

Speech: Call for consequences for those who obstruct the negotiation process, including violations of the Cessation of Hostilities in South Sudan

Thank you Mr President,

And thank you also to our briefers Undersecretary La Croix, ASG Mueller and Chairperson Mogae for updating us today.

As we are all aware, the long term stability of South Sudan is dependent on securing a political agreement.

To that end, we welcome IGAD and the Joint Monitoring Evaluation Commission (JMEC)'s work on the High Level Revitalisation Forum, and in particular the agreement of a Cessation of Hostilities. I would like to thank and pay tribute to IGAD and Ambassador Ismail Wais, who have led efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table.

The Revitalisation Forum is the best opportunity to secure a political agreement. It must be truly inclusive to deliver an agreement that is accepted and supported by the people of South Sudan. Women, youth, and broader South Sudanese civil society must all be allowed to participate meaningfully.

Mr President,

We made this Council's expectations clear in last month's PRST. An end to hostilities. "Cost and consequences" for those who obstruct the Revitalisation Forum process. And unimpeded humanitarian access.

Let us now take stock of the progress that has been made.

First, hostilities have not ended. The Cessation of Hostilities was violated almost immediately after it was signed and fighting continues across the country today.

We are particularly concerned by the fighting in Koch. The significant military build-ups by the government and opposition groups in the Malakal-Tonga corridor are also extremely worrying. As are potential offensives in Yei and Akobo.

We are also concerned by First Vice President Taban Deng and his 500 troops' movements in Jonglei state, which is both a violation of the Cessation of Hostilities and an inflammatory action in the build-up to peace talks.

We therefore welcome the Chairperson of the IGAD Council of Ministers statement on the 29 December, which strongly condemned the violations and called for those responsible to be held to account.

Which brings me to our second expectation: Consequences for those who obstruct the negotiations process, which includes violations of the Cessation of Hostilities.

And we would call on IGAD to use their Council of Ministers meeting on 27 January to set out defined consequences for violators. IGAD can identify these individuals and collectively we take action against them. This Council must be ready to support IGAD using all the measures at our disposal.

We welcome the joint statement by the UN and the AU on the 12 January and fully support South Sudanese Civil Society who are calling for accountability for violating the ceasefire.

We are concerned by recent threats against civil society as they comment on the Cessation of Hostilities, which, as signatories to the Agreement, they have every right to do.

We also welcome the efforts of the new Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) Chairman to increase the timeliness of reporting. There have been marked improvements in the short time he has been in position. We hope he will build on these, including reporting on gender-based violence.

An effective Cessation of Hostilities monitoring body is crucial if we are to prevent further violence. CTSAMM has a difficult job to do and we call on the Government and opposition groups to stop impeding and criticising them. We welcome JMEC's recent statement on this.

Mr President,

The consequences of the conflict are known all too well by the people of South Sudan who are victims of the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation. Two thirds of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance in what is a manmade disaster. We condemn unreservedly sexual violence in South Sudan.

In November, despite the President's decree calling for unimpeded access, nine aid workers were killed and aid was obstructed over 100 times. All parties to the conflict bare responsibility for this, but the Government alone is responsible for the bureaucratic impediments, such as \$4,000 work permit fees, which continue to hinder the relief agencies' efforts to save lives.

Mr President,

This Council visited Addis Ababa last September for our annual meeting with the AUPSC. At that meeting, we talked about supporting the African Union and its sub-regional organisations. Today, Chairperson Mogae citing IGAD statements, has asked to make clear the consequences for those who violate,

spoil, or derail the peace agreement. Undersecretary General La Croix urged us to show that there were real consequences for violators.

We therefore reiterate our call for an arms embargo. It would apply equally to all parties, not singling anyone out for blame. It would send a strong message to those who undermine the Revitalisation Forum and strengthen those in the region trying to bring South Sudanese parties to peace. It is in line with what the region has called for: clear consequences for violators.

Mr President,

The parties in South Sudan must start putting the people of South Sudan first. They must fully engage with the Revitalisation Forum and refrain from violence. They must allow humanitarian access to all who need it. And we, as the Security Council, must also do our part to make the consequence of inaction clear, including those of us around this table, because make no mistake: inaction is a decision, too. It is a decision to let people be attacked and to die. We must hold those responsible to account, and we must do this now. The people of South Sudan can wait no longer. Let us not protect the warmongers and abusers. Let this not be a stain on this Council's conscience.

Thank you Mr President.