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STATEMENT BY H.E. FESTUS G. MOGAE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT MONITORING & EVALUATION COMMISSION TO THE 21st JMEC PLENARY MONDAY, 20th NOVEMBER 2017 JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN

Monday, 20 November 2017 08:17

**Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

1.       Ten days ago, millions of people around the world stood in silence for two minutes in an annual act of remembrance of those who fought and died in the two world wars of the 20th century.

2.       The people of South Sudan will closely associate with the idea of fighting for freedom and commemorating those close relatives and friends of every community and every region who gave their lives for a better tomorrow.

3.       As we engage in the IGAD-led revitalisation process, the questions on the lips of every South Sudanese should be – how do we secure that ‘better tomorrow’ and deliver peace and prosperity for all? And how do we honour the sacrifice made by our brothers and sisters? I shall leave you pondering those questions as I continue, and return to them at the end.

**Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

4.       Since we last met, the IGAD Special Envoy, Ambassador Ismail Wais, and his team have been engaged in studious efforts to prepare for a revitalisation forum that offers an opportunity to put the peace process back on track.

5.       Three weeks of consultations, led by the IGAD Council of Ministers and supported by the Special Envoy and his taskforce, have been followed by three weeks of analysis and consideration that I hope will soon indicate the way forward.

6.       Three weeks ago, I briefed H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and Chairperson of IGAD, on recent JMEC engagements and activities, our support to the IGAD Council of Ministers and Special Envoy and my expectations for the revitalisation process.

7.       I also reinforced the One Voice message, and the need for the region to approach revitalisation unified and with strength of purpose. Collectively, the IGAD Heads of State must prevail over the South Sudanese leadership to rethink the current trajectory of the country and take the necessary steps to restore peace and inclusive governance.

8.       I made it clear that if the Peace Agreement is to get back on track we will need:

a.        An inclusive political process which brings together all Parties and estranged groups;

b.       A cessation of all hostilities and a renegotiated permanent ceasefire that includes all armed groups;

c.        Transitional Security Arrangements with robust verification and enforcement mechanisms;

d.       A clear plan of action to address the current dire humanitarian situation and facilitate eventual voluntary return of IDPs and repatriation of refugees;

e.        An enforcement mechanism that includes accountability measures for spoilers and violators;

f.          Specific reforms that ensure the conduct of credible, free and fair elections at the end of a transitional period;

g.       And finally, dedicated funding for implementation of the revitalised Peace Agreement.

9.       As we await IGAD’s plan for the High Level Revitalisation Forum, I call upon us all to remain focused on the desperate plight of the people of this country.

10.   For them, we must stop the fighting, end the violence, deal with criminality, prevent sexual and human rights abuses, ameliorate human suffering and address the economic crisis.

**Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

11.   The current security situation in South Sudan remains fragile. Major violations of the ceasefire continue to be recorded since we last met. CTSAMM has recently published five violation reports, one of which highlights the extent of Sexual and Gender Based Violence perpetrated by uniformed men in Yei. I condemn all incidents of violence and again call on the warring factions to cease all hostilities and abuses immediately.

12.   However, it is significant to note that for the first time since the signing of the Peace Agreement, the Government has submitted written responses to CTSAMM concerning four of the recent violation reports. I urge all Parties to respond to all CTSAMM’s reports without fail.

13.   On another positive note, the Joint Operations Centre here in Juba continues to improve its operations and functionality and is a clear example of good cooperation and coordination between security agencies. I truly hope that the other mechanisms of Chapter Two can emulate this level of achievement.

14.   I am also pleased to hear that, so far, the reported disagreement between the Government and its former Army Chief of Staff has been peacefully resolved. I hope that the TGoNU will continue to demonstrate similar commitment to the peaceful resolution of any and all future political and security disputes.

**Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

15. It is impossible to overstate or repeat too often the severity of the humanitarian situation here in South Sudan. According to the latest data from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (the IPC), the current harvest will not reduce the number of people suffering severe food insecurity by any more than 20%. This Christmas 1.4 million more people will go hungry around the country than last year.

16. Despite this desperate situation, and credible reports that malnutrition is critical in several areas, delivery of humanitarian assistance continues to be impeded. More than one hundred access incidents were recorded in October, and yet another aid worker was killed.

