

IGAD

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**OPENING REMARKS BY
AMBASSADOR SEYOUM MESFIN
CHAIRPERSON OF THE IGAD SPECIAL ENVOYS
FOR SOUTH SUDAN AT THE RESUMPTION OF
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER NEGOTIATIONS
FOR SOUTH SUDAN**

**22 SEPTEMBER 2014
NILE CONFERENCE CENTRE, BAHIR DAR**

Honourable Yalew, Speaker of the Amhara National Regional State Council;

Distinguished delegates of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan;

Distinguished delegates of the SPLM/SPLA (In Opposition);

Distinguished delegates of the SPLM Leaders (Former Detainees);

Distinguished delegates of the Eminent Personalities, Civil Society and the Faith-based institutions;

Distinguished delegates of the women's block;

Distinguished representatives of the UN and Troika;

Excellencies, my Colleagues the Special Envoys, members of the secretariat, and members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Allow me to again welcome you all to Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara National Regional State on Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile. .

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My opening remarks will be brief. I do not need to underline that the situation South Sudan faces continues to be very grave. Lives continue to be at great risk. We are most disappointed that in recent days there has been new fighting in Upper Nile, and appeal to all parties to exercise restraint. The IGAD Monitoring and Verification Teams will investigate the incidents and the results will be acted upon.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

There is a way forward. You can reach a sustainable and comprehensive settlement. The document that the mediation circulated on 20 September provides the starting point for this round of talks. The approach of the mediation is to draw on the guiding principles provided by the Protocol endorsed by the IGAD Heads of State and Government on 25 August 2014, while recognizing that the Protocol is not in itself a final agreement. It is a roadmap of principles guiding the South Sudan stakeholders toward a negotiated agreement.

The document you have in front of you, which incorporates the Protocol and the position or official response of the stakeholders to the single negotiating text developed during the 5th session of talks, recognizes that there is still much work to be done, and much negotiation still to occur. It is your document, and contains your positions. It is your peace process. The Protocol itself calls for the terms of the transition to be determined by the agreed outcomes of this ongoing peace process, so let us engage now towards that productive end. Let us not get trapped in the past, but be practical enough to work towards real resolution.

Let progress not be impeded any further by rhetorical or procedural issues. The adage goes: if you are looking for fish, do not climb a tree. If you are committed to peace, you will not find it through the barrel of the gun, but around this table. If you are looking for peace, you will not get it from others as a donation: but I can assure you that we can find it together. It is in you. Find it! Do not lose this opportunity. The people of South Sudan may not give their leaders a second chance. Let us see together a bigger objective: reaching a settlement that can take the country forward, and work with each to achieve that aim.

The mediation is not perfect—we accept that there have been shortcomings, which we humbly regret. But this should not excuse delay or intransigence on anyone's part. The consequences of failure now will be severe. Let this be the last generation in South Sudan to experience war. The people of South Sudan deserve peace. They have gone through enough suffering. Let us not preside over further calamity or death and destruction. That is not leadership.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The mediation remains determined to help you negotiate in good faith and find peace. Let me repeat: we are ready to help you find peace. Let that be our only agenda.

Finally, on behalf of the mediation, my colleagues General Lazaro Sumbeiywo and General Mohammed Ahmed al-Dabi and that of the delegates attending this meeting, I would like to thank the Government, the Assembly of the Amhara National Regional State and the people of this beautiful city of Bahir Dar for providing all the necessary facilities to make our meeting a success.

I thank you. ###