



**Government of South Sudan Opening Remarks
at the Commencement of the Second Phase of
the IGAD High Level Revitalisation Forum
(HLRF)**

As delivered by

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Monday, 5th February 2018

**United Nations Economic Commission for
Africa(UNECA) Headquarters**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Amb. Ismail Wais- Special Envoy of the IGAD HLRF,
Distinguished Facilitators,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates;**

1. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan unreservedly embraces the IGAD-led High Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) for the Agreement On the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS). Its objectives are crystal clear and to that extent, the delegation of the Government of South Sudan has come fully prepared to utilize this opportunity to bring about the achievement of comprehensive peace and launch the country on the path to peaceful transition and free and fair democratic elections at the end of the transition period.
2. The purpose of the (HLRF) as stated by the Extra-Ordinary IGAD Heads of State Summit of June 12, 2017 held here in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is threefold. First, to **institute a Permanent Ceasefire**, second to **give fresh impetus to the inclusive implementation of the provisions of the (ARCSS)** and third, to **agree new realistic timelines and implementation schedules towards democratic elections at the end of the Transitional Period**. It is critically important not to lose sight of the purpose of the (HLRF) otherwise the exercise could easily unravel even before it starts. And there is a real danger of that happening if some of the demands elicited by the pre-forum consultations and the unsolicited proposals and comments on governance by some South Sudanese think tanks and academics, are anything to go by. The suggestion by some that the (HLRF) should lead

to an interim Government of technocrats with or without a sprinkling of “politicians” clearly indicates that there are still those among us who do not understand what Revitalization is all about. Worse still, their proposals may not be borne out of ignorance about the aims of Revitalization but rather out of a disingenuous attempt on their part to circumvent the entire process with the ultimate objective of precipitating its eventual collapse. Furthermore, the task of the (HLRF) is not to assemble South Sudan’s political elite in Addis Ababa so that they figure out whether a parliamentary system of Government as opposed to a Presidential one best suits the country or whether we would fare better with a hybrid system where Executive Authority is shared between a President and a Prime Minister. Likewise, we are not gathered here to discuss whether we should have a Collegial or Rotating Presidency or whether we should transfer all executive and legislative competencies, save for Defence and Foreign Affairs, at a go from the Federal Government to the constituent states of the Federation or do that in a gradual fashion as more resources become available to the states. These are all matters that we are all agreed should be dealt with as part of the Permanent Constitution-making process during the Transitional Period. **In fact that is what the Transitional Period is all about. To enable the South Sudanese through a bottom-up approach build consensus on fundamental issues of governance and enshrine that consensus in a new constitution that will derive its legitimacy and respect from the fact that it represents the will of the entire populace.** By way of further emphasis, let me sum up by saying that **the (HLRF) is not designed as a vehicle to negotiate an alternative Agreement to the (ARCSS).** It is merely intended to expedite the implementation of a modified version of the (ARCSS) that

is politically more inclusive and that further adjusts implementation timelines, in keeping with the current status of implementation in terms of what has actually been accomplished and what remains to be done to fully implement the (ARCSS).

3. South Sudan continues to be beset by deep-seated political differences stemming from the contest over political power. And this, unfortunately, has taken a violent form. This state of affairs is not unique to South Sudan despite attempts to portray our situation as being without precedent on this planet. Since time immemorial, humankind has been tormented by the tragic consequences of the struggle to control power. The reinstatement of the status quo prior to July 2016 under which the former First Vice President deputized the incumbent President, is no longer a viable option in terms of the Revitalisation of the Agreement. The entire period in between the attainment of independence in 2011 and July 2016 was characterised by friction and discord within the Government of South Sudan. The President and the First Vice President hardly got along and a situation was created where the Government degenerated effectively into two competing and mutually antagonistic power centres, one supporting the President and the other throwing its weight behind the First Vice President. This eventually paved the way for the December 2013 debacle and the rest as they say, is history. ***We can ill-afford to reinstate that power configuration whereby the former First Vice President deputizes the President again, otherwise December 2013 will surely pay us another visit.*** So our message to our armed compatriots in the opposition is that nobody seeks to monopolize political power and deny you your birth-right as citizens of South Sudan, to aspire to the pinnacle of political power. All that

we are saying is that you need not have recourse to violence as the means of pursuing that power. The Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan guarantees all citizens the right to access power at all levels and the right to freely organize and propagate peacefully in the quest for political power. Hence the use of military force for the attainment of that objective is totally uncalled for.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates;

4. The Government strongly associates itself with calls for the (HLRF) process to culminate, inter alia, in a comprehensive and irreversible Permanent Ceasefire Agreement. And as we work toward this goal, we hope all stakeholders, especially the Armed Groups, will recommit themselves to observing the Cessation of Hostilities (COH) Agreement that will not only create a conducive atmosphere for the success of the (HLRF) process, but will also serve as a solid foundation for the Permanent Ceasefire that shall be negotiated and agreed as an integral part of the Agreement that the (HLRF) will lead to. We are aware that in the current circumstances there is always a strong temptation on the part of the opposition to scale up military operations against the Government in the hope of strengthening bargaining positions at the negotiating table. And this understandably complicates the task of strictly adhering to the (COH) Agreement. We also know that the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) is being constrained in its ability to offer optimum performance by a combination of capacity challenges and external political influences. That means the Parties cannot rely entirely on CTSAMM to stop (COH) violations that occur from time to time. Indeed, the best safeguard against episodes of (COH) violations is the will and desire of the Parties themselves. The (COH) Agreement can only hold if there

is a strong bona fide political commitment by all Parties to observe it. We therefore call for the demonstration of such a commitment.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates;

