

**MESSAGE FROM H.E HAILEMARIAM DESSALEGN,
PRIME MINISTER OF THE
FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA
AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE IGAD ASSEMBLY
TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH SUDAN
6 MARCH 2015**

My dear brothers and sisters, the people of South Sudan,

On February 1st of this year, President Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar agreed to a plan to conclude negotiations on the formation of a transitional government of national unity and begin a process of healing and reconciliation in your country. My colleagues, the Leaders of the IGAD Member States, and myself, were hopeful that this moment signaled the nearing of the end of the terrible tragedy that has befallen South Sudan since December 15th, 2013.

President Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar agreed that they would come to an agreement by March 5th. That deadline has been missed. Talks continued this morning, past the deadline. I regret to inform you that the talks did not produce the necessary breakthrough.

The consequences of inaction are the continued suffering of you, the people of South Sudan, and the prolonging of a senseless war in your country. This is unacceptable, both morally and politically. On behalf of the people of Ethiopia, and the people of the entire IGAD region, we stand with you at this difficult and disappointing time: we remain hopeful that the promise of peace will be fulfilled in the near future.

My dear brothers and sisters, the people of South Sudan,

Leadership is never easy, but continuing a war flagrantly disregards the interests of you, the people. It is an abdication of the most sacred duty leaders have to you, their people: to deliver peace, prosperity and stability.

Both President Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar have assured the Leaders of the IGAD Member States that they are committed to peace. At the same time, there are individuals on both sides who continue to beat the drums of war. This cannot be right. There can be no justification for the continuation of this conflict. The war must end now.

On March 3rd, I urged President Kiir and Dr. Machar to make the necessary and difficult compromises to move out of this crisis. I asked them to be courageous in offering compromises and alternatives, rather than only reiterating old positions. Both regional and world leaders joined this call. Unfortunately, as the missed deadline shows, our pleas have not been heeded.

IGAD has tried to mediate the crisis as best it can, but we must acknowledge that our efforts have not yet produced the necessary results. Our efforts cannot continue unaltered and expect a different outcome; the peace process must be reinvigorated and reformed. In the coming days, I will consult with my colleagues, the IGAD leaders, partners and friends in the region, on the continent, and beyond to agree a common plan of action.

My dear brothers and sisters, the people of South Sudan,

Together, we will hold the Parties to their commitment to form a transitional government by July of this year. To achieve that goal, IGAD, joined by the friends of South Sudan from Africa and abroad, intends to implement a common plan and table a reasonable and comprehensive solution to end the crisis in South Sudan.

While the Parties may see the peace talks as a process that can continue indefinitely, you, the people of South Sudan, including the millions directly affected by the conflict, know that peace is needed, and is needed now.

At the highest level, the world must speak with one voice on South Sudan. We will assist the Parties to make the compromises that have so far eluded them. We will use all influence at our disposal to convince those that remain intransigent. And we will ensure that the voices of the silent majority of South Sudanese prevail: peace, reform and justice.

We ask you, the people, to refuse to support those who militate for war, destruction and killing. We want you, the people, to be unequivocal with your leaders: choose reconciliation and not injustice; choose dialogue and not rigidity. Choose peace and not conflict.

My dear brothers and sisters, do not lose hope. The region, and the world, stands with you. Peace is our only priority. Peace will be achieved. You, the people of South Sudan, need and deserve no less.