



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN

The President

His Excellency Salva Kiir Mayardit
President of the Republic of South Sudan
Address to the Joint Session of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly

Freedom Hall

30/08/2021

The First Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar Teny,
Vice Presidents of the Republic,
The Right Honourable Speaker of Transitional National Legislative Assembly,
The Right Honourable Speaker of Council of States,
Presidential Advisors Present,
Cabinet Ministers,
Members of Diplomatic Community and Representatives of International
Organizations,
Honourable Members of Parliament,

Allow me to congratulate all of you, Honourable Members, for winning the trust of your respective parties who nominated you to this esteemed Assembly and to the Council of States. I would also like to thank the Right Honourable Speaker, for inviting me to open this first joint session of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly and the Council of States.

By the way, we have made history today because we, for the first time in our history have a woman as the Speaker of our Parliament.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me remind you from the outset that a huge responsibility awaits you, the responsibility of serving the people. The central focus of your work in the coming months will be directed to speeding up the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement and to supervising government programs that meet our people's needs. The people expect you to fully use your legislative, oversight and representative roles to their benefits. And you can only fulfil people's expectations if you put their needs above partisan consideration.

This therefore calls on you, Honourable Members, to see yourselves first as South Sudanese, and second as your parties' representatives. And when you do so you will find it easy to cooperate on issues that matter to the people. You will also find many areas of agreement in your legislative agenda when the country and its people take the central stage in your deliberations. I know the parties who nominated you matter, but I call upon all of you to place the people of South Sudan above any narrow party interest.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,
In our case, having a functioning Parliament is essential to the full implementation of the Peace Agreement. That is why there was a huge sigh of relief when you took your oath on the 2nd August, 2021. The relief came because the delay in the process of reconstituting the TNLA was a matter of serious concern to our citizens and partners, especially those tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement.

Despite the delays we have encountered in this process, the opening ceremony we are holding today marks yet another milestone in our determination to implement the Agreement fully. The steps we have taken and continue to take in this process should give our people, the IGAD region, the African continent, and indeed the wider international community confidence that the Agreement is being implemented despite delays.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our policy objective for the Transitional Period is to end the war by implementing the Revitalized Peace Agreement fully. This Agreement provides the only path to stable and prosperous South Sudan. Let us all therefore strive to implement it as the way of putting our country on the path of permanent stability.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since February 2020, your counterparts in the Executive Branch have been working. Most of the files they have worked on require your review and approval before they can move forward. Today I am drawing your attention to these files to ensure that they top your legislative agenda. One of such files is the National Budget. It has already been debated and approved by the Cabinet and it awaits your discussion and final approval. I urge you to take this up as a matter of urgency because the country cannot any longer afford to operate without an approved budget.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we continue to implement the various chapters and provisions of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, we should always remember that our final mandate in this process is to hold free, fair, and credible democratic elections at the end of the Transitional Period. This means, giving people the power to choose their leaders. And this is a collective responsibility that we must shoulder because it is the only way we can achieve political stability in our country.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenges you will face in moving this process forward are huge. In order to expedite peace implementation, you need to pick up where the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC) has stopped after their mandate. This body has already worked on a number of laws that are critical to the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. It has reviewed most of petroleum, security and institutional reform laws.

The Ministry of Justice has also done some work on Chapter-5 in the area of Transitional Justice and Accountability. It is also working on the Permanent Constitution Making Process Bill. Further, there are Provisional Orders on Petroleum and Gas Corporation; National Public Health; Cybercrime and Computer Misuse and, Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank that have been assented to which the Ministry of Justice will table before this August House.

Honourable members, you also need to enact laws on eradication of the recruitment and use of child soldiers as well as laws preventing humans trafficking.

You need to review and enact these not to please others, but to implement the Revitalized Peace Agreement and secure our future. In addition, some of these laws will put us at par with our counterparts in the region on pressing issues like humans trafficking.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your work on legislative tasks should be informed by your role as the representative of the people. The people you represent have huge expectations on you during this Transitional Period. Meeting their expectations is our collective responsibility as the Government. We for example, still have our people in displacement camps in neighbouring countries. There are also internally displaced persons in our country who needs to be assured of their security in order to return to their areas.

