
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL SUBSTANTIVE SESSION, GENEVA 2011

SPEAKING POINTS FOR THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Morning Session 19 July: The Role of the United Nations and the International Community in Supporting the Capacity of the Government of South Sudan to Manage the Transition.

[Check against delivery]

1. In 2005, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement granted semi-autonomous status to South Sudan, this Government possessed few of the formal institutional structures essential for governance, and the country's human resource base was severely impacted by generations of war. The government's capabilities to provide public security and services to its people, therefore, were weak.
2. Over the CPA Interim Period, which spans the period of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to the country's independence on the 9th of this month, the Government of South Sudan has undertaken one of the fastest developments of public sector institutions in the history of modern statehood. Many key physical and organizational structures of government are now in place at the national and state levels and a growing number of educated South Sudanese are establishing a functioning public sector.
3. However, institutional conditions remain fragile, individual capabilities are heterogeneous, delivery capacities remain extremely weak, and there is acute need for a professional and accountable public service to create confidence in Government.
4. With the achievement of full independent statehood only just over a week ago, South Sudan is at a critical juncture in its history. While the long period of armed conflict is now over, the country is still confronted with the immense challenges of restarting economic growth, improving the social welfare of its population, reconstructing shattered infrastructure, resolving residual political conflicts, and extending public security and the rule of law. This Government must successfully manage a complex state-building process to create the institutions necessary for effective governance and viable independent statehood.
5. We have been working hard to strengthen the capacities of our population from the bottom up, through a strong focus on education at all levels. This includes both a focus on formal education up to the higher levels, as well as an intensive focus on alternative education systems, to tackle the country's tremendous adult literacy problem, and to provide an education to those who were prevented from attaining a formal education by decades of civil war.
6. While we progress towards filling the capacity gap through an intensive focus on the education sector, we must also focus immediate attention on a rapid scaling up of capacities in our public service. A large portion of our public servants have only an early education, and only a small fraction hold degrees. Many public sector employees lack the specific skills required in this sector, and many have major difficulties in English communication, the official language of Government. To put it concisely, every office in every ministry at the national and at the state government level requires technical assistance and long-term support for capacity development.

7. Since 2010, the GoSS has launched two initiatives intended to address these challenges. First, the Core Governance Functions Action Plan, published in November 2010, articulated the 18 priority functions of government that must be established or strengthened by South Sudan's independence in order to ensure the viability of the institutional framework of the State. The government has made remarkable progress since November 2010, but many of the rapid capacity needs within the Core Governance Functions will require continued support beyond July 2011.
8. Following, and building on the Core Governance Functions progress, the Government has developed a three-year development plan. The South Sudan Development Plan will provide a framework for achieving critical development outcomes related to security and rule of law, economic development, governance, and social and human development.
9. Recognizing that the capacity gap is one of the major obstacles to rapid progress in the south, the Development Plan includes a three-year strategy for capacitating the new state to deliver on the national development objectives articulated in the Development Plan. The strategy focuses on both institutional and human capacities, and was developed under the leadership of my ministry, the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
10. Part of the strategy of rapidly addressing capacity challenges are initiatives with support from the UNV system, IGAD and the African Union.
11. Under the Rapid Capacity Placement Initiative, 150 specialist UN Volunteers, including from the diaspora, are being embedded in key public sector institutions, directly accountable to their government supervisors, under overall coordination of UNDP. Since the start of the initiative in 2009, over 100 UNVs have been deployed, the majority at the state level, where needs are most acute. A coaching plan, clarifying learning goals and expectations for both government staff and the UNV, is agreed at the initial stage of each deployment, based on the results of a rapid capacity scan.
12. Under the IGAD Regional Initiative, which is supported by the Norwegian Government, 200 experienced civil servants from three IGAD member states (Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) are being deployed to core ministries. The first 45 civil servants from Kenya have already been deployed and have assumed their duties in their respective GoSS ministries. IGAD civil servants are contracted by the GoSS through Memoranda of Understanding with participating countries and 'twinned' with South Sudanese civil servants to provide direct on-the-job training.
13. The AU Initiative, supported by UNDP, will see up to 1,000 technical experts from AU member states deployed to work within the GoSS Civil Service. Once this initiative is launched, AU technical experts will be deployed to support strategic functions at national and state levels in the areas of Public Administration, Agriculture (Food Security), Infrastructure Development, Energy Development, Health and Education, and Local Government.
14. Finally, together with its development partners, the Government plans to develop a protocol on capacity development in South Sudan, shared and agreed by the government and the donor community. The compact will set basic standards in areas like technical assistance and endogenous capacity development, specifying mutual accountability mechanisms between Government and donors, and providing practical guidance on balancing direct engagement with mentoring roles.