

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by Ms. Jackline Nasiwa
Statement to the UN Security Council
3 March 2021**

Madam President, Excellencies,

Good morning and warm greetings from South Sudan. I am Jackline Nasiwa, Founder of the Center for Inclusive Governance, Peace and Justice (CIGPJ), a local non-governmental organization working on human rights, justice, peacebuilding and women's rights in South Sudan. Thank you for the opportunity to brief you today.

As in many other parts of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated South Sudan. Cases are skyrocketing and overwhelming an already weak healthcare system that cannot meet even basic demands for services. This pandemic comes amidst a myriad of other issues: floods in most parts of the Upper Nile Region; famine in Jonglei and Pibor; continuous violations of the ceasefire by its parties, including in the cantonment sites; fighting with non-signatories to the agreement; communal violence causing loss of lives and property; sexual violence against women and girls; displacement; and broader public health crises. Our economy has collapsed due to mismanagement of revenue and national resources, denying citizens basic services. This is South Sudan today.

The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) is at risk of collapse without your unwavering support and unified stand. In the two years since the agreement was signed, the parties have embarked on steps that, to me and many of my fellow citizens, appear to be only drops in the ocean. They have taken to establish the Executive of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) at State and National Level; begun the process of cantonment and training of Necessary Unified Forces for VIP protection; announced the formation of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission; and drafted bills on security and governance, as well as the Constitutional Amendment Bill incorporating the Peace Agreement into the Transitional Constitution (2011). But much, much more remains to be done. I am deeply concerned by the unacceptably slow pace of implementation and the lack of political will shown by the parties as my people continue to suffer on a daily basis.

Our leaders must be held accountable for implementing key aspects of the peace agreement in the remainder of the transitional period. This is what our people around the country are calling for. When my colleagues and I visited local communities in parts of Upper Nile, Equatoria and Bahr Ghazal recently, this call was echoed by those we met, who demanded accountability and justice – for civilians, for women and children who suffered conflict-related sexual violence, and for those who have lost lives and property – in order for peace to be realized. Ordinary civilians need security and peace. They need recognition of their plight and reassurance from their leaders of “never again” when it comes to war. They demand an end to war, human rights violations and corruption. Above all, they need truth and reconciliation.

Close monitoring of the peace implementation framework is essential, as is completing key tasks such as reconstitution of state and national legislatures; establishment of transitional justice mechanisms; adoption of the draft laws and the Constitutional Amendment Bill on the peace agreement; operationalization of the cantonment sites, screening and training of the forces; provision of basic services to the cantonment sites including medicines and food; and ensuring support for the disarmament and demobilization processes. Human rights must be the foundation of all these processes; failure to uphold human rights will result in continued inequality, division and more violence.

South Sudan is subject to a binding international framework, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which states that women's equal participation is both a right and a necessity for peace. However, the participation of women as provided for by the R-ARCSS, which calls for 35% representation thanks to hard-won advocacy efforts by women's civil society, is far from being met. The few women who have been appointed so far make up less than 20% at the national and state level. In some states, including, Warrap, Jonglei, Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Unity

states, women's representation is around 11%-17%, while at the County level, women make up only about 2%. The parties to the agreement have ignored and excluded women's leadership in key governance structures and institutions. Women have lobbied and advocated for inclusion with party leaders, but in a patriarchal society with a long history of inequality and marginalization of women's rights and leadership, the fight for equality cannot be the burden of South Sudanese women alone. The Security Council must pressure the parties to take concrete steps to ensure that the 35% quota is met at all levels of governance and consider this in measuring progress towards implementation.

When I first briefed this Council in May 2018, I noted the need for UNMISS to better collaborate with civil society. I am glad to inform you that CIGPJ and other civil society organizations are working with UNMISS to pursue grassroots peace efforts, protect human rights and support women's leadership and peacebuilding. However, this support must be expanded and, in order for it to be sustainable, requires building local capacities to continue this work.

Protection of human rights defenders, particularly women defenders, is critical given the closing civic and political space for civil society, media and political parties in South Sudan. For instance, civil society organizations are required to get security clearance to conduct workshops, training and meetings on all aspects of governance, health, humanitarian support and service delivery. Some civil society colleagues have been summoned by authorities for speaking out against corruption and the need for accountability. UNMISS must join civil society in advocating for respect for fundamental rights, such as freedom of assembly and association and freedom of speech and access to information, and further support human rights defenders and civil society organizations who face any intimidation for carrying out their essential work.

Madam President, Excellencies,

We thank you for the humanitarian support the international community has extended so far, but peace and stability are the only assurances of the future of our communities.

To date, eleven South Sudanese women have briefed this Council. We are tired of sharing the same stories of war, trauma and loss. Having visited many of the affected communities, I can personally attest that after enduring decades of conflict, the resilience of my fellow South Sudanese is fading. Although ours is a history of struggle for liberty, freedom, prosperity and dignity, we can struggle no more. To expect the South Sudanese to remain resilient in the face of such trauma — losing our children and loved ones, being displaced from our homes, dying from hunger, disease and witnessing the impunity with which rape and other horrific acts have been committed under the watch of this Council and its Member States — is unacceptable. We need this Council to act now before even worse happens.

Peace be with us all. Thank you.