

Renewing progress towards peace in South Sudan

- UK notes progress towards peace in South Sudan is “too slow and too limited” and calls on government to act in interests of its people
- UK expresses concern at levels of humanitarian crises and severe malnutrition and calls for Government to partner with donor communities and the UN to solve the crisis

Remarks by Ambassador Jonathan Allen at the Security Council, 3 March 2021

Thank you very much, Madam President. Let me begin by thanking Jackline Nasiwa for her briefing. And let me also take this opportunity to commend the outgoing SRSR, David Shearer. David, I and many others have seen over the years your genuine, personal and tireless commitment towards peace and stability in South Sudan. You have always put the people of South Sudan first. Members of this Council saw that first hand during our visit in 2019. This has been a distinguished tour of duty, and my country thanks you for your service.

Madam President, twelve months on from the formation of the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity, I want to welcome the appointment of a unified Cabinet, Governors and Deputy Governors in all states. We hope that those appointed can deliver tangible improvements to people's lives.

South Sudan's endorsement with a roadmap for implementing transitional justice mechanisms, including the Hybrid Court, is also welcome. And I urge the Government of South Sudan to expedite the memorandum of understanding with the African Union on the Hybrid Court.

Madam President, whilst these steps are welcome, overall progress has been too slow and too limited. Time after time, this Council expresses its concerns and calls for action. Yet what we and the people of South Sudan continue to see is inaction on a number of issues. Power vacuums at local level have directly led to further suffering and civilian casualties. The Government needs to show the world that it's serious about peace. As the next step, we call for South Sudan to complete the reconstitution of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly. We also call on the Government to ensure adequate training and resourcing of the Necessary Unified Forces. Such action does not require any easing of the arms embargo, but should the Government wish to submit exemption requests, they are free to do so for the consideration of the Sanctions Committee.

Madam President, we must acknowledge that more people are in need of assistance than at any time since South Sudan's independence nearly a decade ago. 8.3 million people are dependent on humanitarian assistance to survive.

60 percent of the population is facing crisis levels of food insecurity. 1.4 million children under the age of five face severe malnutrition in 2021 – that's 10 percent of the entire population. We must do all we can to scale up the humanitarian response.

The UK is giving over \$175 million this year in response to needs in South Sudan, in addition to our large scale funding of COVAX, providing vaccines around the world. I want to remind Council members of the importance of our passing of UN Security Council Resolution 2565 and provisions within it calling for access to vaccines in conflict zones, which I hope will apply fully in South Sudan next year.

Reporting from the UN Commission on Human Rights provides further devastating insight into the impact of conflict on civilians. Violence against civilians continues. Rape and starvation are used as weapons of war. Now is clearly not the time to downgrade the Human Rights Council's oversight of the situation.

The South Sudanese government needs to show it understands the severity of the plight of its people, to take responsibility and act in partnership with donor communities and the UN to solve the crisis. It should include full respect for the Status of Forces Agreement. And I want to state our unequivocal support for UNMISS and recognise the crucial protection role played by UNMISS.

Madam President, one year on from the formation of a transitional government and almost 10 years from the creation of South Sudan, we have sadly little to applaud. We can say that it could be worse, but only because so often it has been worse. There are multiple systemic failings and sadly, the elite do not choose to put the interests of the people first. We need an approach which incentivises those elites to cooperate in the interests of all.

I note that the representative of South Sudan has again today chosen not to participate in our meeting. Indeed, we have not seen him here for a year. I understand he has said he does not want to join us because he feels that his country is criticized in our meetings. It seems to me that if more time was spent by the leadership of South Sudan in listening to others rather than ignoring inconvenient voices, then things might improve.

Madam President, we cannot let the systemic drift continue. With renewed effort from us all, including from the government and the politicians in South Sudan, substantial progress can be achieved. We should seize this opportunity so that when we meet again ahead of the 10 year anniversary of South Sudan's independence, we – and more importantly, the people of South Sudan – can have something to celebrate.

Thank you, Madam President.