

Peacebuilding Commission

Ambassadorial-level meeting on South-Sudan

Building Peace in Communities through Local Governance and Community Reconciliation in South Sudan

31 January 2023

Chair's Summary

1. On 31 January 2023, **the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith** convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on South Sudan with a focus on local governance and community reconciliation. The meeting also provided the opportunity for the Chair and the Vice-Chairs of the PBC to brief the Commission on their recent visit of to South Sudan from 6 to 9 December 2022, including concrete recommendations to support South Sudan in its transition process. The Commission was briefed by the Minister of Peacebuilding, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan, a Representative of the Special Envoy for South Sudan of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and two civil society representatives.
2. In his opening remarks, **the Chair** recalled the first meeting of the Commission on South Sudan held on 26 October under the theme of “Building Peace through institutions and Governance”, and the subsequent visit of the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Peacebuilding Commission to South Sudan in December 2022. He expressed his deep gratitude to the Government of South Sudan for welcoming the Commission leadership to South Sudan and welcomed the participation in person of the Minister of Peacebuilding to the meeting as a strong sign of the continued engagement between the PBC and the South Sudanese authorities. The Chair highlighted that despite the progress made in the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, some concrete actions are needed in many areas, such as drafting the permanent constitution, holding of the elections, and achieving the 35% quota established by the peace agreement for women's participation in the institutions at the national and local level. Furthermore, he stressed the need for ensuring full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in decision making and involving the youth, who constitute over 70% of the population of South Sudan, in various conflict resolution processes. The Chair emphasized the importance of having civil society organizations participate in the implementation of the R-ARCSS and in the process of the upcoming elections. He further emphasized the need to support the efforts to strengthen local governance and transitional justice as envisaged in Chapter 1 and 5 of the Revitalized Peace Agreement as well as Public Finance Management Reform and service delivery which will be critical for sustainable peacebuilding in South Sudan. In addition, he highlighted the prevailing humanitarian situation, and the escalation of the inter-community conflicts and subnational violence exacerbated by adverse impacts of climate change and recurring natural disasters. He also referred to the 2023-2025 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework between the United Nations and the Government of South Sudan as an important foundation for United Nations’ engagement in South Sudan. Finally, the Chair

presented the recommendations included in his trip report to support South Sudan in its transition process such as confidence building measures between the state and its citizens, humanitarian, development and peace efforts, partnership with international financial institutions (IFIs), and engagements with the Commission.

3. **The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar**, expressed appreciation for the continued collaboration between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Government of South Sudan in support of the implementation of the peace agreement and the transition to sustainable development and stability. Referring to the report by the Chair of the visit to South Sudan in which she was also present, she emphasized the importance of prioritizing trust building between the state and its citizens which will require the Government to continue to build effective, accountable, transparent, resilient, and inclusive institutions, and an enabling environment for open, peaceful exchanges, including at the local level. ASG Spehar also stressed the utmost importance of the empowerment of both women and youth in conflict resolution and noted the efforts made by the authorities to enhance inclusivity in the political and institutional framework of the peace process including with the development of the Youth National Strategy and to push for women's participation in political institutions. She highlighted the added value of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in enhancing the participation of women and young people in peacebuilding at national and subnational level, both in formal institutions and informal settings. She also welcomed the launch of the first Joint National Steering Committee for the PBF co-chaired by the Minister of Peacebuilding of South Sudan and UN Resident Coordinator, with the participation of civil society and national and international partners as an important step to institutionalize inclusive national ownership. To conclude, she encouraged the Government of South Sudan to remain engaged with the PBC and continue sharing updates on peace and development in the country as well as experiences on peacebuilding with other countries facing similar peacebuilding challenges. Cross-cutting issues like the meaningful empowerment and participation of women and youth in political institutions leave constructive space for sharing experiences and lessons learned in a context of South-South and triangular cooperation, she said.
4. **The Minister of Peacebuilding, H.E. Mr. Stephen Par Kuol** gave an overview on the progress made to date in the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement whose core elements such as, the unification and the graduation of security forces; consultations for the establishment of the Hybrid Court, the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH), as well as the establishment of Compensation and Reparation Authority are currently in progress. He also mentioned the on-going preparation of the legislative framework for the conduct of democratic elections in 2024 which will require the development and subsequent adoption of the permanent Constitution. Towards this end, in December 2022, the Ministry of Peacebuilding facilitated a two-day inclusive and participatory political dialogue with support from UNDP that brought together over 100 members of political parties to develop a roadmap for inclusive and peaceful elections in 2024. In terms of peacebuilding priorities specifically in line with Chapters 2 and 5 of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, the Minister referred to the Security Sector Reform including the training, deployment, and provisions of logistics to the unified army; the support to national reconciliation with emphasis on the constitution making process and national census, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and support to community peacebuilding initiatives to address the root causes of conflict in South

Sudan; and the support to rule of law to address impunity with the establishment of CTRH. In terms of challenges, the Minister emphasized the need to provide additional resources to operationalize the Peacebuilding Policy, the Strategic framework on Peacebuilding and implement the National Action Plan on Hate Speech that the Ministry has recently developed.

