

## South Sudan 'revitalized' peace deal must be inclusive, Security Council hears

Although recent engagement between the main political rivals in South Sudan is a welcome development, ending the country's long-standing conflict will only be achieved by addressing its root causes and ensuring women, youth and other sectors contribute to peace efforts.

That was the key message a senior United Nations official delivered to the Security Council in New York on Thursday.

Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General in the UN's [Department of Peacekeeping Operations](#), updated ambassadors on the ongoing process to end nearly five years of fighting in the world's youngest nation, including mediation efforts by the African regional body IGAD.

The organization facilitated meetings this month between South Sudan President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar, his former deputy, leading to the signing on Wednesday of a declaration announcing a "permanent ceasefire" across the country.

Ms. Keita said these "positive developments" must be supported.

"However, peace in South Sudan will not be achieved or sustained merely on the basis of a bilateral deal between the two leaders," she told the Council.

"While the outcome of regional and international efforts to deliver a political settlement is yet unclear, I must reiterate that peace will only be sustained if the revitalized agreement is inclusive, fair, addresses the root causes of the conflict and engages all stake holders, including women and youth."

Akuei Bona Malwal, South Sudan's Ambassador to the UN, urged the international community to support IGAD's efforts.

"We would like to appeal to this Council and to other international actors and entities concerned with the situation in South Sudan to give the IGAD peace process that is currently and earnestly underway in Khartoum, full support. This Council must be seen as fully supporting the peace process for South Sudan, not just eager to dole out blame and punishment whenever there is a setback in the process of peace-making," he said.

South Sudan gained independence in July 2011 but descended into violence in December 2013, following a political impasse between the two leaders. A peace deal signed two years later fell apart.

Since the start of the conflict, thousands have been killed, nearly two

million have been displaced, and untold human rights violations have been committed, including rape, abductions and pillaging.

The violence has further added to humanitarian challenges the new nation already was facing due to the legacy of civil war from when it was part of Sudan.

Ms. Keita reported on various “security incidents” this month so far, including deadly attacks on villages.

She said the continued fighting has a direct impact on the humanitarian situation and people’s access to food. Moreover, 30 aid workers have been killed since the start of the conflict – seven this year alone – while a UN peacekeeper from Bangladesh died this week after his convoy came under attack.

With hunger and malnutrition reaching record levels as the peak hunger season approaches, Ms. Keita warned that more than seven million people could be affected.

“More than a million children under age five are forecast to be malnourished in 2018. This is a heavy and unfair price being paid by the most vulnerable of society due to no fault of their own,” she said.