of the work we do."

While he will be missed "immensely," said the UN chief, "let us always be inspired by the legacy of Kofi Annan – and guided by the knowledge that he will continue speaking to us, urging us on towards the goals to which he

dedicated his life and truly moved our world.”

His widow Nane Annan spoke eloquently of her husband’s strong connection to Ghana, and about how “excited he always was returning home.”

“On arrival he would draw in the air” and “look so happy and content,” she said, crediting her late husband’s “inner strength...from his deep roots here” and thanking the country for giving the world “such an extraordinary human being.”

She conveyed her husband’s “irresistible aura of radiant warmth” and said, “his legacy will live on in his foundation and in all of us.”

“May you rest in peace and may your wisdom and compassion continue to inspire and guide us,” she concluded.

Blockades ‘expose’ the innocent, to the ‘ravages of economic war’ – UN sanctions expert warns

Economic sanctions must not be allowed to degenerate into blockades which “expose people to the ravages of economic war in peacetime” said the UN independent expert on the effects of sanctions on human rights.

Special Rapporteur [Idriss Jazairy](#), pointed out on Thursday, that civilians affected by blockades do not benefit from the protection of the Geneva Convention, which is aimed at safeguarding civilians during war time.

Sanctions usually lead to countries, or groups of countries, refusing to trade with a targeted State, but a blockade prevents the targeted State from trading with other potential partners.

Briefing the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Mr. Jazairy said that people in Iran and Venezuela risk being badly affected, were any blockade to be imposed, while the situation for those in Syria – already suffering grave human rights abuses – would have even worse consequences.

In Yemen, one of the poorest countries on earth, which imports almost all of its food, fuel and medicines, civilians were weakened further by a total [blockade](#) imposed in November 2017, preventing all humanitarian aid and commercial trade – including food and fuel – from entering the country.

In Gaza, where residents have lived through an Israeli blockade for more than a decade, after the militant group Hamas gained control of the enclave,

civilians have suffered from a deteriorating humanitarian situation.

In [August](#), UN Political Affairs chief [Rosemary di Carlo](#) told the Security Council that humanitarian aid in the Middle East should not be held hostage to politics.

“There is a need for differences between States to be resolved through peaceful means as advocated by the [UN Charter](#), while avoiding exposing innocent civilians to collective punishment,” said Mr. Jazairy, expressing concern about the growing practice of unilateral sanctions, where a particular country bans companies and corporations from doing business with a sanctioned state.

Referring to a recent meeting in Brussels with European Officials, Mr. Jazairy told the Council that he has urged the EU to limit “secondary sanctions”, which go beyond targeted countries.

He said he would focus on making humanitarian exceptions to internationally imposed measures effective, until States lift all sanctions that lead to human rights infringements.