

**Statement by H. E. James Wani Igga Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan to the High-level Meeting of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York City - September 26th 2013**

- Mr. President,
- Your Excellencies,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address this Assembly for the first time as the Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan.

First, I would like to express heart-felt condolence from the government and people of South Sudan to the people and government of the Republic of Kenya particularly the families of those affected by the brutal and inhuman act of terror in the Kenyan Capital Nairobi. We condemn all acts of terrorism and pledge our full cooperation and support to all efforts geared towards cleaning the region and indeed the globe of terrorism.

**Mr. President,**

I convey sincere gratitude from President Kiir Mayardit and the people of South Sudan to the United Nations (particularly its Security Council), IGAD countries, the Troika, and all people of good will for diplomatically helping us bring an end to the conflict that had devastated our Country for decades.

We are particularly grateful to the International Community for closely monitoring the difficult implementation of that peace accord. Given the complexity of the issues involved, the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) has been relatively successful although the protocols of the two states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, the case of the contested area of Abyei and the demarcation of the borders between South Sudan and Sudan continue to impede the full implementation of the peace accord.

**Mr. President,**

Our country is well endowed with abundant natural resources. Our relations with Sudan, of recent, involve unexpected tension with intermittent suspension of oil-flow through Sudan. Inside the South itself there is reemergence of old quarrels since time immemorial by some communities over cattle grazing and water points. This became complicated during the last war as guns of different calibers trickled to unauthorized civilians' hands. We are working hard as a government to entrench peace to all corners of South Sudan. We have established programs for rehabilitating and integrating former rebel groups into our armed forces and society at large.

**Mr. President,**

We have to build a country literally from scratch. With non-existent physical and social infrastructure which made us to have the worst human development indicators in the world including high maternity and infant mortality rates, and high illiteracy rates among a population of over 8 million.

While we as humans and government recognize that we must have made errors of judgment as we try to fix a war-devastated country, there are also successful steps taken and we appeal for the goodwill shown to us in those times of difficulty to continue. We are confronted with the test of adherence to human rights, which are a consequence of malicious action by external hands, rather than our own making.

We commend any objective criticism and we call on the ‘experts’ on South Sudan to also appreciate the bigger picture of how well the country is run outside Jonglei state of the ten states we have. We are presently running a government with acceptable standards of competence. A decentralized system of governance was a conscious decision by South Sudan’s political leadership enshrined in the Transitional Constitution, 2011 to build a broad-based democracy in the post conflict setting. We set up the ten States with popularly elected governors and democratic legislatures as a nucleus of good governance. In 2010, President Kiir Mayardit was democratically and overwhelmingly elected. Our noble struggle was to actualize the ideals and values of true democracy, so much cherished by our people.

According to our Constitution, the next elections will be held in the year 2015. Indeed, on the 18th of this month, our president publicly confirmed this date. The governing party, the SPLM is holding another general Convention in March, 2014 to freely elect its structures as a preparatory move to conduct the 2015 national general elections.

On the side of women, who have suffered discrimination since 1956, their literacy rate hardly reached 18%. As such, the SPLM as a ruling party is now raising women’s political participation from the 25% in the current constitution to a minimum of 35% in the proposed permanent constitution.

**Mr. President,**

Over the past years, the National Legislative Assembly, of which I was an elected Speaker for eight years, enacted a good number of laws, including a Petroleum Revenue Management Act, which sets out clear rules on how we can efficiently and prudently spend our oil revenues. With the support of our development partners in the region and internationally, we have now embarked on the development of our infrastructure. Numerous infrastructural projects are currently underway.

In response to oil shutdown last year, the government implemented austerity measures. We reduced government spending by 40 per cent and at the moment we have considerably increased non-oil revenue collection. We take seriously our responsibility to ensure that public funds are properly utilized and our spending will be rigorously monitored. We are, thus, determined to uncompromisingly fight practices of maladministration.

**Mr. President,**

We deeply regret the loss of lives of the Indian Peacekeepers, the Russian Helicopter Crew and the Kenyan and South Sudanese relief Workers in Pibor County. We send our

condolences to the families and the governments of those who lost lives. We would want to assure the international community that such tragic incidences are not repeated.

