

Ensuring genuine change and implementation of commitments in South Sudan

Thank you, Mr President, and let me say how good it is to see you in the chair in what I think is your last month with us in this council, so it's very nice to see you there. Let me also thank Special Representative Shearer for your briefing and all you've done. And I'd also like to thank Ms Sunday for your very insightful briefing and your continued efforts to seek justice and accountability for the women of South Sudan. It was an inspirational part, Ms Sunday of our recent visit to Juba to meet you and your fellow civil society activists. And I am pleased to hear from you that this council's interest then has helped you locally to open that space.

Mr President, let me start with, like others, welcoming the very positive news: the decision of the South Sudanese parties to form the Transitional Government of National Unity. The people of South Sudan have long awaited this important step and the people of the United Kingdom join them in celebrating this important progress. And let me therefore salute the leadership shown by President Kiir and First Vice President Machar in making the necessary compromises, including on the number and composition of states in particular. Putting the people of South Sudan first is what matters and is their test of leadership.

Let me also praise the role of the region in their efforts to bring the parties together. I agree wholeheartedly with the SRSB on the important unity shown an effort shown by the subregion and beyond. Thanks are due widely, as he said, reflecting the wide concern and interest of the international community. You left out one person, David. So thank you to you for all that you've done.

But let me also echo SRSB Shearer's sense of caution. It's really important that the dividends of this progress are felt by the wider population. That hasn't yet happened. Our focus remains on helping the people of South Sudan to lead their lives free from hunger, violence and fear. Only through genuine implementation of commitments made by all sides will South Sudan move forwards.

And let's not forget, Mr President, this conflict has killed nearly 400,000 people, has left 7.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, has seen sexual and gender based violence used as a weapon of war, has seen over 4 million people displaced and some 6.5 million people at risk of acute food insecurity. The United Kingdom will continue to stand by South Sudan and its people in this endeavour. We remain one of the largest humanitarian donors. Last year, the United Kingdom gave over \$220 million in humanitarian assistance to South Sudan.

Now, Mr President, as I've said, recent steps are only the start of the next

phase of delivering change for the people of South Sudan. Our hope is that the spirit of compromise continues and that the swift progress to address the many challenges ahead. Most immediately, we need to see the timely formation of an inclusive government with positions and portfolios allocated. One very concrete step that could be taken would be to ensure the meaningful participation of women, – as Ms Sunday made clear – both in this government and in South Sudan's future. And on that, I would simply say that the 35 percent quota should be the floor, not the ceiling. I welcomed Ms Sunday's comments in general, and I particularly agree with her that South Sudan's natural resource wealth should be used in support of its people including, as a priority, girls' education.

Mr President, those tasks which should have been completed during the pre-transition phase must now be addressed. This includes on unifying forces and cantonment. Partial implementation would bring new security challenges, which must not happen. And we would like to see full transparency on this, including on funds already disbursed. Efforts to address growing levels of inter-communal violence and immediate steps to tackle the humanitarian situation would show this government prioritising its people.

This council must remain alive to the risks. History has shown that the violence in South Sudan can escalate quickly. So in addition to that sustained commitment from the new government, we believe the international efforts that we've seen pay such benefits and dividends recently must remain there with South Sudan to provide a conducive environment for sustainable peace. And as part of that, we believe it's important to maintain the sanctions regime, to discourage any potential spoilers of the peace and to keep the arms embargo which exists for the protection of the people of South Sudan. Of course, necessary exemptions must be taken through in the correct way.

Mr President, the Security Council has walked with South Sudan over the past years and months. It's been a very difficult time. But the strong interest and focus, including our recent visit, have been important elements in support of peace. And we need as a council to maintain that interest and our focus. On that Security Council visit, I recall vividly the words of one of our civil society reps that we met about South Sudan's parties. And they said, "When they are united, they let us talk. When they're divided, they kill us." It's better that they are united.

Mr President, the people of South Sudan deserve a world in which they're not in danger, in which they're able to fulfill their potential and live their lives to the fullest. As we say for all on this planet, let no one be left behind. The President and Vice President have shown leadership to get to this point. True leadership means being able to make compromises for the good of their people, and I applaud them for it. But this is just the beginning. We need true leadership from them and all South Sudanese politicians now.

The hard work, Mr President is just starting.

Thank you.