5. **The UN DSRSG/RC/HC Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti**, welcomed the meeting as a strong sign of the continued commitment by the Government of South Sudan and the PBC to engage in meaningful dialogue. She commended the Government of South Sudan for its commitment to advancing the transition roadmap and for fostering strategic partnerships with the United Nations, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), African Union (AU) and other development partners which have contributed to the achievement of several key milestones in the peace agreement. The DSRSG emphasized the catalytic role that the UN System continues to play in supporting the Government and people of South Sudan to successfully implement the revitalized peace agreement roadmap, including support to electoral processes, constitution making, census civic engagement and trauma informed processes that facilitate healing and reconciliation. She recalled the signing of the 2023-2025 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) at the end of 2022 whose strategic Priority One focuses on transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance, complementing the UNMISS vision set forth in resolution 2567 (2021) “to prevent a return to civil war, build sustainable peace, and support inclusive, accountable governance and free, fair and peaceful elections” which is particularly reflected in the commitments of Chapter 5 of the Agreement on Transitional Justice, Accountability, Reconciliation and Peacebuilding. Furthermore, the DSRSG emphasized the urgent need for service provision and for more effective community level natural resource governance, given South Sudan’s high climate risk index. She stressed the importance of prioritizing a holistic approach interconnecting peace, humanitarian and development nexus at the community and national levels in South Sudan. To this end, she has established an integrated office with a risk management unit that will ensure effective coordination and risk analysis across the Peace-Development-Humanitarian nexus for optimal impact. The DSRSG also highlighted the added value of the UN South Sudan Humanitarian Fund and PBF, noting for the latter the inauguration of a PBF Joint Steering Committee on 25th January 2023, comprising representatives from Government, UN agencies, donors, IFIs, civil society and non-governmental organizations as an opportunity to elevate the fund’s impact towards community and national peace.

6. **The Senior Political Advisor to the Special Envoy South Sudan & Sudan of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Mr. Ahmed Yusuf Hersi** welcomed the effective holding of the ceasefire which allows IGAD to play its role as mediator to encourage the Government of South Sudan to achieve key milestones in the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. He commended the Government of South Sudan for the adoption of key legislation like the Permanent Constitution Making Process Bill and the restructuring of important institutions such as the National Constitutional Review Commission (NCRC) and the National Elections Commission (NEC) designed to oversee the constitution making progress and the upcoming elections. However, he reiterated the need for continued efforts to address the nomination of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA). He also welcomed the release of Phase I of the unified forces as a first important step in the reorganization of the security sector reform, but urged the Government to accelerate the Phase

II which includes the training, professionalization and redeployment of these forces. Furthermore, Mr. Hersi regretted the current funding situation of key mechanism of the Agreement such as the Ceasefire Transitional Mechanisms (CTSAMVM) and the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) which monitor and oversee all aspects of the implementation of the Agreement. In addition, he highlighted the humanitarian crisis resulting from the combination of ethnic violence and weather (drought and floods) in Upper Nile and Jonglei, exacerbated by displacement and fragile livelihoods in general.

7. **The Executive Director of Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO), Mr. Edmund Yakani** acknowledged that local efforts to build peace are necessary for a stable democratic transition in South Sudan. He noted that good governance at the local level can be the foundation for a transition to democracy. In this regard, he emphasized that investment in Chapter 5 of the R-ARCSS would be crucial to reconciling communities and delivering justice. He said communal violence remains a persistent threat to life in South Sudan, with human rights violations such as abductions targeting women and youth contributing to an escalation of violence. Mr. Yakani stressed that legislative work must be undertaken to criminalize these abductions. He also informed the Commission that large-scale sexual and gender-based violence committed in incidents of community violence must be addressed more robustly by government authorities. He shared good practices from his experience as a local peace mediator; these include empowering local communities through local peace committees, which conduct peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation measures, establishing an early warning and response system in local communities as a prevention tool, and supporting civil society to play a proactive and influential role in protecting civilians. Based on his extensive experience with local mediation initiatives, Mr. Yakani encouraged improved coordination with national authorities and the strengthening of infrastructure to support the implementation of local peace initiatives. He highlighted how the participation of people with disabilities in local initiatives can be improved by better linking humanitarian response and local governance. He also noted that the constitution-making process offers the opportunity to open spaces for greater community engagement in reconciliation. In that regard, the president's declaration of 2023 as the year of forgiveness, reconciliation, and development offers space for intervention in aspects of Chapter 5 of the R-ARCSS. Finally, he recommended working towards greater transparency in the administration of peacebuilding funds; the Joint Steering Committee of the Peacebuilding Fund could serve as an example.
8. **The Program Manager of the Non-Violent Peace Force, Ms. Adeng Leek** briefed the Commission on the challenges that South Sudan faces such as poverty, conflict-related sexual violence, shrinking civic space, inter-communal violence, cattle rustling, and continued divisions along tribal and political lines that lead to mass displacement in South Sudan. She noted how peacebuilding through local governance can address the multifaceted crisis by stimulating economic development and environmental sustainability, but that the lack of dialogue between local governments and respective communities creates an obstacle for South Sudan in this regard. Dialogue and participatory action will therefore be needed to bridge the gap and civil society as well as youth organizations can be helpful in this. She acknowledged the progress made in the implementation of the R-ARCSS with the graduation of the unified

