

Opening Statement
by
His Excellency Festus G. Mogae,
Chairperson
of the
Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC),
at the meeting of JMEC held in Juba on
22 December 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies,

Distinguished representatives,

Ladies and gentlemen:

Greetings of the season to all of you assembled here today, and to the people of South Sudan.

It is a great pleasure to see the representatives of the SPLM/A (IO) here today. It has been a long journey, both literally and metaphorically. But you are here, despite the difficulties. And I am sure I can express on behalf of all of us here that you are welcome. Your return indicates the commitment you have to restoring peace and implementing the Agreement in South Sudan. Your return is not the end of the road, but the start of another important journey. With your presence in Juba, we can truly say that the chapter of implementation is now open.

Above all, I would like to thank the GRSS for enabling the first group of the SPLM/A (IO) to return, and urge both Parties to plan for the expeditious return of the second and third groups, in accordance with the proposed plan.

We hope that the momentum that now exists will continue with concerted and meaningful action to implement the commitments provided for in the Agreement. I welcome the statements of Minister David Deng Athorbei and Gen. Taban Deng at the airport last night in which both the GRSS and the SPLM/A (IO) reiterated their pledges to move quickly to honour the Agreement, and I welcome their remarks, and indeed we welcome the commitment by all the Parties to honour and uphold the Agreement, and take those commitments with great seriousness.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

2016, a new year is just around the corner. And yet many of the challenges faced since the signing of the Agreement in August of this year remain. This meeting, with quorum, comes nearly four months after the Agreement was signed. In our meeting in November, we observed a moment of silence in honour of those who perished as a result of the conflict, and indeed, all conflicts in South Sudan. Let that not be an empty gesture for the cameras. Let South Sudanese be convinced – whether aligned with the Government, the opposition, or the other political parties, and, most importantly, the many millions who have no formal affiliation with politics, that their leaders, whether in the

administration, in JMEC, or in other institutions, are guided by the principle of acting in the interests of the citizens of this country, and acting with good will to implement the Agreement. This is not a rhetorical statement: there is skepticism in many quarters that peace has really come, and there are understandable doubts, that can only be addressed by meaningful action.

To the people of South Sudan, in this season of hope, forgiveness and renewal, it is my sincere hope that this Christmas, 2015, is the last celebrated in a context of conflict. The greatest gift that could be presented to the people of South Sudan by its leaders is the gift of peace and the promise of reconciliation and healing. As Chairperson of JMEC, I pledge to you my commitment to ensure this Agreement succeeds, and be implemented in letter and spirit. I will not hesitate to work with every Party represented here, every Stakeholder, to strive for peace, accountability and reform.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting will achieve what was planned in our first meeting in November: to engage in a comprehensive dialogue on the way forward, on the many issues that remain. Let me be clear: this is not a forum for renegotiation. It is instead, an opportunity to

work practically, collaboratively, and quickly. We will encourage and accelerate progress on all fronts, facilitate dialogue and overcome difficulties in implementation, and, I reiterate, that we are all duty bound to take all necessary action to ensure the Agreement is fulfilled. Allow me, also, to repeat some of what I said in November: no Agreement can address every concern of every party. No Agreement is a solution to all problems; therefore, the determination to implement what was agreed is a critical first step towards finding further solutions, within the context of the Agreement.

We cannot be complacent. Too much time has been lost already. I will not recite the humanitarian statistics, even though they deeply pain me as a leader myself. I too know what it means to have a huge number of your citizens in peril – we in Botswana, at one time, had an uncontrolled situation of HIV which affected hundreds of thousands of my compatriots, which risked crippling our country's future, so to hear that there are millions at risk in South Sudan is very saddening. But to be practical, what action can we take to avert the suffering? How can confidence be built so that people return to their homes? To live normally and raise the food that they need for sustenance? How do we best abide

by the Agreement and foster its implementation so that the statistics change, for the better? These are the questions we must ask, and answer. It is clear to me that one of the required answers is that we must move the Agreement forward.

The implementation calendar that I issued last week was necessarily ambitious. Some might say that we are being too ambitious, given the time of year and given the complexity involved. To the first point, let me respond that ambition is necessary. An accelerated plan is necessary. We have limited time to do things that should have been done weeks ago. We have to make up for the time lost. This can be achieved if we all work effectively and engage in good faith. And concerning the Christmas season, if you may permit me, to cite the Bible, then in the example of Jesus himself we have our answer. In the gospel according to Luke, chapter 13, verses 14-15, it is said "But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day. "Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead it to water?"

So, yes, let us revise the calendar in accordance with reality, and celebrate the holiday, but let us still pursue our tasks with the full vigour and determination that is required, even if that means that every day between now and the New Year is a working day, a working day in the cause of peace.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my expectation that this meeting will have three main outcomes:

1. To ensure that the main pre-transitional institutions to be convened begin today, tomorrow, Wednesday and on Thursday. These are:
 - a. the Joint Military Ceasefire Commission (JMCC); for further action on security arrangements nationally;
 - b. the Joint Operations Centre, for implementing security arrangements for the capital, Juba;
 - c. the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC), begins the work necessary to technically conform the national constitution to the provisions of the Agreement;

2. To hear from the leadership of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) about their activities and challenges, and see how best we can support their efforts in future, and similarly, to hear from the Parties on the status to date, of the cantonment of forces;
3. To move forward with the other processes necessary to establish the Transitional Government of National Unity, as required by the Agreement and by the process of implementation, such as the selection of ministerial portfolios, to ensure that this is an inclusive government, and a government that can be formed in the very near future.

These should be our outcomes today. I intend to move forward with all of these steps, so that by the end of the year, I can positively report to the IGAD Heads of State and Government, the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council the status of implementation of the Agreement, and ask them, where necessary, for the action required of them to further support the peace process.

Next week, I intend to visit more states – in Greater Bahr el Ghazal and in Greater Upper Nile – to reach out further to the leaders and citizens of South Sudan, and to demonstrate that this process is real and its steps are meaningful. I hope, that in the near future, the leadership of both the Parties will also join me in such initiatives. Following that visit, it is my hope that we can meet again as a Commission in early January to review progress and take further steps to accelerate implementation of the Agreement.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Once again, allow me to express my great happiness in seeing that the SPLM/A (IO) is here with us today. Let us progress from that achievement. It is time to do so. May the goodwill that is expected at this time of year encourage us to make a lasting and helpful contribution to the cause of peace for the people of South Sudan. I thank you all.