Jonglei State, the most populous with inaccessible terrain has been of particular concern to us as a government as well as the international community. It has serious security and infrastructural impediments. As we regret the security impediments in Jonglei, we assure the international community of our government's determination to transform our army, the SPLA, into a professional National Army that respects human rights and the rule of law and committed to the protection of civilians. The President has declared general amnesty to the rebel groups and already two large groups under Gen. Bapin and the second under Gen. Johnson Oluny have responded positively. The President has also ordered for inevitable disarmament of the civil population. And he has taken legal steps to punish the perpetrators of human rights violations in Jonglei including an SPLA Brigade Commander who is now under arrest together with 13 soldiers who have been sentenced to prison terms that vary from three to five years. Up to now 84 cases of human rights abuses have been tried in the courts of law. We are determined to see that violations committed by some indiscipline SPLA elements will not go unpunished. Recently, the government formed a peace and reconciliation committee headed by top religious leaders to promote dialogue with all groups including the rebels in Pibor County.

**Mr. President,**

The government has allowed UNMISS, UNOCHA and other humanitarian agencies unhindered access to all parts of the country including Jonglei State. The situation in Pibor County which has been of particular concern to all of us, we have ascertained from UNMISS and UNOCHA the number of people who have currently registered for food distribution in various IDP camps and villages, and comparing that with the pre-conflict registered population of Pibor County, we could now be relatively relieved that most of those who had been unaccounted for are in fact alive and receiving much needed humanitarian assistance from UN agencies. Out of the total population of approximately 140,000 in Pibor, for instance, nearly 100,000 people are identified in Pibor bushes with another 10,000 in Juba town and 26,000 registered as refugees in the neighboring countries. We appeal for expeditious relief assistance, of various forms.

Another urgent security demand is to train a police force capable of eliminating the high rate of crime we are experiencing in Pibor county, and indeed the whole country. The UNMISS, and with our profound appreciation, has helped us transform hundreds of former combatants into a police force conscious of the rule of law. UNMISS is doing quite a commendable work under its able leadership. The rate of crime caused by the proliferation of small arms has been alarming. While our police force has managed to apprehend many criminals, others are still slippery and at large but the government is committed to erase this menace. We refute any allegation that these violations are deliberate and systematic orchestrations.

**Mr. President,**

Our relationship with Sudan has been a mixture of cooperation and squabbles. Fundamentally, both sides do acknowledge that there is no alternative to lasting peace other than harmony and cooperation given our shared history. This is why President Kiir Mayardit remarkably visited Khartoum early this month and amicably discussed with his counterpart President Omer El Bashir of Sudan. The two agreed to enhance cooperation on all fronts including allowing unhindered oil flow from South Sudan through Sudan.

On the other hand, we call on the parties at war in Sudan to find a durable political solution to the conflict, a situation for which the CPA had provided a workable remedy. We urge the international community to play a positive stepped-up role in narrowing the gap between both parties. The civil war currently taking place in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile regions of Sudan as well as in Darfur has created an influx of suffering refugees to South Sudan. We appeal for humanitarian access and supply for those refugees. Given our unique knowledge, acquaintance and position as partners to Khartoum and former comrades in arms of the fighting forces in those regions, in addition to our interest in realizing peace along our northern border, the government of South Sudan can play a constructive mediation role if required.

On Abyei, we will continue to cooperate with the Republic of Sudan to implement the agreement on the final status of Abyei through a referendum fixed for October 2013 by the AUHIP. The AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council accepted the proposal as “representing a fair, equitable and workable solution.” The international community must ensure that this proposal is implemented expeditiously.

Mr. President,

Our new government, with energetic and new faces, is leaner but wider in terms of inclusiveness of other political parties and civil society. The reshuffle has been highly supported and applauded countrywide; with a recent opinion poll (carried out by CRN and ST) showing 84.7% for the new team and 92% for the choice of the new Vice President. While many including our friends had doubted our ability to peacefully manage a simple political exercise as a cabinet reshuffle, the domestic backing is revealing. Our immediate program for the new phase is to get better healthcare, education, roads, electricity, and quality of life. We are determined to uproot impunity and corruption, a phenomenon which is a symptom of post-conflict states, and which can derail all our efforts and determination to succeed. As a will to combat corruption and set a new standard, our government has discovered and uprooted 16,000 ‘ghost names’ from the police payroll. We are keenly carrying out a similar exercise within the military and other organized forces.

**Mr. President,**

As I conclude, I wish to repeat that we remain steadfast in our vision – a country at peace with itself and with its neighbors; a country which is growing in security, rule of law, human rights and progressing to justice and prosperity. I offer my sincere thanks to our many partners and friends for their continued support. We look towards the future confident of what we can accomplish together and as a people emerging from marginalization and sufferings of civil strife.

This esteemed body, the UN, has to double efforts in nurturing and reinforcing its new member, South Sudan economically and in its determination to put an end to human rights violations. Importantly, this body should monitor and push forward for complete implementation of the Cooperation Agreement reached between South Sudan and Sudan to cement harmonious and peaceful co-existence.

**Thank you very much.**