

## **Peacebuilding Commission**

### **Ambassadorial-level meeting on South-Sudan** ***Building Peace through Institutions and Governance in South Sudan*** **26 October 2022**

#### **Chair's Summary**

1. On 26 October 2022, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on South Sudan for the first time in the Commission's history. The meeting was chaired by Vice Chair of the Commission H.E. Mr. Jose. A. Blanco Conde. The purpose of the meeting was to generate and provide support to South Sudan in its efforts to build peace with a focus on accountable governance, public finance management and the delivery of social services at the local level, in support of the implementation of the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement. The Commission was briefed by the Minister of Peacebuilding, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Health, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the Special Envoy for South Sudan of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the World Bank Country Manager, and a civil society representative. In his opening remarks, the Vice-Chair of the PBC recalled the advisory role that the Commission provides from the perspective of prevention and support to ongoing peacebuilding processes. In this regard, he emphasized the need to build effective and resilient institutions to implement the Revitalized Peace Agreement. He urged the Commission and the Government of South Sudan to intensify their efforts to strengthen the delivery of public services in an integrated manner with the aim of preventing and building peace in South Sudan.
2. The Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Peacebuilding Support addressed the Commission with welcoming words for the occasion of the first-ever PBC meeting with Government of South Sudan, expressing gratitude to the members of the Transitional Government of National Reconciliation of South Sudan for initiating the process of engaging with the PBC. She underscored the role of the PBC as a dialogue platform that enables the Government of South Sudan to share their lessons learned and further requirements for transitioning to sustainable development and stability. In her statement, the ASG stressed the importance of establishing a social contract and trust with the people of South Sudan for social development and sustaining peace, as called for in the Secretary General's "Our Common Agenda". She called for redoubling efforts to support the government in its efforts to build effective, accountable and resilient institutions for the deployment of basic public services in the country. In this regard, she referred to ongoing UNDP and UNICEF support initiatives for public financial management reforms, and PBF-funded projects aimed at making institutions more people-centered and inclusive. The ASG also emphasized the need to be mindful of the country's vision and goals for peacebuilding, stressing the importance of national leadership and ownership. Finally, she noted the relevance and potential of the PBC as a unique and diverse platform for South-South and triangular cooperation for peacebuilding through peer learning and support among conflict-

affected countries, noting the full commitment of the UN peacebuilding architecture to support the government of South Sudan in its peacebuilding efforts.

3. The Minister of Peacebuilding, H.E. Mr. Stephen Par Kuol, began by highlighting how the strong cooperation between South Sudan and the UN, including UNMISS and the UN Country Team as well as support by the UN Peacebuilding Fund has helped maintain stability and create opportunities for enhanced socio-economic development to build a sustainable peace architecture in South Sudan. He then reviewed the government's progress in implementing the revitalized peace agreement since its signature in 2018, noting the overall decline in violence in the country despite the persistence of worrisome political and ethnic tensions, coupled with the socio-economic and humanitarian crisis; efforts to establish accountable and reliable governance through decentralization, support to address internal and cross-border displacements and prevention of small arms and light weapons proliferation, as well as the ongoing process for adopting a permanent constitution; the unification of forces under a single command structure; and preparations for transparent and inclusive elections by 2024, made possible by the extended transition. The Minister of Peacebuilding also highlighted the socio-economic, humanitarian and peacebuilding challenges, citing the increased internal displacement the country faces due to the cumulative effects of years of protracted conflict, weak delivery of basic services as well as chronic vulnerabilities. He referred to the fresh Ebola outbreak on the DRC border, the locust invasion and the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the adverse effects of climate change, such as, recurrent floods and extreme weather events that have a direct impact on peace and security in the country, which has been evidenced by the tensions between pastoralists and farmers. He also cited the effective management of oil revenues and other resources as a key priority for the Government of South Sudan for economic stability and financing and for establishing systems that ensure transparency, integrity and accountability to enable investments in social services, resilience and recovery. In early 2020, the Donor Working Group on Public Financial Management (PFM) was reactivated to coordinate partner support to the PFM reform agenda, as outlined in the revitalized agreement. Finally, the Minister of Peacebuilding briefed the Commission on the country's peacebuilding priorities, including SSR, socio-economic revitalization, promotion of national reconciliation, and highlighted the newly established Ministry of Peacebuilding, which he hoped would benefit from PBC support for sustained advocacy, resource mobilization, and policy accompaniment in the quest made by the Government for sustainable peace, resilience, and development.
4. The Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs, H.E. Ms. Angelina Teny, highlighted the cross-cutting nature of the implementation of the revitalized peace agreement which the Government plans to ensure through the extension of the transitional period. Despite the extension, key challenges remain obstructing peacebuilding in South Sudan with institutional resilience being of the most relevant issues to be tackled, according to the Minister. Concentrated and concerted action is needed in bolstering lacking financial and human resources. The Minister stressed that these capacities are necessary for South Sudan

