

Speech: “Suffering on this scale cannot be allowed to continue. South Sudan cannot continue on its current path.”

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative, at the Security Council briefing on South Sudan

Thank you Mr President. At the outset, let me take the opportunity to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Shearer and also President Mogae for their briefings, and to reiterate the UK’s full support to the vital work of UNMISS and JMEC in difficult circumstances in South Sudan.

Mr President, two years ago the people of South Sudan rejoiced at the signing of the 2015 Peace Agreement. It was a symbol of hope for this young country which had so quickly been plunged again into war by the rivalries of its leaders. Now that document is a stark reminder of all the Government has failed to deliver for South Sudan. As the Secretary-General said, the signatories to the Peace Agreement have demonstrated time and again that they are deaf to the distress of their own people and unmoved by calls for peace from the international community.

Conflict, hunger and horrific sexual violence have become commonplace: there has been gang rape, recruitment of child soldiers, and attacks on schools and hospitals. Nearly 2 million people are on the brink of famine and half the population are food insecure.

And yet, NGOs report that those starving are often too afraid to collect life saving aid for fear of being attacked on the way home by those charged to protect them. We cannot even begin to imagine the choices that the people of South Sudan are being forced to make. This suffering is forcing millions of civilians to flee, creating the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the fastest growing in the world.

And today, we have been presented with yet another set of reports which demonstrate that the Government’s declared “ceasefire” is meaningless. Government forces continue large-scale military operations, causing dire humanitarian consequences and disrupting life-saving humanitarian operations. Suffering on this scale cannot be allowed to continue. South Sudan cannot continue on its current path.

As President Mogae has rightly stated, the international community must act and speak with one voice. And in this vein, the UK strongly welcomes the joint efforts of the United Nations, the regional countries in IGAD and the African Union to bring the suffering of the South Sudanese people and the

fighting to an end.

These messages were reiterated at the High Level Meeting on South Sudan last week and echo many of the calls that this Council made in March in our Presidential Statement. And we welcome the leadership shown by the regional countries of IGAD in launching the High Level Revitalisation Forum and we offer our full support, as I believe all in this Council do, to this initiative in its objective of revitalising the peace agreement. If this is to succeed, Mr. President, it will take a concerted and united push from all countries in the region and a commitment to stay the course.

Now the first priority for this process must be the laying down of all arms once and for all. There is no military solution to this crisis. Lasting peace will only be achieved through the inclusion of all groups, both armed and non-armed. We cannot expect success overnight. We must see the Revitalisation Forum as a process, not a one off meeting, although we must also guard against drift.

Success will also require all the parties, particularly the Government, to demonstrate the commitment and political will to pursue peace. Thus far this has been lacking. The UK therefore calls on all parties to the Agreement, as well as estranged and other opposition groups, to respond positively and constructively to this opportunity for dialogue. And we agree with others that at this stage elections would be premature.

The United Kingdom has repeatedly set out that there must be consequences for those who seek to obstruct peace, and has long-called for sanctions against spoilers. We therefore support last week's African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué in its call for all necessary steps, including sanctions to be considered against all those that continue to obstruct efforts towards the restoration of peace and security in South Sudan.

The international community including this Council must be prepared to act against those that continue to impede progress towards peace. We should be clear to those who reject peace and continue the suffering of the South Sudan people, that they will face sanctions if they do not participate fully in IGAD's process.

As that communiqué says, South Sudan can no longer be treated in a routine manner. The United Kingdom stands ready to support the region and to use all the tools at our disposal, both collectively and individually, to compel the parties to choose peace.

Thank you Mr. President.