

## Conflict can lead to positive change, 'if we learn from it', South Sudan tells UN Assembly

Drawing lessons from conflict – particularly the causes and ultimate resolution – can be a vehicle for positive change, South Sudan's Vice-President told world leaders gathered at the United Nations General Assembly, highlighting his country's efforts to ensure lasting peace.

"As brothers and sisters, we have hurt each other," said Taban Deng Gai, the First Vice-President of South Sudan, telling delegates at the Assembly's annual general debate that his country, gripped by conflict for nearly five years, is seeking "national healing" through an inclusive, nationwide dialogue process.

A multi-layered approach has been launched in South Sudan to repair its "social fabric", he added, and its "grassroots component" is working with local communities to identify causes of division while also searching for solutions on how to heal them.

"The process allowed for those who didn't have an opportunity to have their voices heard to begin putting across their various viewpoints," said Mr. Deng Gai, noting that such information will be vital as the country moves forward in its peace process.

The South Sudan leader also highlighted the recent agreement between President Salva Kiir and his former Vice-President Riek Machar on ending violence that has claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions across the world's youngest nation.

He added that the Government of South Sudan welcomes the guarantors of the agreement to monitor its implementation and that it encourages the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD, an eight country trade bloc in Africa) and the African Union (AU) to work with the UN Security Council on the support that can be provided by the UN-mandated Regional Protection Force in the country to ensure that peace holds in his country.

The Vice-President also informed the UN Assembly of his country's commitment to security sector reform, combat impunity and uphold human rights.

In particular, he noted the recent verdict by a military court, finding South Sudan soldiers guilty of horrific crimes against civilians and journalists in the infamous Terrain Hotel attack in July 2016.

"The Terrain trials demonstrated the commitment of the SPLA [the Sudan People's Liberation Army] to make its members account for their crimes, including abuse of civilians," he asserted Mr. Deng Gai.

Also in his address, the Vice-President of South Sudan said that his Government awaits the settlement of the final status of Abyei, reiterating its support for the recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General. The Government of South Sudan also urged speedy resolution of contentious issues in Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Darfur.

“This emanates from our strong belief that stability in these areas is critical for total and lasting peace in the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan and the region as a whole.”

[Full statement available here.](#)



UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Taban Deng Gai, First Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan, addresses the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly.