

Speech by H.E. Mr. Marc Pecsteen, Ambassador,
Permanent Representative

at the UN Security Council

Briefing session: South Sudan and UNMISS

USAGE INTERNE - N5 - INTERN GEBRUIK

New York, 25 June 2019

Mr President,

I would like to thank Mr David Shearer for his briefing and his exceptional work under difficult conditions. I would also like to thank ASG Mr Andrew Gilmour and Ms Lydia Minagano for their informative briefings.

Mr President,

July 9 marks eight years since the independence of South Sudan, five of which have been marked by the effects of a civil war. This conflict has claimed the lives of nearly 400,000 people. One in three people have been forced to leave their homes and one in two face acute food insecurity or worse. It is expected that some 860,000 children under the age of 5 will suffer from severe malnutrition in 2019. Women and girls are most affected by violence, including degrading and barbaric sexual violence. No one is spared, neither women in their eighties nor two-year-old girls. As we imagine the intolerable suffering of the people of South Sudan, it is time for real action by the country's leaders.

Mr President,

Just before 12 May, the end of the eight-month pre-transitional period, the South Sudanese parties unanimously agreed a six-month extension of this period to allow for the implementation of the essential preconditions for the transition. The region and the international community supported this decision. Time is passing, there is a persistent lack of progress and a real risk of compromising the gains made.

The new deadline could easily be missed unless there is significant political investment by the parties and the region, including IGAD, to accelerate preparations for the transitional period.

This is worrying, as the revitalised Agreement represents *the* window of opportunity for achieving lasting peace in the country. We encourage all actors to spare no efforts in achieving real progress on the key issues in the implementation of the agreement. The parties must put in place security arrangements, finalise the establishment of internal boundaries, create an implementation roadmap, organise face-to-face meetings with key political leaders and release the implementation funds announced by the government; non-signatories must also join the R-ACRSS. We support the SG's call to the parties to refrain from mutual recrimination and inflammatory rhetoric. The strong commitment of the region's States is essential for the implementation of the agreement.

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Mr President,

The civilian protection crisis continues. Although political violence has decreased, inter-community violence has intensified in recent months. Human rights abuses continue. No lasting solution to the conflict in South Sudan can be found without addressing this abuse urgently and effectively. We call for an end to the culture of impunity in South Sudan. We call on the Government to assume its responsibility to protect civilians, thoroughly investigate all cases of sexual violence and other abuse, and bring those responsible for these crimes to justice. We call for the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms, including the Hybrid Court, to combat impunity.

Restrictions on freedom of expression are unacceptable. A country can only flourish with a diverse and active civil society and free media. Political prisoners and prisoners of war must be released without delay. It is unacceptable, moreover, that the whereabouts of two UNMISS staff members have remained unknown since their arrest in 2014: the South Sudanese authorities should immediately inform UNMISS of their condition and location.

Mr President,

Conflict is the main factor in the humanitarian and protection crisis in South Sudan, a crisis that is completely man-made. Any delay in the implementation of the Agreement will prolong the suffering of the people of South Sudan. The necessary measures have been identified and it is now up to the parties to implement them.