



## REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN The President

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### His Excellency Salva Kiir Mayardit President of the Republic of South Sudan Remarks on Eleventh Anniversary of Independence

July 9, 2022

**Fellow Citizens,**

Today we celebrate the eleventh anniversary of our independence. July 9<sup>th</sup> is an important day in our calendar. It is the day we celebrate the fulfillment of our long-held aspirations to be an independent country. It is also the day we remember the people we lost in our painful journey to statehood. On this day, I would like to congratulate all of you both within the country and across the globe.

**Fellow Citizens,**

Since our country got entangled in the senseless war that we ended in 2018, we have not been able to hold a public celebration on our Independence Day. This is mainly due to war induced economic crisis as well as the corona virus pandemic. This year specifically, we have decided to scale-down public celebration because of other competing national priorities, which did not allow us to commit resources to support a public celebration of our independence.

That said, I urge the public and state governments to celebrate this important event in any way they deem fit. I have already observed motorcycle taxis and rickshaw drivers here in



Juba celebrating by flying our national flag high while doing their daily business. This gesture may look simple, but it demonstrates a deep sense of patriotism.

**Fellow Citizens,**

The lagging economic difficulties responsible for this scale down celebration will not remain with us for a long time. We will work collectively to find a permanent solution that will address it once and for all. We have already started this process. I have directed the Ministry of Finance and Planning to pay all the salary arrears owed to public servants, a task they are about to accomplish at the moment. The Ministry has also started the payment of salary arrears owed to our diplomatic missions and it will continue paying them until all our diplomats are paid their arrears.

**Fellow Citizens,**

The signing of the Revitalized Peace Agreement in September 2018, ended the internal conflict that started in 2013 and the flare up that took place in July 2016. So far, we as the parties to the agreement, have held together and are doing our utmost best to implement it despite ongoing challenges. The permanent ceasefire continues to hold across the country. As a result of the improved security situation, the majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in UNMISS camps across the country are returning home. The voluntary return of refugees from neighbouring countries has also been recorded, which demonstrates improved security situation.

The challenge we are facing now is finding resources to support these returnees to re-integrate into their communities. We are calling upon our international partners to support these returnees, especially those returning to rural areas be assisted with tools and seeds to help them produce their food and improve food security.



**Fellow Citizens,**

On critical matters of the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, I am pleased to inform you that the command structure for the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF) has been established. All the required bills that we need to finalize the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement: the Security Sector bills, the Permanent Constitution-Making bill among others are in their final stage of reading by the Reconstituted Transitional National Legislative Assembly (R-TNLA).

The passing of these bills is critical because they are key to holding credible elections at the end of the interim period. It is for this reason that our people along with our international partners are eagerly waiting for the passing of these bills. I am also adding voice today by urging our members of parliament to put aside partisan politics and engage in genuine debate that will pave the way to passing these bills.

I am also aware that another sticking point that the region and the international community are waiting for is the graduation of the Unified Forces. Plans for graduation of the Unified Forces are in advance stages and the Presidency will sit in the coming days to fix the date for their graduation.

While what I have mentioned are key areas we need to address urgently, I would like to inform you that a roadmap that will guide us on how the Transitional Period will end has been developed. This roadmap provides timelines for the completion of the outstanding provisions in the Agreement. In the coming days, we are going to convene a meeting of the parties to the Agreement to discuss this Roadmap. This is important because we want the Agreement to end peacefully through the conduct of fair, transparent and credible elections.

**Fellow citizens,**



We are concerned by the decision taken by our partners to scale down their support to the Monitoring Mechanisms: The Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (R-JMEC) and the Ceasefire and the Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM). These bodies are vital in providing oversight on issues arising from the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. Given the vital roles played by these institutions, I am adding my voice to that of IGAD in calling upon our partners to reconsider their decision and provide the necessary funds that will enable these institutions to carry out their functions.