forces, the conclusion of the public consultation for the establishment of the Truth, Reconciliation and Healing Commission under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the passage of bills such as the Constitutional Process Act 2022, the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of Southern Sudan 2011, the National Police Service (Amendment 2022) Act and the National Wildlife Service (Amendment 2022) Act. She also recommended that the government demonstrate the necessary political will to end the violence between pastoralists and farmers in Jonglei province by providing livelihoods, delivering basic social services, promoting sustainable development and infrastructure, and ensuring civic space at local levels of governance.

9. **Member States** welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- They recognized the significant security, political, humanitarian, and developmental challenges that South Sudan faces, noting the extreme vulnerability of the country to the effects of climate change such as frequent and intense flooding and localized drought which add to the complexity of humanitarian challenges including food insecurity, infrastructure fragility and subsequent forced displacements.
- They welcomed progress in the implementation of the transition process, despite the numerous challenges encountered, and encouraged the South Sudanese authorities to stay the course and accelerate the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, in line with the timeline set out in the Agreement on the Roadmap to Peaceful and Democratic end of the Transitional Period of the R-ARCSS adopted in August 2022.
- They recognized that the elections scheduled for the end of 2024 will be an important milestone and will pave the way for the consolidation of democracy in South Sudan. They encouraged the Government to strongly foster participatory and inclusive dialogue with the people of South Sudan to ensure that the constitution making process is led and owned by the South Sudanese.
- They underlined the importance of ensuring inclusivity and called the Government to promote the meaningful participation of women and youth in the political and institutional framework of the peace process. They encouraged the Government's efforts to address the underrepresentation of women in government positions by fully complying with the Agreement's provision of a 35% quota for women at the national and local level.
- They expressed concern over the continuation of localized and inter-communal conflicts and the escalation of sub-national violence that affect civilians and have negative repercussions on vulnerable groups, especially women and youth, further eroding the dividends of peace earned by previous investments. They underscored that political will continue to be central for making progress on building accountable and transparent governance and effective and resilient institutions that deliver basic services to the population and strengthen social cohesion between the

state and its citizens including at the local level. This will help to foster the transition from humanitarian response to long-term development in South Sudan.

- They 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. In this regard, they 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 and for achieving the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals.
- Recognizing the potential in South Sudan's young population, they underscored the importance of promoting employment opportunities for youth, and to enable young people to act as agents of peacebuilding in local communities and contribute towards social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.
- Member States underlined the vital role of civil society in promoting social cohesion, integration, and national and community reconciliation to prevent and address the root causes of conflict in South Sudan, and encouraged the Government to foster stronger partnerships with civil society to strengthen government to support community relationships. In this regard, they welcomed the launch of the Joint National Steering Committee for the PBF, co-chaired by the Ministry of Peacebuilding of South Sudan and the UN DSRSG/RC/HC and involving the UN Country Team, civil society, and national and international partners as an important step to institutionalize inclusive national ownership and coordination.
- They called for UNMISS, UN entities in collaboration with the IFIs, the IGAD and the AU to enhance integrated support developing a holistic multidimensional approach with the aim of sustaining South Sudan's peace and development in line with the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, they reiterated the need for a cross-pillar approach to peacebuilding incorporating regional organizations, IFIs and international partners with respect of the notion of national ownership. In this regard, they further encouraged 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.
- They welcomed the recommendations made by the Chair and the Vice-Chairs of the Peacebuilding Commission in their report on visit to South Sudan and highlighted the need for strategic follow-up of the implementation of recommendations of the report They encouraged the Government to make use of the PBC platform in this regard. Specifically, they expressed strong support for further exploring the sharing of experiences and lessons learned to peacebuilding and for advancing south-south cooperation.

10. During the closing segment of the meeting, **the Minister of Peacebuilding** expressed his appreciation for the holding of this second PBC meeting, and welcomed the support expressed by the international community. He recognized the need to support trust building initiatives between the state and its citizens for an inclusive and democratic transition process noting the importance to respect civic space and civil society participation, enhance women's representation in political and institutional framework as well as transparency in South Sudan financial institutions. He concluded by underscoring the importance of adopting a Peace to People Approach.
11. In his closing remarks, **the Chair of the Commission** thanked the briefers and reiterated the commitment of the Commission to support the Government of South Sudan in the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. He encouraged the Government of South Sudan to remain engaged with the Peacebuilding Commission to further update on the progress achieved on peace and development in South Sudan. He concluded by announcing that a draft press statement would be circulated among the members of the commission after the meeting for their views and comments.