We know that for sustainable peace to be achieved, you as parliamentarians must use your oversight function over the line ministries to design programs that will support the return of the displaced persons to their areas. The same oversight function should be directed to security forces to provide adequate security for the safety of those returning to their homes.

These steps are necessary to provide a conducive environment for reconciliation and healing among our people. It is only after the displaced persons have returned to their ancestral lands that we can say we have a total peace in our country.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ending insecurity in our country is key to our progress. We all know insecurity can undermine peace. Insecurity also creates chaos that prevents genuine debate on the future of the country. This is why I am today calling upon us in the government, community leaders, and civil society organizations to work together to find a lasting solution to the issue of insecurity. Unless we solve the issue of insecurity, South Sudan will not be peaceful, our economy will not grow and our people will remain underdeveloped.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On Security Arrangements outlined in Chapter-2 of the Agreement, we are nearing the completion of its implementation. Already approximately 53,000 Forces composed of soldiers from all the parties to the Agreement are in training centres across the country. Our resolve to graduate these forces has been doubted, but I would like to assure you that necessary arrangements for their graduation are at advance stage.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the quest for an inclusive peace in our country remains our sole objective, recent killings of innocent civilians along Juba-Nimule highway and on Yei-Juba Road by elements of South Sudan Opposition Movement Alliance (SSOMA) have tested our patience. We have signed with SSOMA the Rome Declaration and Rome Resolution, the Recommitment to Cessation of Hostilities (COH, December 2017) and the Declaration of Principles.

The goal of signing these documents was to stop fighting and save innocent lives. This was our commitment to inclusivity. In addition, these documents were also part of confidence building process between the parties aimed at giving negotiations a chance for success to achieve lasting peace. This is a win -win situation for all the Parties.

Now that SOMMA, specifically the National Salvation Front (NAS) elements continue to violate these commitments, we have decided to pause the ongoing Sant'Egidio led Rome Peace Initiative. Our pursuit of an inclusive peace should never be taken for a weakness and used as a window to kill the innocent. Talks with SSOMA will only resume after they cease from killing the innocent and show their commitment to documents they have signed in Rome. It is only when they meet these conditions that genuine dialogue with them will resume.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Internally, the recent disagreement within the SPLM/A-IO is a matter of concern to all of us, and I am urging our brothers and sisters within the SPLM-IO Party to pursue dialogue and end this dispute peacefully. We have covered a long distance in our work to implement the Revitalized Peace Agreement. This is not the time to allow an internal rift within the party to reverse the gains we have achieved. Let us all remain united in calling for dialogue as a means for resolving this dispute. We must all show we do care for our people by protecting them avoiding violent conflict and use the peace we have created to work for their prosperity.

At the communal level in the states and counties, issues of cattle rustling, community and inter-communal violence are worrying and need our attention here at national level. The same applies to recent phenomena of youth violence against NGOs and other fellow South Sudanese. Honourable members, now that you have been sworn in and your order of business launched, your focus should turn to supporting our efforts to address the above challenges.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,
In recognition of the hardships faced by public servants because of constant delay of their salaries, I directed the Ministry of Finance and Planning during my address to the Nation on July 9th, 2021 to pay the arrears and start paying salaries regularly. In the same address, I also directed the Minister of Finance and Planning to increase

salaries of civil servants by 100% as phase one, and subject the salary structure to periodic review as our economy improves. I am sure the days of green pasture for South Sudan will come.

I am now informed that the Ministry has been paying arrears and it has almost caught up with the payment. I have been briefed also that June and July salaries are ready to be paid out, but delayed due to the breakdown of paysheet generating machine in the Ministry of Labour. I call upon the Ministry of Labour to urgently repair the paysheet machine so that salaries for June and July are immediately processed.

