



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Statement by

H.E. Ms Karen Van Vlierberge, Deputy Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the United Nations

UNMISS/South Sudan discussion and consultations at the Security Council

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Mr President,

I would like to thank SRSB David Shearer for his briefing and his excellent work under difficult conditions.

We welcome the decision of the parties in South Sudan to form a transitional Government of National Unity and the swearing-in of the Vice-Presidents on 22 February. This is an important step towards lasting peace.

This development is the result of a spirit of compromise on the part of President Kiir and Riek Machar, and the commitment of the IGAD and the countries of the region, the African Union and several international actors.

We now encourage all parties to finalise the formation of a balanced Government of National Unity and to continue to fully implement the Revitalised Agreement.

Despite the commendable progress of the past few weeks, many challenges remain, such as the unification of the armed forces, genuine political dialogue, the establishment of the instruments of transitional justice, and rapprochement with the non-signatory parties to the peace agreement. In this context, we welcome the important efforts of the Sant'Egidio community in Rome.

Mr President,

The formation of a transitional government and the distribution of ministerial portfolios cannot be goals in themselves. It is essential that progress on the political front now translates into a tangible improvement of the plight of the people of South Sudan.

Yet the population continues to suffer from the serious humanitarian crisis. More than 7.5 million people need aid. Hunger is on the rise due to droughts, floods and the intense political instability of recent years. According to the latest WFP figures, 5.3 million South Sudanese are in "crisis" or at an even more alarming (or severe) level of food insecurity. More than 1.3 million children will suffer from acute malnutrition in 2020. These are unacceptable numbers.

The ceasefire continues to be broadly respected, but fighting continues in parts of Equatoria. Inter-communal violence, sexual violence and crime persist throughout the country, as indicated in the SG's most recent report. UNMISS reports an average of 150 persons killed, injured, abducted or sexually assaulted each month. We call on the government to prosecute the perpetrators of these acts in order to end the cycle of violence.

It is also necessary to continue to fight impunity for serious human rights violations, in particular through the operationalisation of transitional justice mechanisms, such as the establishment of the African Union Hybrid Court for South Sudan.

Mr President,

Let me now turn to the mandate of UNMISS. The encouraging developments of recent weeks can be reflected in the new mandate, but we must remain vigilant. In this respect, we believe that the mandate should remain largely unchanged.

The protection of civilians must remain the priority task of UNMISS. It is too early to reconfigure civilian protection sites, as the situation on the ground remains difficult and unpredictable. The resolution should pay due attention to human rights, children in armed conflict and sexual and gender-based violence, because the challenges are real.

We support the request of UNMISS to integrate the Regional Protection Force into the mission's resources. The UNMISS operational set-up has continued to evolve to become more mobile and maximise its presence. We encourage the mission to continue its efforts in this regard, in order to deter violence against civilians.

Mr President,

For the first time in a while, there is real reason for optimism on this issue. A crucial step has been taken. Now is the time to tackle the remaining challenges as well - there are still many of them. Only in this way can the plight of the people of South Sudan be improved in a sustainable manner.

Thank you.