

**Visit of the PBC Delegation to South Sudan  
6-9 December 2022  
Report**

1. As part of my mandate as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, I, Ambassador Muhammad Abdul Muhith, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, led a mission of the Peacebuilding Commission leadership to South Sudan from 06 to 09 December 2022. I was joined by the two Vice-Chairs of the Commission Ambassador Osama Abdelkhalek, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the UN, and Ms. Carla Maria Carlson who represented the Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the UN, and by the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar whose office acts as the Secretariat for the Commission.

2. The purpose of the visit was for the Peacebuilding Commission to witness the progress made on the implementation of the peacebuilding priorities presented by the Government of South Sudan at the Peacebuilding Commission meeting “Building Peace through Institutions and Governance” which took place on 26 October, and to explore ways for the Peacebuilding Commission to further enhance the engagements with South Sudan to support the South Sudanese people in addressing the root causes of conflict and overcoming the country’s political, humanitarian and development challenges. During the visit, the delegation met with H.E Martin Elia Lomuro, Minister of Cabinet Affairs, H.E Stephen Parl Kuol, Minister of Peacebuilding, H.E Angelina Teny, Minister of Defense, H.E. Michael Makuei Lueth, Minister of Information and Communication, H.E Yolanda Awel Deng, Minister of Health, H.E Ayaa Benjamin Warille, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, H.E. Deng Dau Deng, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, H.E Sarah Cleto Hassan, Governor of Western Bahr el Ghaza State and other senior officials from the Reconstituted Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU). We also met with the representatives of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU), International Financial Institutions (IFIs) including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank (WB), civil society organizations, United Nations entities, and bilateral donors. A visit to the solar panel project installed by the Bangladeshi contingent of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and a project supported by the Peacebuilding Fund of the UN Secretary General in Wau were also included in the programme.

3. We appreciate the hospitality extended by the government of South Sudan during our visit, and for the rich discussions with the ministers and senior government officials, We also wish to thank the Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim, the Office of the Resident Coordinator and UNMISS for substantial briefings, extending assistance in execution of a comprehensive programme, and providing transport and other logistical support throughout our visit.

4. In our discussions with a broad range of interlocutors, we noted the progress on the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), whose transitional period was extended for two years until

22 February 2025 through the Roadmap signed in August 2022. This includes functioning of national government and legislature at national and sub-national levels, the graduation of thousands of members of South Sudan's unified forces and preparations for key draft legislation. We were encouraged by progress made towards meeting the 35 per cent quota of women's participation in the institutions established by the peace agreement, including 32 percent female representation achieved in Parliament. We noted the commitment displayed by Government interlocutors towards the implementation of the peace agreement and the roadmap and the active and positive engagement of civil society. We also witnessed the excellent work led by community members, and youth in particular, in Wau to consolidate peace. At the same time, we heard about the tremendous challenges that remain to be tackled within a relatively short timeline, including the training and deployment of unified forces, progress on the constitution, as well as truth, reconciliation and healing processes, and preparations for elections. The Delegation calls on national stakeholders to stay the course and to accelerate implementation of the roadmap during the remainder of the transitional period. We appeal to Peacebuilding Commission members and to the wider international community to continue to sustain its focus on and support for South Sudan. We also want to stress the importance of ensuring that the voices of the South Sudanese people and particularly the voices of youth are heard consistently with respect to the country's peace process and its future and that women fully participate in the process. All people across South Sudan must experience the dividends of peace.

5. It is our hope that South Sudan will continue to engage regularly with the Peacebuilding Commission to share important progress achieved on peace, security and governance, to mobilize international support to help the country in addressing the root causes of conflict and for South Sudan to share lessons learned with other countries that come to the Peacebuilding Commission. In the following lines we share our impressions and reflections on specific peacebuilding areas that were discussed with interlocutors to support the Implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement.

### **Implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement**

#### **Transitional security arrangements and security sector reform**

6. During our visit, we met with senior Government officials, including the Minister of Defense who briefed us on the overall implementation of transitional security arrangements, including progress towards the completion of phase 1 with the graduation of 53,000 members of the national unified army (the Necessary Unified Forces). She noted that plans for their deployment are still uncertain and stressed the importance of progressing also on the transformation and professionalization of the unified armed forces in line with Chapter 2 of the R-ARCSS. This includes preventing impunity within the forces. The Minister of Defense added that technical or in-kind support from the United Nations and other partners would be crucial in moving forward. She highlighted that Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) will be necessary to ensure that gains made in the implementation of transitional security arrangements are not lost.

7. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare mentioned the importance of continuing to promote gender equality and to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in the security sector.

In this regard, the delegation received positive feedback from interlocutors on a project funded by the UN Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund and implemented by UN Women and UNDP in collaboration with UNMISS, which supports women's participation in the security sector and the inclusion of women's security needs in Security Sector Reform. This has helped raise the Ministry of Gender's awareness and activities on Women, Peace and Security.

### **Constitution making process and electoral preparations**

8. The elections scheduled to be held by the end of 2024 will be an important milestone and will pave the way for the consolidation of democracy in South Sudan. In our discussions with government officials and international partners, we noted the progress that has been made in preparing the legislative framework for the elections, including the review of the National Elections Act by the National Constitutional Amendment Committee as the first step for the reconstitution of the National Elections Commission, but also a degree of concern that key milestones, such as the establishment of the National Constitutional Review Commission to draft the permanent constitution, have not yet been met. The sense of urgency to move quickly and steadily toward the completion of the requirements of the electoral process, such as the national census and voter registration, was very clear among many stakeholders.

9. The Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare updated the mission on the progress made towards achieving the 35% threshold for women's participation in the institutions established by the peace agreement, including in the Parliament. We wish to continue to support government stakeholders to enhance women and youth's full, equal, and meaningful involvement in public decision-making including in the constitution making progress, and to reach and even exceed the peace agreement's threshold for women's participation.

### **Transitional Justice**

10. We acknowledge the key role to be played by the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH) and the Hybrid Court of the Reparations and Compensations Authority as part of the transitional justice mechanisms envisaged under Chapter V of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. In order to address the legacies of human rights violations, we believe that it is important to accelerate the establishment of these institutions.

11. To ensure that transitional justice and broader peacebuilding processes can take place, we recognize the importance for the Government of South Sudan to create an environment that enables the people of South Sudan to freely express their views without fear of intimidation, retaliation, or persecution. We call on national actors to protect the ability of civil society to fully participate in the implementation of the roadmap, to contribute to monitoring and accountability mechanisms around the revitalized peace agreement and to engage in the political debate in the public space. We call on the Government of South Sudan to ensure the rights of the citizens be respected and protected, including the right to freedom of speech, as part and parcel of the democratic process.

### **Public Finance Management Reform and service delivery**

12. We take note that the Government of South Sudan continued to demonstrate its willingness to ensure transparent and effective Public Financial Management (PFM) since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2018, in line with Chapter IV of the R-ARCSS which calls for Economic and Financial Reforms targeting specific institutions in the PFM. Most of the stakeholders whom we met, including Senior Government Officials, mentioned the critical importance of the PFM reforms to ensuring sustain peace and the need to adopt such reforms at the State and County Levels. In our conversations with the IFIs, we took note of the World Bank's (WB) support to the Ministry of Finance and Planning, as well as the assistance provided by the African Development Bank (AfDB) to modernize the National Revenue Authority and improve domestic resource mobilization in the non-oil sector. We welcome the willingness expressed by the WB and AfDB to drive positive change and to help strengthen government systems of service delivery and accountability to build up effective state institutions. We were also encouraged by the re-activation of the PFM Donor Working Group to coordinate partners' support for the PFM reform agenda.

13 We recognize that sustained international support towards reforming South Sudan's Public Financial Management process and improved governance of public services are critical for South Sudan to meet its political, social and governance goals. In the last Peacebuilding Commission meeting on "Building Peace through Institutions and Governance in South Sudan" held on 26 October 2022, member states highlighted the necessity to accelerate the implementation of Public Financial Management reform, noting the strong emphasis to be placed on accountable and transparent governance. In Juba, the delegation heard about the numerous challenges and outstanding tasks of chapter IV of the R-ARCSS, including procurement reform, the establishment of an anti-corruption body, among other issues.

14. Many interlocutors also stressed the importance of the government's responsibility to provide basic services, and thus start moving away from the dependency on humanitarian aid for large parts of the population. In this regard, emphasis was put on capacity-building and strengthening relevant institutions. The Minister of Health reminded us that the delivery of basic services, such as health, education, water and sanitation, etc., are inextricably linked to security and the successful implementation of chapter 2 of the R-ARCSS. In summary, the mission was seized of the critical importance of ensuring effective, inclusive, and accessible delivery of public services, such as health and education, to the people of South Sudan to meet their basic needs and to avoid further destabilization in the country and the broader region.

