

Written submission

Peacebuilding Commission advice to the Security Council on the Secretary General's report on the situation on South Sudan

6 March 2023

Since 2022, on the request of the transitional Government of South Sudan, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has been engaging with the latter to mobilize support for South Sudan's efforts to address peacebuilding challenges related to the complex implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The Commission acknowledges that the challenges in South Sudan are complex and deep-rooted. The Commission appreciates the efforts of South Sudan to address these issues and welcomes the engagement by the Transitional Government of South Sudan with the Commission as part of its effort to build a sustainable peace and fulfill the commitments it made to the people of South Sudan in the R-ARCSS. The Commission's first meeting on South Sudan, "Building Peace through Resilient Institutions and Governance", organized on 26 October 2022, focused on South Sudan's peacebuilding priorities. As a follow-up, the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Commission along with the Assistant Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support visited South Sudan from 6 to 9 December to witness the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the peacebuilding priorities, and to explore ways for the Commission to further engage with and support the transitional Government of South Sudan and South Sudanese people in addressing the root causes of conflict. Following the visit, on the request of the transitional Government of South Sudan, a second meeting was organized on 31 January 2023, to hear back from the visit, including concrete recommendations to support South Sudan in its transition process. The meeting also provided an opportunity for the authorities to interact with the PBC on the national priorities as well as the challenges South Sudan continues to face to sustain peace and stability in the country.

The Commission recognized the complexity of the humanitarian, security, political and development challenges in South Sudan, including conflict-driven food insecurity and forced displacement, the significant effects of climate change such as frequent and intense flooding and localized drought. In this connection, the Commission called on all stakeholders to redouble their support to tackle humanitarian and development challenges.

The Commission takes note of the need for demonstrated political will by the South Sudanese authorities to implement the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement. To date, there has been progress in some areas, including drafting of the permanent Constitution, the passing of key legislation, a functioning national legislature, and the graduation of the first batch of the unified forces, as a positive development towards creating a safety and security environment. The authorities need to continue these efforts in other areas. The transitional government should expedite the redeployment of the graduated forces, and take steps to initiate Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes. In doing so, the Commission, encourages United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), within its mandate, and other relevant UN entities, IGAD and the African Union, to collaborate with international and regional financial institutions and national stakeholders, and to continue providing their support to accelerate the full implementation of the outstanding provisions of the R-ARCSS. Building on this, the Commission would like to share the following points:

First, the Commission notes with appreciation the promulgation of the Constitution Making Process Bill and the review of the National Elections Act that are necessary initial steps in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and elections in 2024, and encourages the transitional Government of South Sudan to implement all the enacted laws. The Commission highlights the importance of supporting the authorities to continue to improve participatory dialogue with the people of South Sudan, including through widened political and civic space, to ensure that the constitution-making and electoral processes are owned and led by the South Sudanese. The Commission underscores the important role of UNMISS to advise and assist South Sudan, in line with its mandate providing technical assistance, capacity-building, and logistical support for the electoral process, as well as assisting the transitional government and necessary unified forces in the difficult task of providing peace and security leading up to and during the elections in 2024. The Commission also takes note of the formal request received by UNMISS from the transitional Government of South Sudan for comprehensive United Nations electoral assistance on 24 January 2023. In this regard, the Commission underscores the need to ensure necessary capacities and resources for UNMISS to extend support to the transitional Government of South Sudan.

Second: The Commission notes with concern the continuation of localized and inter-communal conflicts and violence, including sexual violence in conflict, that affect civilians and have negative repercussions on vulnerable groups, especially women and youth. Cognizant of the principle of the primary responsibility of states for the protection of civilians, the Commission expresses the hope that the transitional Government of South Sudan will continue to undertake measures to protect its population from violence, and to continue its efforts to build effective, inclusive, and accountable government institutions including at the local level to foster dialogue and reconciliation, and strengthen social cohesion.

Third: mindful of the importance of including women and youth as part of the whole-of-society in peacebuilding processes, the Commission recognizes value of continued efforts towards the meaningful participation of women and inclusion of youth in peacebuilding initiatives to address the root causes of conflict in local communities. The Commission takes note of projects implemented by UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes and civil society organizations that aim at enhancing the participation of women and youth in peacebuilding processes at national and local levels, including in Security Sector Reform and transitional justice. The Commission encourages the transitional Government to further promote the meaningful participation of women in the political and institutional framework of the peace process, including by fully complying with the 35% quota for women at the national and local levels as provided under R-ARCSS, and as a measure of promoting the women, peace and security agenda. Similarly, recognizing the crucial role the South Sudanese youth can play in prevention and resolution of local conflict, the Commission calls for improving the provision of socio-economic opportunities to address intercommunal violence, and encourages the transitional Government to continue to implement the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda in South Sudan at the national and local levels. The Commission also commends the role of UNMISS for its continued support to promote inclusive dialogue, peaceful coexistence, reconciliation, and social cohesion at the local level to enhance protection of civilians and create favourable conditions for implementing the R-ARCSS.

Fourth: the Commission underscores the need to invest in capacity and institution building to ensure the effective delivery of and access to basic social and economic services and the urgent need for economic stability and financing and for establishing systems that ensure transparency, integrity and accountability. Viable state institutions at all levels are a critical and foundational component for peacebuilding and constitute the building blocks for sustainable development and to foster the transition from humanitarian to long term development assistance towards achieving sustainable development in South Sudan. In this regard, the Commission underscores the need for the transitional government, with the assistance of development partners of South Sudan, to devote sufficient resources to these efforts. The Commission recognizes the signing of the recent 2023-2025 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework between the United Nations and the Transitional Government of South Sudan. The Commission also recommends that UNMISS, as mandated, and other United Nations relevant entities, in collaboration with the International and Regional Financial Institutions, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU), continue to support the transitional Government of South Sudan and the people of South Sudan.

Fifth: The Commission takes note of the support provided by the international partners to South Sudan. The support of international partners has enabled transitional Government of South Sudan in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement to complement national efforts with an emphasis on democratization, justice and accountability processes, addressing conflict related to displacement, and strengthening local peace and conflict prevention mechanisms. The Commission also noted the support provided by the UN Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The Commission notes the launch of the Joint National Steering Committee for the PBF, involving Ministry of Peacebuilding of South Sudan, and other stakeholders, notably UN Agencies, and the UN Country Team, and also Civil Society as an important step to institutionalize and foster national ownership of peacebuilding activities.

Finally, the Commission encourages the transitional Government of South Sudan to remain engaged with the Peacebuilding Commission and reiterates its commitment to extend its support for the peacebuilding efforts of South Sudan and looks forward to further updates.