

The people of South Sudan are 'desperate for peace,' though political crisis persists – UN peacekeeping chief

21 June 2017 – Deliberate actions by the Government and opposition armed forces as well as other actors to advance their political goals continue to severely undermine efforts to get the country back on the path to peace and development, the top United Nations peacekeeping official has warned.

"We must not lose sight of the fact that this tragedy is man-made," Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told the Security Council today.

He added that the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA)-in Government, the SPLA-in Opposition, and various other entities, took decisions that have fed the conflict, creating "ever deeper divisions between the people of South Sudan."

In his briefing to the 15-member Council, Mr. Lacroix emphasized that while the Organization continues to make every effort to implement its commitment to the country, "only a truly inclusive political process and the genuine political will" of the key protagonists to end the conflict and implement agreements they reached will bring peace to the war-torn country.

Continued violence and insecurity has left more than half of South Sudan's population in need of food aid. Furthermore, a third of its population is displaced and half of those displaced have sought refuge in neighbouring Uganda, Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia.

Of particular concern, Mr. Lacroix said, are persisting hostilities in many parts of the country, even after a ceasefire commitment made by President Salva Kiir.

He also informed Council members that in the midst of the fighting, the UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)) is "doing its utmost" to protect civilians.

"Our peacekeepers are persistent in getting through checkpoints to reach vulnerable populations, even when the patrols are threatened and, at times, shot at [...], giving the populations confidence that we are there to protect them enables us to report human rights abuses, and helps us to support our humanitarian partners in ensuring that assistance goes to those who need it most."

He also updated members on progress towards the deployment of the Rapid Protection Force (RPF), mandated by the Council last year to provide a secure

environment in and around capital Juba, and noted some issues concerning the plot of land provided by the Government to the RPF to establish its northern basing site.

Further in his briefing, with regard to a pledge made by President Kiir to release political prisoners, the UN peacekeeping chief told the Council that while one UN staff member was released recently, two others have been held for two years without charge, and another has recently been detained in Rumbek.

“We must judge the President’s commitments by his actions, not his words,” said Mr. Lacroix, also calling for full freedom of movement for the Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) to monitor and verify ceasefire violations as well as UNMISS, which have faced far too many obstructions to their movements, making their work extremely challenging, and in some cases, impossible.