### **Women and Youth empowerment**

15. During our visit, the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare updated us on progress made, including the drafting of policy documents for the Women's Enterprise Development Fund, the Anti-Gender Based Violence Bill — signaling an end to impunity for Sexual and Gender-based Violence perpetrators — plus the Strategic National Action Plan on Elimination of Child Marriage. Our visit took place on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, which must be a priority in South Sudan where youth constitute over 70% of the population. We welcome the development of a National Youth Strategy which was briefly discussed during our meetings and call on national actors and their international partners to continue to prioritize the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in South Sudan.

## **Peacebuilding framework**

16. While in Juba, we met a couple of times with H.E. Stephen Parl Kuol, Minister of Peacebuilding who also received the delegation at Juba airport on their arrival. During the last Peacebuilding Commission meeting on South Sudan, we had expressed our strong support for the positive trajectory of peacebuilding in South Sudan with the creation of new peacebuilding architecture, notably the Ministry of Peacebuilding, created by the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to reinforce local and national capacities in sustaining peace. During our discussions, the Minister further presented his Ministry's priorities, including the dissemination of the peace agreement throughout the country and the implementation of a new Strategic Framework for Peace, which emphasizes dialogue to resolve violence at the community level. The Framework identifies the need for enhanced capacity building and technical assistance and for increased partnership with sub-regional and regional organizations.

17. The Minister of Peacebuilding highlighted his Ministry's close collaboration with the United Nations and we discussed his upcoming role as co-chair of the national Joint Steering Committee for the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) together with the UN Resident Coordinator. He welcomed the PBF's important support in key areas of the implementation of the Revitalized Peace agreement, including assistance to the permanent constitution making process and Security Sector Reform and for addressing conflict and tensions at community level, through an overall active portfolio of \$25 million in South Sudan. The Under-Secretary of Peacebuilding, Mr. Pia Philip, joined the delegation on the project visit and meeting with former youth gang members in Wau County who received support to become drivers of positive social change and strengthened social cohesion in their community through a PBF-funded project implemented by IOM and UNESCO in partnership with the Government and a national NGO, Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO). We welcomed the Government's commitment to hold the first meeting of the PBF joint steering Committee in January 2023.

## **Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission of the Revitalized Peace Agreement**

18. The delegation met with the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) established under the auspices of IGAD. It noted the importance of this mechanism to monitor and spur the implementation of the peace agreement and report to the AU, IGAD and the UN Security Council. The Chair of RJMEC raised the issue of recent funding cuts to the mechanism and stressed that this would limit its ability to monitor, investigate and elevate issues to the IGAD Council of Ministers when required as a way to maintain accountability among the political stakeholders to advance on the implementation of the agreement. The delegation calls on the RJMEC to continue and to enhance its reporting and advocacy roles and encourages all stakeholders to remain engaged in support of the mechanism.

## **Humanitarian situation**

19. Sub-national violence driven by multiple factors, including political rivalry, competition over resources and extreme weather events also related to climate change, continue to directly impact peace and security and exacerbate the humanitarian situation. Combined with the Ebola virus disease outbreak at the DRC border and the invasion of desert locusts, the effects of climate change and conflicts have further contributed to driving up the number of people experiencing acute food insecurity and needing humanitarian assistance. Two-thirds of South Sudan's total population were estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022. Women and children continue to be the most affected. Sexual and gender-based violence continues to be widespread.

20. We noted deep concern from many of our interlocutors about the ongoing humanitarian crises in the country fueled by continued subnational violence, observed at communal level but frequently linked to national-level politics, with intensive fighting persisting particularly in Jonglei and Upper Nile States, and by recurring natural disasters, especially floods which continued to ravage the country for the last four years consecutively

### **Civil society engagement**

21. The delegation also heard from and exchanged views with members of civil society, including youth and women led organizations. The exchanges highlighted the importance of ensuring civil society is enabled and empowered to fully participate in the implementation of the R-ARCSS and the roadmap as well as the need to ensure civic space and freedom of speech are enhanced, especially in the lead up to the elections slated to take place by the end of 2024.

22. Members of civil society stressed the importance of improving the security environment, urgently progressing on the establishment of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, the hybrid court and the Reparations and Compensations authority as well as further investments in trust-building and reconciliation at community level. They regretted the persistence of the exclusion of women and youth in decision-making in most contexts, in spite of tremendous commitment and efforts by women and youth across the country to contribute to their communities and to the national efforts to build peace. They reiterated that technical and financial support for capacity-building and training would be highly beneficial to CSOs, as well as continued advocacy to maintain and enhance the civic space in South Sudan.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Stay the course on the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement**

23. We have been encouraged by what we heard from our interlocutors on progress made in the implementation of several aspects of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, including functioning governments and legislatures at national and sub-national levels, the building of national unified forces and preparations underway on key draft legislation, including in relation to constitution-making and the upcoming electoral process. We urge the authorities to stay the course with respect to implementing the outstanding elements of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, in line with the timelines established in its recently adopted Roadmap.