**Fellow Citizens,**

The gains we have made in the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement are being eroded by inter-communal violence across the country. We have lost many lives in Western Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Central Equatoria and Warrap States to inter-communal violence. Even more disheartening is the recent violence in Tonj North where many military personnel, including several senior officers lost their lives at the hands of our own civilian population. These soldiers died at the hand of those they have sworn to protect. At personal level, I deeply regret their death and I convey my heartfelt condolences to their families and loved ones.

As a country, we cannot allow this senseless killing of both security personnel and civilians to continue. Justice must be served on behalf of those whose lives have been lost through this pointless violence. Let me remind everyone that the government will not engage in collective punishment when pursuing justice on behalf of those who have been killed. The government will not met out collective punishment, but it will hold those who have killed others accountable for their crimes.

**Fellow Citizens,**



Since we have signed the Revitalized Peace Agreement, we have witnessed incremental steps in the field of development. Individuals and businesses that have been hesitant to invest have now started investing. Juba has witnessed rapid development since 2018.

At the Government level, we are focused on infrastructural development and have initiated road constructions. Without peace, Freedom Bridge would have not been handed over to us. Given that peace and development go hand in hand, I am humbly calling upon each and everyone in this country, irrespective of their political affiliation to work in support of peace in our country. We need the culture of peace to take deep roots among our people.

### **Fellow Citizens,**

In the last few weeks, the country has been engaged in an emotive debate over the issue of dredging the Bahr el Ghazal Basin, specifically the Naam River. In this debate, the contending sides have put forward legitimate arguments both for and against dredging. For example, those who support dredging see it as a permanent solution to persistent floods in low lying areas. Others in the same group see it (dredging) as a means of opening our water ways for river transport that will ease transportation bottlenecks in the country.

On the other side of the debate, dredging without proper studies is viewed as a path to ecological disaster that will change South Sudan's biodiversity forever. This group fears the loss of marshlands which are the lifeline for different animal species and a means of livelihood for our fishermen. In short, this group opposes dredging on the basis of adverse environmental concerns and the anticipated loss of their economic livelihood.

Having followed this debate keenly, I realize that this outcry from both sides came because we have not conducted an informed public consultation that addresses the concerns and fears of those groups. These fears and concerns, whether real or perceived can only be



overcome through public consultation and the conduct of credible scientific studies of the impact of dredging on the surrounding communities and the SUDD ecosystem.

It is only after we have done this will our people on both sides of this debate have confidence to support this project.

To allow our citizens to participate in the consultation process without emotions, I am today freezing any planned dredging activities in the SUDD Region until credible, professional evidence-based studies are carried out on the impact of dredging both on the surrounding communities and their ecosystem. To this effect, I am directing the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to initiate the process of identifying and eventually hiring credible experts who will carry out the said feasibility study.

### **Fellow Citizens,**

Our country was preparing to receive His Holiness Pope Francis this month. The Holy Father was to be accompanied by his colleagues, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator General of the Church of Scotland on his historic Apostolic Journey to our country.

However, on advice of his medical staff, the Pope had to postpone his trip on medical grounds. Since we are still eagerly waiting to receive him in South Sudan, let us all pray for his quick recovery in order for him to fulfil his planned Apostolic Journey to our country.

In a show of genuine commitment to South Sudan, His Holiness sent Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State, who arrived on July 5, 2022 to deliver the Pope's greetings and convey his wish to visit South Sudan as soon as he recovers.

During his stay in our country, Cardinal Parolin conveyed His Holiness message: calling on us to fully implement pending tasks in the Revitalized Peace Agreement and to give peace and reconciliation a chance. On my part, I commit to upholding peace and reconciliation and asked His Eminence Cardinal Parolin to communicate to his Holiness that peace is being implemented in South Sudan, but with difficulties, because of the ambitious nature of the Agreement itself.

I wish you all fellow citizens a joyful eleventh Anniversary Celebration. Celebrate peacefully in your communities. Thank you all and May God bless you and our country, the Republic of South Sudan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Salva Kiir Mayardit', is written over a large, faint circular watermark of the South Sudanese coat of arms and national motto.

**Salva Kiir Mayardit**  
President,  
Republic of South Sudan  
Juba, South Sudan