



**Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission
(RJMEC)**

STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE

34TH RJMEC MONTHLY MEETING

THURSDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2024

JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

1. A Happy New Year to you all. I welcome you to the 34th meeting of the RJMEC and the first plenary meeting for the year 2024. This is a significant and important year for South Sudan, and for us as RJMEC, monitors of the Revitalised Peace Agreement. Much work needs to be done to create an enabling environment for the conduct of free, fair and credible elections, as per the Agreement and the Roadmap. That said, the prospects of delivering the country to a democratic dispensation should motivate all of us, the Parties in particular, to redouble efforts to achieve this historic goal smoothly.
2. In this regard, I am encouraged with the commendable progress made since we last met in December 2023, in particular with regard to the reconstitution and operationalisation of some of the more critical institutions, namely, the National Constitutional Review Commission, the National Elections Commission, and the Political Parties Council. However, we are mindful of the delays in

their establishment, and the very short time left for them to deliver their important mandate.

3. Since we last met, I have had the opportunity to engage with some of the Principals of the Revitalised Agreement or their representatives, as well as the leadership of the newly reconstituted institutions, and some of our peace partners and special envoys. My overall assessment is that there is significant appetite for elections to be conducted in a timely manner, and in accordance with the requirements of the Revitalised Peace Agreement. What is unclear, however, is how the RTGoNU and Parties to the Agreement will be able to complete the critical pending tasks and create a conducive environment for the conduct of credible elections within the time left.
4. I also briefed the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security, the AU Panel of the Wise, and the Facilitation Support Team from South Africa, as well as many other international and regional peace partners. In these meetings, I appealed for their unwavering support to the South Sudan peace process, and emphasised the need for the leadership of the RTGoNU to dialogue, embrace collegiality, and work together as peace partners in order

to build social cohesion and the public confidence needed to hold free, fair and credible elections as scheduled for December 2024.

5. With this in mind, my statement will update you on the recent progress registered in the implementation of the Revitalised Peace Agreement, highlight the critical pending tasks and challenges facing implementation, and conclude with my recommendations to the RTGoNU and Parties to the Agreement.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Regarding governance, since the last meeting, the members of the National Elections Commission (NEC) and the National Constitutional Review Commission (NCRC) were sworn in and have begun work. I look forward to an update from these two bodies, as well as the Political Parties Council (PPC), which had been sworn in earlier.
7. In terms of pending legislation, the TNLA is currently considering a number of bills, including that of the National Audit Chambers, the National Security Service, the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, and the Compensation and Reparation Authority. The Anti-

Corruption Commission Act has been assented to by the President of the Republic of South Sudan, the operationalisation of which will enhance transparency and accountability across the public sector. The National Social Insurance Fund Act has also been recently assented to. In this regard, the mandate of the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC) is nearing completion, with only two laws remaining to be reviewed and drafted. The NCAC will update the meeting this morning.

8. The *ad-hoc* Judicial Reform Committee (JRC) for its part is currently concluding its stakeholder consultations, and is drafting its final report. This report is expected to contain recommendations critical for reforming the judiciary, including review of the Judiciary Act, reconstitution of the Judicial Service Commission and establishment of the Constitutional Court, among others.
9. Regarding security, it is very concerning to have begun the year with multiple reports of violence in different parts of the country, in particular the Abyei Administrative Area, and Unity, Warrap, Western Bahr el Ghazal, and Jonglei States. For example, over the weekend of 27-28 January 2024, it is deeply regrettable that over 50 lives were lost in

intercommunal fighting in Abyei, including two peacekeepers from the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei. Sadly, these attacks follow a pattern of continuing violence between local communities of that area in recent weeks and months.

10. RJMEC urges for dialogue to break the cycle of violence and underscores the need for the culture of peace to prevail. Much is at stake for the people of South Sudan as they seek to have their democratic aspirations met by holding their first elections as an independent nation. RJMEC therefore reminds the RTGoNU of its responsibility, as per Article 1.2.2 of the R-ARCSS, to restore permanent and sustainable peace, security, and stability.

11. Regarding the Transitional Security Arrangements, the completion of the unification of forces is a key step towards providing a conducive environment in which to hold elections. However, under Phase I, deployment of the graduated personnel is at a limited stage, though it has begun. According to CTSAMVM, around 4000 army NUF personnel have been deployed to the states of Upper Nile, Eastern Equatoria, Western Equatoria and Western Bahr El Ghazal. However, some 51,000 NUF personnel are yet to deploy, the majority of whom are from other organised

forces besides the army, which also play an important role in South Sudan's security. The status of Phase II also remains unclear.

12. In addition, the DDR process has not started, even though soldiers were screened for that purpose during Necessary Unified Forces (NUF) Phase I training, graduation and deployment. I look forward to hearing from the Joint Defence Board and the DDR Commission on the progress in this matter, especially on gender disaggregated data relating to both the deployed unified forces and those yet to be deployed.

13. The work of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) Board has stalled. The documents prepared by the Board as per their mandate still require validation, and it is not clear how this process will move forward in light of the strike by the members of the Board and Secretariat. I would like the Chair of the SDSR Board to provide an update on this matter.

14. In regard to the Sant'Egidio-mediated Rome peace process, it is important to mention that this peace process between the RTGoNU and the hold out groups will now be conducted with facilitation by Kenya. This is following the

request by H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit to H.E. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya, to facilitate the peace talks between the RTGoNU and the hold out groups. It is hoped that this new initiative will take the process forward.

15. As you may recall in our previous meetings, we informed members that we are in the process of addressing the CTSAMVM administrative and operational matters that hindered progress in their work. It is therefore encouraging to note that following the interventions of RJMEC and IGAD, CTSAMVM's operational challenges have now been resolved. CTSAMVM has a very important role to play this year in the lead up to elections and I urge the Parties and international community to afford it all the support it needs. I look forward to hearing a report from the CTSAMVM Chair this morning.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. In the last two months, the humanitarian situation has continued to worsen, with approximately 120 thousand more refugees and returnees fleeing the conflict in Sudan entering the country, according to UNOCHA. This exacerbates the general humanitarian situation in South

Sudan, where the scale of need is already high, service delivery is low, and the little resources available are very stretched. Furthermore, the Special Reconstruction Fund and Board, a mechanism which could provide much needed focus and direction to the humanitarian and reconstruction needs of South Sudan, has not been established.

17. On the subject of resource, economic and financial management, while it is encouraging that the Anti-Corruption Commission Act has been assented to, other key pieces of legislation intended to strengthen transparency and accountability in the economic and financial sectors, including amendment bills to the National Audit Chambers Act and the Public Financial Management and Accountability Act, are pending.

18. Though in general there has been some improvement in the management of natural resources, greater accountability is required in wealth sharing and revenue allocation as South Sudan prepares for democratic elections. The proportion of the country's natural resource wealth to be shared with the states and communities are to be reviewed in accordance with Article 4.11.5, and the final

terms of the increment and formulae agreed upon, and should be determined in the permanent constitution.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. Regarding transitional justice, there has been no progress since the previously reported situation; the Bills for the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH) and the Compensation and Reparation Authority (CRA) remain with the reconstituted TNLA. I urge the TNLA to give these bills their timely attention, as matters of truth, reconciliation and healing will play a vital role in South Sudan this year, spearheading the promotion of forgiveness and social cohesion ahead of elections. I look forward to hearing an update on the Hybrid Court for South Sudan from the African Union and the RTGoNU.

20. On the issue of the constitution making process, the National Constitutional Review Commission (NCRC) has commenced work. A people-led and people-owned constitution, if made in an inclusive and participatory manner, will be critical in anchoring lasting stability and good governance as the country transitions into its democratic future. RJMEC therefore urges the RTGoNU

and partners to support the NCRC in order for it to conduct much-needed civic education and public consultations for the permanent constitution, which is also a critical requirement for the conduct of elections, as per the Agreement.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

21. The recurring challenges facing implementation of the agreement are by now familiar, and steps to mitigate them in order to smooth the way for elections at the end of this year need to be taken. These challenges include, among others, the lack of sufficient funding, trust deficit, capacity gaps, intercommunal violence, defections, flooding, and the influx of returnees and refugees fleeing the conflict in Sudan.

22. Meanwhile, there are a number of critical tasks, which if completed in a timely manner, will enhance political and civic space, sustain the peace and consolidate the gains made in the implementation of the Agreement so far. In particular, attention needs to be paid to:

- i) full operationalisation of the three newly reconstituted institutions, especially provision of funding to enable them to deliver their mandates;
- ii) completion of Phase I and Phase II unification of forces, and provision of funding for DDR;
- iii) addressing intercommunal violence through national and state-level dialogue and peacebuilding mechanisms;
- iv) implementation of the legal and policy frameworks which enhance transparency and accountability in economic and financial sectors; and
- v) establishment and operationalisation of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing and the Compensation and Reparation Authority.

23. In light of the aforementioned, I would like to make the following recommendations to the RTGoNU:

- i) encourage further dialogue, collegiality, and consensus building among the Parties, their principals, and the stakeholders;
- ii) provide clarity on the plans and preparations for the conduct of elections as scheduled;

- iii) avail the requisite resources and logistics to fully operationalise the elections-related reconstituted institutions;
- iv) operationalise all pieces of legislation enacted by the TNLA;
- v) complete the training and deployment of the NUF to provide election-related security and security in areas of intercommunal violence;
- vi) fund and operationalise the process of making a people-led and people-owned constitution; and
- vii) ensure the participation of women in all political processes, and their representation in mechanisms in accordance with the Agreement at the minimum threshold of 35%.

24. In conclusion, I would like to urge you, as RJMEC members, to engage frankly with the RTGoNU and Parties' representatives, to clarify how they intend to deliver peaceful, free, fair and credible democratic elections as per the Agreement and Roadmap in the remaining time. I wish you fruitful deliberations.

I Thank You.