24. We also express our strong support for accompanying the South Sudanese authorities in promoting an inclusive implementation of the roadmap and call for the full participation of women

and youth in the process. The extended roadmap offers a limited window of opportunity for the effective implementation of the agreement as the basis for sustained peace in the country and time is of the essence. We reiterate the urgency in accelerating progress towards reaching all benchmarks of the roadmap and fulfilling the requirements for the holding of free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections by the end of 2024, including fully complying with the Agreement's establishment of a 35% minimal threshold for women's participation.

### **Prioritizing trust building between the state and its citizens**

25. We encourage the government of South Sudan to continue its efforts delivering peace dividends to the people of South Sudan to further enhancing confidence between the State and its citizens. This will require the government to continue to build effective, accountable, and resilient institutions, including at the local level, that meet the needs of the people of South Sudan for basic public services, implement more inclusive policies, provide security and protection of civilians, and protect the civic space for every citizen of the Republic of South Sudan.

### **Strengthening the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus**

26. We recognized the complexity of the humanitarian, security, political, and development challenges facing South Sudan, including those associated with the effects of climate change, food insecurity, and related displacement with a significant increase in the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) throughout the country. Our discussions emphasized the need for a Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus approach to address the country's political, humanitarian and development challenges, noting the particular importance of the peacebuilding approach within the nexus in the South Sudanese context. We reiterated the need for a cross-pillar approach to peacebuilding, incorporating civil society, regional organizations, IFIs and international partners while ensuring full respect for the notion of national ownership.

27. We would like to encourage joint analysis, joined-up and/or complementary programming and action between UNMISS, the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes through the UN Country Team and the IFIs, to support the Government and other local actors in the most coherent manner to address the humanitarian, development and peace challenges on the ground. In this regard, we commend the signature of the recent 2023-2025 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework between the United Nations and the Government of South Sudan, which places the emphasis on peacebuilding and democratic transition as sine qua non for sustainable development in the country. We also further encourage the continued and strategic use of the Peacebuilding Fund as a catalyst tool for effective joint analysis, programming and implementation across UNMISS and the UNCT.

### **Better alignment and partnerships with IFIs**

28. Strengthening institutions and boosting their capacities to deliver basic services to the population, building community resilience and establishing a viable basis for inclusive economic development are integral to the consolidation of peace and the transition from humanitarian response to long-term development in South Sudan. In this regard, we strongly encourage continued collaboration between UN entities and IFIs in support of the Government, ensuring

alignment across strategic priorities and greater synergies of intervention. The Peacebuilding Commission can offer a platform for IFIs to give visibility to how their work supports national peacebuilding and development priorities and complements efforts by the UN and other donors.

### **Peacebuilding Commission engagement**

29. We will brief the Peacebuilding Commission on our field visit during a dedicated meeting, based on this report, which will be shared beforehand with members of the Commission. We invite the Government of South Sudan to regularly update the Peacebuilding Commission under its flexible agenda on its peacebuilding priorities and challenges, with the purpose of sustaining in an integrated, coordinated and holistic manner the support of the UN and other international partners for the peacebuilding priorities and needs of the Government and People of South Sudan. We would further strongly encourage the participation of civil society representatives, particularly of women and youth from South Sudan, in such discussions along with government representatives and other relevant stakeholders.

30. In order to strengthen the constructive engagement between South Sudan and the international community at this critical juncture for the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, we would suggest that the Government and the PBC consider exploring further windows for South-South and triangular cooperation. We would also encourage the Government of South Sudan to contribute to the discussions in the Peacebuilding Commission by sharing their lessons learned on peacebuilding with other countries facing similar peacebuilding challenges and opportunities.

31. Finally, we welcome the Ministry of Peacebuilding's expressed interest to more actively engage in the PBF portfolio and encourage a timely formation of the PBF Joint Steering Committee with broad participation of government, civil society and international partners – an important step to institutionalize inclusive national ownership and to jointly identify funding priorities going forward, also with a view to coherence with Peacebuilding Commission engagement.

### **Conclusions**

32. Once again, we wish to reiterate our appreciation for the excellent collaboration and support that we received from the Government of South Sudan and from other local stakeholders in the preparation and undertaking of our mission, in Juba, in Wau and in New York through the Permanent Representation of South Sudan to the United Nations, and we look forward to our continued joint engagement.