5. A serious potential political impediment to the emergence of an Agreement from the (HLRF) process that we have embarked upon, is **the acceptance of Security Arrangements that provide for the co-existence, irrespective of duration, of multiple armies in the country during the Transitional Period.** The Government had strenuously argued against such an arrangement prior to the conclusion of the (ARCSS) in 2015, but to no avail. The tragic events of July 2016 in Juba subsequently vindicated our conviction that the existence of an armed force outside the national army was going to be a recipe for disaster. **We are determined that such an experience will never be repeated.** To that end we expect that all armed elements affiliated with the different Groups and who wish to serve in the national army and other uniformed services, will be immediately integrated into those institutions as part of any Agreement that the (HLRF) process will lead to. **It is unacceptable that any Armed Political Group should seek to retain its own army during the Transition as a safety device to fall back on in case they fail to realise their dreams through the political process.** Such Groups should instead negotiate political safeguards that will ensure a level playing field that guarantees a fair power contest for all.
6. We all feel a deep sense of outrage at the loss of human lives and the atrocities to which some of our citizens continue to be subjected in violation of their basic human rights. At the same time, we are keenly aware that no

matter the magnitude of the suffering of our people, **only a peacefully negotiated political settlement will bring the suffering to an end.** We therefore urge the international community to devote more time and resources to help the people of South Sudan realize peace and eliminate the political root cause of the human suffering. Human rights abuses are unacceptable and those in particular who violate Humanitarian Law by killing innocent civilians with impunity should be held accountable. However, we all have a choice. We can either devote our energies to lament and condemn human rights abuses that are manifestations of conflict or better still focus our resources to promote an end to the political conflict that engenders the atrocities in the first place. For us, the latter should be the clear choice.

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7. The recent decision by the Government of the United States of America to overtly and more aggressively pursue what has hitherto been a discreet policy to pursue sanctions against top Government officials and seek the imposition of a global arms embargo against South Sudan, is unfortunate to say the least. Such actions per se, are not the problem. We are not oblivious to the fact that it is within the sovereign prerogative of all states, the United States of America included, to decide who should be their friends and who should not be. This is the immutable reality of international relations. What we find profoundly disturbing are the possible ramifications on the South Sudan Peace Process of the US Government's decision to designate the President of South Sudan as a leader who is no longer fit to be a partner in the search for peace in his country in addition to the imposition of a unilateral US arms embargo and the continued pursuit of a global arms embargo against us.

8. To begin with, President Salva Kiir Mayardit is being constantly reminded that ultimate responsibility for the restoration of peace in South Sudan rests entirely with him. The Government is being told that it holds all the cards and that the opposition has virtually little or nothing to offer. If this is indeed true and any meaningful concessions for the realization of peace can only be made by the Government to an opposition that is only waiting to receive, how then would we expect a President who has been declared unfit to deliver peace to deliver it. **There is clearly an inherent contradiction in the proposition that someone incapable of bringing peace is also expected to achieve that peace.**
9. The US position vis-à-vis the Government of South Sudan in our view will serve as a strong disincentive for the opposition to reach a peace Agreement with the Government. Knowing that the leader of South Sudan has been written off in some important quarters and aware that the denial of the Government, access to arms required for legitimate defence purposes will tend to level the military ground in its favour, the opposition will likely be emboldened not to rush to an Agreement. To further compound the problem, there has been a concerted and persistent campaign lately to divert IGAD from its real agenda. IGAD member states, JMEC and CTSAMM are now being actively lobbied to allow themselves become instruments for building up the case for imposition of sanctions against Government officials and a global arms embargo against South Sudan by the UN Security Council. This is already causing polarization within IGAD itself between two camps, one perceived to be cooperative with respect to that agenda and one that is

seen as non-cooperative. And this polarization will eventually seep into the African Union itself. We wish to emphasize that the remit of IGAD and the associated mechanisms for implementation of the (ARCSS) is not to promote sanctions or an arms embargo against a member state. Its task is to find ways and means of helping the people of South Sudan peacefully resolve their conflict. The polarization of IGAD will undermine IGAD's ability to deliver on that noble mission. **We therefore urge IGAD to ensure its continued unity and cohesion in the face of these mounting political challenges, if it is to help us restore peace to our war- torn country.**

10. Our final message is to all our compatriots in the opposition. We urge you to seize this opportunity to bring the armed conflict in our country to an end and restore peace. It is possible to successfully pursue your objectives through political means. Do not be tempted to continue with your military campaign. **There is no justification for that because the Government is ready to immediately partner with all of you to transform our country and in addition to that and despite the pressures, I wish to assure you all that the Government is not collapsing any time soon.**

Thank you very much.