Honourable members, I expect you to use your oversight function to tackle the challenge of irregular payment of salaries to public servants. You also need to work with Ministry of Finance and Planning to review salary structure to ensure our public servants are paid a living wage.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The high prices of essential commodities are hurting the public. Although South Sudanese pound has strengthened against United States dollar as a result of the Bank of South Sudan partnership with our international partners, traders are still charging highly for essential goods. In the face this challenge, we continue to be advised that prices will eventually come down as supply and demand balance out. However, these persistent high prices are affecting the purchasing power of many citizens.

Now that this August House is reconstituted, I am urging you Honourable Members to look into how we can overcome this problem. This is important because improving the wellbeing of our people is our priority. More importantly, these hardships are also a source of instability as those who wish us ill can use them to further endanger the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While your legislative agenda will be pre-occupied with passing laws to support agreement implementation, your oversight role in overseeing development projects is

equally critical. We cannot defer development to some other times. It must go hand in hand with peacebuilding. This is why I am urging you, Honourable Members to prioritize supervision of national projects, especially the road network across the country.

This is key because these investments, specifically in infrastructure are linked to improving security, encouraging agricultural activities to increase food security, facilitating investment and providing employment to a significant portion of our population, especially the youth.

I have stated on my tenth anniversary speech that roads construction across the country is our priority. Currently construction is ongoing on: -

- Juba-Bor-Ayod-Malakal-Renk highway;
- Luri Bridge and Luri highway;
- Jur River Bridge in Wau;
- Juba Nimule highway;
- Juba-Terekeka-Yirol-Rumbek Road; and
- Freedom Bridge in Juba.

Contracts have also been signed for:

- Juba -Lainya -Yei-Kaya Road;
- Juba-Torit-Kapoeta-Nadepal Road;
- Rumbek-Tonj-Wau-Kuacjok-Gogrial-Akon-Aweil Road;
- Gogrial-Wunrok-Abiemnhom-Bentiu-Panrieng-Jau Road;
- Rumbek-Maper-Manyendit-Bentiu; and
- Wau-Raja-Boromedina Road.

Other roads construction plans and contracts are in the pipeline for:

- Jekou-Nasir-Malakal Road;
- Malakal-Tonga-Panrieng-Bentiu Road;
- Pagak-Maiwut-Mathiang-Paloch-Malut Road;
- Bor-Pibor-Pochalla-Ayod-Waat-Akobo Road;

- Kapoeta-Boma-Raad Road; and
- Akobo-Gadiang-Bor Road.

All these road projects are important and that is why we have dedicated crude oil for their construction for as long as it takes to complete them.

It is my sincere hope that you will work with concern ministries to streamline contracts and procurement processes. Moving forward, we want to subject contracts with international dimension to consultant advice. Having a third party with required expertise can help our country to get the best value for money as well as minimizing instances of corruption. Honourable Members, with your support, we must revive our policy of zero tolerance for corruption in all aspects of our work.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our shared responsibility to diversify the economy by moving it away from the current sole dependency on oil revenues. This could be done by facilitating and channelling investments into other revenue generating activities such as collections of non-oil revenues, incentivizing subsistent and cash crops-based agriculture as well as initiating industrial development to help generate national revenue from other sources.

This means reviving previous developmental schemes in states to create employment opportunities, stabilize local economies and curtail rural-urban migration. These schemes include:

- Rice scheme in Aweil;
- Currency Centre in Rumbek;
- Anzara Agro-industrial complex;
- Tonj Kanef Project;
- Marial Bai Project Development Unit (PDU) animal husbandry;
- Mongalla sugar scheme;
- Wau breweries;
- Malut Sugar Scheme;

- Oil refineries in oil producing areas; and
- Developing mining sector, specifically gold mining.