to manage the multiple crises that the country is facing in the aftermath of the civil war. She underlined sustainable peacebuilding will only be achieved if the institutions are made capable and resilient to tackle multi-dimensional crises, such as, floodings, especially in the context of displacements. The Minister warned that the current state of crisis response increases a relapse into violence and allows for spoilers to enter South Sudan's political landscape. The Minister stated that measures to build trust, judiciary reform and law enforcement need further support in the context of political violence in South Sudan. The Minister for Defence and Veterans Affairs also highlighted the importance of strengthening the social contract between the Government and the people of South Sudan in order to increase wider engagement with and buy-in of the people in the constitutional reform. The Minister stated that these are necessary preconditions for the establishment and consolidation of resilient governance institutions as part of the implementation of the revitalized peace agreement, to produce a conducive environment for free and fair elections and to tackle issues like gender-based violence and recruitment of children in armed forces. The Minister hoped for continued and deepened support to build strong roots for institutional capacity building, socio-economic-recovery, financial as well as personal accountability with the governance system as immediate next steps. She welcomed the support and cooperation with the international community in these contexts.

5. The UN DSRSG/RC/HC Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti, reaffirmed the UN's commitment to support the implementation of the revitalized 2018 Peace Agreement, noting the Agreement's emphasis on public financial management reforms, peacebuilding, and governance. She provided examples such as the on-going support provided by the UN to state governments to establish unified institutional tax structures and systems through capacity building of state tax authorities and improvement of the legal and regulatory environment to ensure integrity, transparency, and accountability in public finances. The DSRSG also referred to the Security Council's decision to extend UNMISS' mandate until 15 March 2023 which reinforces the Mission's focus on advancing its three-year strategic vision to prevent a return to civil war, build durable peace and support inclusive, accountable governance and free, fair, and peaceful elections. On the PBF portfolio active in South Sudan (2021-2025), she referred to the key initiatives related to provisions under the Revitalised-Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) targeting: the drafting of the permanent constitution, community action for peaceful resolution; and transitional Justice. The DSRSG also mentioned the extension of twenty-four months to February 2025 provides an opportunity for parties to the agreement and national stakeholders to implement the critical outstanding provisions and enable conduct of elections in December 2024, hopefully bringing a peaceful end of the transitional period. She noted the continuous support provided by the UN including on the completion of a permanent constitution, the conduct of civic education, the conduct of a national census and voter registration and the focus on building strong and resilient institutions for transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance and free and fair elections. On the issue of social services, the DSRSG mentioned the continued support of UN, Agencies, Funds and Programmes for access to basic healthcare, nutrition, education, and WASH services by the people of South Sudan, noting the emphasis given to women and children. Finally,

the DSRSRG stressed the need for the UN and partners to work across the Humanitarian, Peace and Development (HPD) nexus emphasizing that there can be no sustainable development and prosperity for all in South Sudan without lasting peace.

6. The World Bank Country Manager, Mr. Firas Raad outlined the new country engagement approach that the World Bank has adopted to better support the development and peacebuilding objectives of the parties to the 2018 Peace Agreement, highlighting the emphasis on building institutional capacity, supporting the delivery of basic services, promoting community resilience, and strengthening social inclusion, particularly for youth and women. The director also noted that the new approach embraced three operating shifts that have shaped the World Bank's programming and development portfolio in South Sudan: (1) a gradual return to government implementation of development projects to strengthen ownership and accountability for development results at all levels of government, (2) the World Bank's updated strategy for working in fragile states, increasing its physical presence and interactions throughout the country, and (3) increased efforts to promote medium- and long-term development programs. As an example of support, the director stated that the World Bank's country program is currently focused on the critical public financial management (PFM) reform program, with a five-year grant-funded commitment to support the Ministry of Finance and Planning. In addition, additional resources have also been provided, such as hands-on technical assistance, advisory services and trust funds available to help the Ministry of Finance and Planning. In conclusion, the World Bank country director confirmed the need to better use the transparency and management of oil revenues to stimulate economic growth and accelerate development in South Sudan by scaling up government spending on institution building, basic service delivery, community resilience - and infrastructure development.
7. The IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan, H.E. Dr. Ismail Wais, first expressed that the four years of implementation of the revitalized agreement has contributed to a significant decline in political friction and violence in South Sudan. He underlined the importance of peacebuilding in South Sudan to consolidate sustainable peaceful development and prevent relapse into conflict. He commended the graduation of the first batch of Necessary Unified Forces as a testament for trust building and called upon the Government of South Sudan to further invest in stabilizations to prevent the escalation of tension in the Upper Nile region. The Special Envoy stated that, given the brief independence of South Sudan the extension of the transition period will help attain focus on the peacebuilding undertakings of the Government. He stated that institutional capacity would be central to consolidate peace and tackle the multiple crisis that the state faces, highlighting the juridical reform as a core element to build sustainable peace. He referred to work of the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC), established by IGAD in cooperation with UNDP in strengthening accountability legislations, such as, National Audit Chamber Act, 2011; the Public Financial Management and Accountability Act, 2011; Petroleum Act, 2012; Petroleum Revenue Management Act, 2013; National Elections Act, 2012; and the ongoing review of Southern Sudan Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2009. IGAD will also launch a Post Conflict Needs Assessment with the intention to identify concrete gaps in institutional capacity to develop targeted solutions. The IGAD Special Envoy concluded by stressing the collective responsibility and joint effort as well as regional and

