

Dramatic drop in South Sudan political violence since peace agreement signing

Since the signing of a September 2018 deal between the South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and his political rival and former deputy Riek Machar to end conflict in the country, political violence has “dropped dramatically,” David Shearer, head of the [UN Mission in South Sudan](#) told reporters on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters at UN Headquarters in New York, Mr. Shearer said that many “positive things” have happened since the peace agreement, including several peace meetings around the country, and the integration of opposition and Government figures in the armed forces.

Despite the fall in political violence, conflict is still ongoing, said Mr. Shearer, pointing to, among others, ethnic violence that has led to killings, and in the South of the country, where the fighters of Thomas Cirillo’s National Salvation Front have been involved in clashes with Government forces.

Although Mr. Shearer expressed concern at a loss of momentum in the peace process, with recent meetings lacking substance or real outcomes, he stated that, overall, progress has been much better than expected, and urged the international community to “speak as one voice,” sending the message that the peace process is the only game in town.

Mr. Shearer’s press conference coincided with an [appeal](#) for funds from the UN [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM) to support displaced people and returnees in South Sudan. The UN Agency is appealing for \$122 million, to help nearly one million people, and over 80 humanitarian and development partners throughout 2019.

In the five years since conflict broke out in South Sudan, more than four million people have fled their homes, and almost two million are displaced within the country. Since the peace deal between the warring parties was agreed last September, there have been signs of stability, leading to the prospect of more people returning to their homes: during his press conference,

Mr. Shearer, who is also the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative in South Sudan, said that the success of the peace agreement will be partly measured by the extent to which people go back to their home towns and villages.

Welcoming this development, Jean-Philippe Chauzy, IOM South Sudan Chief of Mission, cautioned that “although some people have decided to return home, many are still living in displacement sites. They will not be able to return in 2019. So, despite the signing of the revitalized peace agreement, conflict

related displacement continues, albeit on a smaller scale than in the past.”