To further strengthen our local capacity, we need to look into supporting medium enterprises in industrial processing of widely available raw materials across South Sudan. These include availing start-up resources to enterprising young people for processing of:

- Lulu oil from the lulu seeds;
- Fruit canning in areas with concentration of mangoes and guavas;
- Sesame and groundnut oil processing, for example Yirol oil mill and;
- Cow hide collection and treatment for export.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The issue of imbalance in regional development in health and education sectors deserve your attention. The ministry of health with a concerted support from this esteemed House needs to be given resources for the construction of modern regional referral hospitals in Wau and Malakal. This will remedy the present lack of a well-equipped hospital in greater Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile regions. This proposed improvement in health sector can also be complemented by availing resources to the Ministry of education for the construction of state of art national boarding schools in all States and Administrative areas across the country.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In our foreign relations, our interactions with other states and international organizations are guided by our desire for peaceful coexistence. This view prompted us to play a significant role in resolving the Sudanese conflict. Sudan now is stable because of the Juba Peace Agreement which we negotiated. While the SPLM-N under Gen. Abdel Aziz Adam El Hailu and SLM under Abdel Wad Mohammed Nur are yet to sign the agreement, we will continue to talk with them to join the process.

On the same principle of peaceful co-existence with our neighbours, we are encouraging Ethiopia and Sudan to resolve their dispute over their shared border peacefully. Equally, we are talking with Ethiopia to use peaceful means to resolve its internal conflict in the Tigray region.

Honourable Members, in order to exert our influence in the region and beyond, we need to address two critical issues: paying membership fees we owed to regional and international organizations and salaries of our diplomats. Our inability to pay our membership dues to organizations we are part of, as well as paying our diplomatic staff is a matter of great concern. These two issues need to be resolved quickly to allow our diplomats to effectively carryout their duties among their peers both in the region and internationally.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are aware, your parliamentary business cannot start without Specialized Committees. We in the Executive earlier on assigned a committee to deal with the issue of responsibility sharing. Given that you are an independent arm of the government, we are not going to interfere with how you conduct your business by proposing how you structure your Specialized Committees.

However, since the Committees are part and parcel of your Conduct of Business Regulation, I urge the Right Honourable Speaker with her leadership to set up a body that will determine the type and number of Specialized Committees for the TNLA. This work should be guided by the principles of fairness and collegial discussion among the parties. The same should apply to committees' formation at the Council of States.

Finally, as I mentioned in my address on the 10th Independence Anniversary Celebration, all the Five (5) Clusters of the Council of Ministers are functioning under the Chairpersonship of the First Vice President and the Vice Presidents.

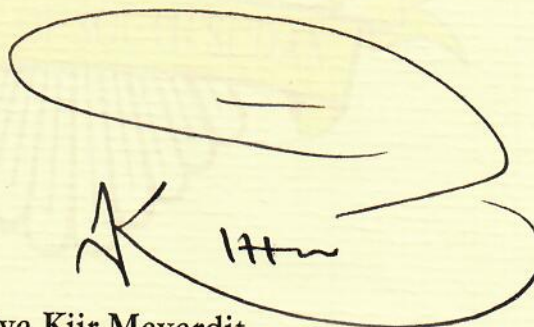
I have directed all the Ministers to develop the Policy Frame-Work and Strategic Plans of their Ministries, incorporating the provisions of the Agreement to ensure their implementation. These are the tools for laying the foundation for our country in terms of governance. You should take these equally serious so that we improve on transparency and accountability in the administration.

Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Just look at yourselves in this Freedom Hall. I would like each one of you to look to his or her right and left and also in front and behind you. After doing this, I believe you have realized all of you in this Hall are representatives of our people's diversity. You represent regions and ethnicities that make up South Sudan.

Your representation in this Hall is reflective of our inclusive diversity, a key building block for our people to live in peace, harmony and solidarity. Our diversity also points us to the path of forgiveness, cooperation and reconciliation. Let us all use this diversity to shun tribalism because tribalism generates hate and destroy the unity of our people and the future of the nation.

I wish you all the best as you begin this parliamentary session, and I applaud each and every one of you for accepting the challenge to be members of this esteemed Parliament and the Council of States.

May God bless you and our country the Republic of South Sudan.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop and a smaller loop, with a horizontal line through the middle.

Salva Kiir Mayardit
President,
Republic of South Sudan
Juba, South Sudan