international support to help South Sudan overcome its transitional period and consolidate sustainable peace.

8. The Minister of Health, H.E. Ms. Yolanda Wel Deng, thanked the international community for its support to South Sudan and especially to the Ministry of Health. She noted that the country's transition severely impacts the capacities of the health system to deliver. She mentioned that COVID 19 pandemic is negatively impacting both sustainable peacebuilding and the country's health system. South Sudan's health infrastructure was struck by flooding caused by the adverse effects of climate change, the Minister further noted. She acknowledged that the capacities have been strengthened significantly through support of the international community and urged the international community and regional as well as international organizations to keep up their valuable support to South Sudan, especially relief on a local level could contribute to sustainable peacebuilding.
9. The civil society representative, Ms. Merekaje Lorna Nanjia, South Sudan Democratic Engagement, Monitoring and Observation Programme (SSuDEMOP), stressed the importance of creating a platform for the Government of South Sudan to collaborate with the international community on accountable governance, public finance management, delivery of social services at the local levels and realization of the benchmarks enshrined in RARCSS. She identified institutional and personnel capacity gaps, insufficient political will to implement the revitalized agreement and insufficient emphasis on institutional interlinkages as checks and balances as main obstacles for governance reform. She noted the progress made through the reform process in the Public Financial Management, while stressing on the need to further ensure transparency and accountability in managing public finances. She asked the government, civil society, international and regional partners to ramp up their efforts and contributions in the process and recommended for enhanced coordination of civil society, improved institutional interlinkages with the aim to ensure accessible services and promoting civic participation, sharpening focus on PFM reform process, address systemic institutional and personnel capacity gaps in public service and induce a focus on peace dividends in the implementation of the revitalized agreement.
10. Member States welcomed the engagement of the Government of South Sudan to brief for the first time the Commission on its peacebuilding challenges and made the following observations:
  - They recognized the significant security, political, humanitarian, and developmental challenges that South Sudan faces, noting the extreme vulnerability of the country to the effects of climate change such as floods and extreme weather events which adds to the complexity of humanitarian challenges including livelihoods insecurity, and infrastructure fragility.
  - They welcomed progress in the implementation of the transition process, despite the numerous challenges encountered, and encouraged the South Sudanese authorities to continue implementing the Revitalized Peace Agreement in a timely manner, in line with its recently adopted Roadmap.

- They commended the efforts put in place by the Government to establish a peacebuilding architecture in South Sudan through the creation of a new Ministry of Peacebuilding, while noting the importance of preventing and addressing the root causes of conflict and coordinating an integrated approach to further sustain peace dividends. They welcomed the upcoming visit of the Chair of the Commission to South Sudan.
- They called for UNMISS, UN entities and international partners to enhance integrated support developing a holistic multidimensional approach with the aim of sustaining South Sudan's peace and development in line with the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, they reiterated the need for a cross-pillar approach to peacebuilding incorporating regional organizations, IFIs and international partners with respect of the notion of national ownership.
- Member States highlighted the necessity for accelerating the implementation of public financial management noting the strong emphasis to be placed on accountable and transparent governance. They stressed the sense of urgency to ensure effective, inclusive, and accessible delivery of public services, like health and education, to the people of South Sudan to avoid further destabilization in the country and the broader region.
- They expressed their strong support for accompanying the South Sudanese authorities in promoting an inclusive implementation of the transition process and called for the full participation of women and youth in the overall process. In this regard, they called for more attention to the constitutional reform process to allow for the inclusive and transparent running of the 2024 elections.
- They underscored the importance of partnership between the UN, the AU, IGAD as well international and regional financing institutions to support South Sudan's national peacebuilding efforts in support of the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement, and in line with its recently adopted Roadmap.

11. In his closing remarks, the Vice-Chair of the Commission reiterated the commitment of the Commission to support the Government of South Sudan in its nationally led peacebuilding efforts.