17. To compound the problem, the TGoNU has announced the enactment of the threatened substantial increase in the cost of work permits, which is likely to have a further detrimental impact on the delivery of critical humanitarian aid.

18. Two of the mechanisms in place to facilitate humanitarian access are not operating as they should. The scheduled November meeting of the Humanitarian Coordination Forum has not yet taken place, and no date has been set for the Humanitarian High-level Oversight Committee meeting that is delayed since October.

19. However, the President of South Sudan, H.E. Salva Kiir Mayardit, has now personally intervened to order unhindered access for humanitarian organisations in South Sudan, and I join the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan in welcoming the President’s intervention. I sincerely hope that this will make an immediate difference on the ground. I appeal to all other Parties to grant unconditional access to humanitarian agencies.

**Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

20. I welcome the progress that has been made towards economic stabilization. During the last two months the exchange rate has stabilized and there has been a downward trend in inflation. Annual inflation was 130 per cent in October 2017, as against close to 500 per cent in October of last year. Prudent domestic borrowing has contributed to this outcome. However, I must caution that there are serious threats to this progress.

21. Fuel subsidies are budgeted to reach 160 million USD by the end of 2017, which is almost half of total net oil revenues. The consequence of high fuel subsidies is a significant reduction in budget allocations to other essential areas.

22. Additionally there has been a decline in oil production. So far, the impact on revenues has been counteracted by higher world oil market prices, but these are subject to constant change and fluctuation as we have seen in recent times.

23. I understand that the Government is working on economic reforms and is receiving technical advice from the IMF on the way forward. I note that South Sudan has made a formal application for an IMF-programme, which will constitute important support to the revival of the economy.

24. Given the severe budgetary constraints, I would therefore urge the TGoNU to continue with its plans to unwind the fuel subsidy and use available resources to pay down arrears owed to public sector workers as outlined in its Budget.

**Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

25. The Council of Ministers has finally approved the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan Amendment Bill (2017) and directed the Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs to present the Bill to the TNLA. It is expected that the Bill will be tabled before the legislature goes on recess in December.

26. JMEC welcomes this significant progress. This Bill incorporates the Agreement into the Constitution, and thus lays a firm foundation for progress in the establishment of all the institutions and mechanisms provided for in the Agreement. I urge the TNLA to expedite the ratification of the amendments to the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan.

27. The National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC) is now finalizing the drafting of five Bills for the amendment of the key security laws in order to conform them to the Peace Agreement and complement existing efforts to reform the security sector. It is anticipated that these Bills, drafted with expert consultation and input from key stakeholders, will be presented to the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs by the end of this month.

28. In addition, the NCAC is making significant progress towards the amendment of the Elections Act (2012) and the Political Parties Act (2012) and is reviewing submissions from the Parties to the Agreement, the Political Parties Council, the National Elections Commission, the South Sudan Law Review Commission and civil society.

**Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

29. I expect this Plenary to:

a.        receive a briefing from the TGoNU on recent progress made in implementing the Peace Agreement and on steps taken to facilitate humanitarian access;

b.       receive an update from UNMISS on the current humanitarian situation; and,

c.        receive reports from the various Boards and Commissions of the Peace Agreement on the progress towards their objectives.

30. To conclude, and to address the questions I raised at the beginning, it is beholden upon us all to support IGAD and the revitalisation process and seize this opportunity to restore peace and hope to the people of South Sudan.

31. Let us now honour all those South Sudanese men and women, who stood resolutely side by side for decades and fought and died for this young nation. It is in their name and heroic memory that we strive for peace and prosperity for all.

32. It is possible that, due to the anticipated revitalisation activities, we may not be able to hold another Plenary before the Christmas holiday season, and so finally, I wish to take this opportunity to thank all our partners in the TGoNU, the other South Sudanese stakeholders, IGAD, AU, Troika, EU, China, the UN, UNMISS, and the International Partners and Friends of South Sudan for their unwavering commitment to JMEC and the South Sudan peace process throughout the year, and I appeal for your continued support in 2018.

33. May God bless us all and continue to guide us in the relentless pursuit of peace. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you.



