

Speech: A lasting peace agreement

Thank you Mr President and may I thank all our briefers for sharing their assessment of progress in South Sudan following their visit. And it's important and welcome to see such joint UN-AU activity.

Mr President, the signing of the revised Peace Agreement in September was a significant moment in the peace process and let me again publicly take the opportunity to welcome this important step taken by the Parties. We also applaud the role of the region. The deal would not have been agreed without the work of IGAD – in particular, Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda and Kenya – and we welcome their engagement in monitoring progress and holding the parties to account for implementing the agreement. If I've understood the Ethiopian ambassador correctly, let me also welcome IGAD's intention to approach the United Nations and the Security Council to discuss any proposal to deploy troops in support of the agreement.

As our briefers have made clear, some significant progress has been made since the revised Peace Agreement was signed, which we warmly welcome. In particular, the establishment of key transitional bodies, the return of Riek Machar and other opposition leaders to Juba for the Peace Day celebrations, the release of some prisoners, and the holding of National Pre-Transitional Committee meetings are all to be welcomed. I was struck by the Swedish Ambassador's comment about the tangible sense of hope that he perceived when there. Everything we do must be to sustain that hope.

So despite this promising start, we remain concerned that several fundamental provisions of the Agreement are yet to be implemented and the timeframes set out in the Agreement are being missed.

We are deeply concerned by the reports of continued violence, in particular around Wau and Yei, which threaten to undermine the Agreement and violate the commitments made by all parties in the Cessation of Hostilities, numerous ceasefire agreements, and in the revised Peace Agreement.

We are also concerned that UNMISS and CTSAMM are being denied access to areas, such as south of Wau, to carry out their work including to monitor implementation of the ceasefire as mandated by the UN Security Council and IGAD.

Secondly, we have yet to see the full and unfettered humanitarian access that has been repeatedly promised. This has improved in some areas. But elsewhere obstructions continue, including around Greater Baggari, where access was denied for several months earlier this year and has recently been blocked again, and where we know there are people in famine-like conditions. Bureaucratic obstructions also continue, including taxes and fees that divert tens of millions of dollars from providing food, water or shelter for the most vulnerable in South Sudan. We call on the Government of South Sudan to introduce a temporary waiver from income taxes for international staff of humanitarian and development organisations, as well as a waiver from other

taxes, fees and permit costs and fees, for as long as the current acute humanitarian crisis continues. And we call on the Opposition to cease attempts to impose illegal charges. As of September 2018, the World Food Programme assessed that 6.1 million people – over half of the population – are facing severe food insecurity. The humanitarian community is in South Sudan as a life-saver, not a revenue-raiser.

Third, more must be done to ensure that the Peace Agreement is supported across South Sudanese society. This includes increasing the transparency of government revenue so that the people of South Sudan can see that this is used for their benefit. It should also include respecting fundamental rights and basic freedoms, including freedom of expression, opening civic space and releasing those political detainees that remain in detention.

To build confidence in the Peace Agreement Mr President, implementation must be truly inclusive. We welcome the focus of the visit on women's participation. I found the words of the Executive Director of UN Women particularly important in this in our briefing today. I particularly noted her comments on security institutions and the need to end gender-based violence and around representation. And we know that that female involvement in peace processes makes them much more likely to be sustained. This is in everybody's interest, Mr President.

Tackling impunity will also be essential to building confidence in the peace process and to preventing future grave violations. We call on the Government of South Sudan to sign the MoU with the African Union to establish the Hybrid Court, to ensure perpetrators are held to account for their appalling crimes.

Mr President, I want in particular to highlight our concern about the impact of the conflict in South Sudan on children. The Secretary-General's recent report on Children and Armed Conflict report finds that children have been deliberately targeted and killed, very young girls have been subjected to gruesome gang-rape, children have been abducted and their schools destroyed. We welcome the recent visit of the Working Group, as set out by the Swedish Ambassador, and the work on a comprehensive Action Plan to address this issue, and we urge the signatories of these Action Plans to implement them in full.

Mr President, let me conclude by repeating that we are strong supporters of the peace deal and we applaud the efforts of the region in achieving it. There has been progress, and that is welcomed. But there needs to be so much more. It is essential that the Parties demonstrate their commitment to this agreement by addressing all outstanding issues urgently because it is the people of South Sudan who are suffering most – from hunger and from violence. It is for the sake of the people that we must all redouble our efforts.

Thank you Mr President.