

Speech: “We’re meeting today as South Sudan spirals deeper into crisis.”

Thank you Mr. President, and thank you David for your briefing just now, and for all of your excellent work.

We are meeting two months after President Kiir recommitted to a ceasefire in South Sudan, two months after this Council agreed to a Presidential statement with very clear steps. We should be reflecting today on two months of peace, two months of life-saving aid reaching those most in need, two months of UNMISS protecting civilians.

Instead, we’re meeting today as South Sudan spirals deeper into crisis. As we’ve heard so many times, the humanitarian and human rights situation is worsening, the economy is collapsing, and fighting has continued unabated. People are no longer fleeing in their tens of thousands, but in their hundreds of thousands. Over 900,000 South Sudanese now call Uganda home.

This situation underlines not only how severe the situation has become, but also how hollow those promises sounded to the people of South Sudan when President Kiir made them two months ago.

We all know what needs to happen. President Kiir must take the long overdue steps that he agreed in the IGAD statement in March and that we called for in our Presidential statement. This means granting sustained humanitarian access, allowing the deployment of the regional protection force, enabling UNMISS to fulfill its mandate, and above all, bringing an end to the fighting, not just in words, but through actions that make the people of South Sudan feel safe in their own homes, in their own country.

President Kiir this Monday once again declared a unilateral ceasefire and said he has once again agreed to consider the release of political prisoners. We welcome these statements, but the onus is now on him to prove that these are meaningful commitments, and not just convenient timing with the start of the rainy season, when fighting is made more difficult. I note with scepticism, but not surprise, that on the day that the ceasefire was announced, government offensives continued in Yei, and attacks by militia groups continue still.

We need to see an end to offensive operations, and end to disproportionate responses. We need to see true inclusive engagement with the opposition and civil society. And in turn, yes, we need to see a commitment to a ceasefire from opposition groups as well. President Kiir must begin withdrawing troops from parts of the country, disband ethnic militias, and ensure that humanitarian assistance can reach those in desperate need.

Sadly, the government has repeatedly ignored the requests of this Council, repeatedly ignored too the requests of the African Union and IGAD. Instead of allowing humanitarian access, the government has willfully endangered the

most vulnerable, denying aid to those facing famine in Unity state. Instead of allowing UNMISS to fulfill its mandate, the mission has faced significant harassment and worse, with the SPLA threatening to shoot UN peacekeepers if they moved any closer towards Wunkur in Unity state. These are not moves designed to inspire confidence in the commitment of President Kiir.

It's long past time, Mr. President, for the Government of South Sudan to show a genuine commitment to peace and stability, including by reaching out to the opposition. We will of course support political efforts which are truly inclusive. But we must learn from the past and not make the same mistake of relying on just the promise of dialogue. We will also need to keep up the pressure, and by that I mean we must use all of the tools at our disposal to encourage the Government of Sudan to take those steps, and for the opposition to follow suit. We need to show that there are consequences should they fail to do so.

Earlier today we renewed the sanctions regime that enables us to do just that. We should be willing to use this regime to send a clear message to anyone who continues to fail to deliver peace. And as I have said on numerous occasions in this chamber, we also need to restrict the flow of weapons into South Sudan. This Council has a responsibility to do all we can to bring peace to South Sudan. It's a responsibility that we are not yet fulfilling. All of us in this chamber, in the UN and across the region must redouble our efforts; we owe it to the people of South Sudan.

Thank you.