

**Statement by**

**H.E. Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin**

**Chairperson of the IGAD Special Envoys**

**To the African Union Peace and Security Council**

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**Excellency the Chairperson of the AU Commission,**

**Excellencies Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all I would like to thank the Peace and Security Commission for inviting the mediation to brief this august body regarding developments on a crisis—the Crisis in South Sudan—that has gripped our region and most importantly the people of the Republic of South Sudan for the last 15 months.

Your Excellencies as you would recall, on February 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, President Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar agreed to conclude negotiations on the formation of a transitional government of national unity and begin a process of healing and reconciliation in that country.

On the same date, the region incorporated March 5 as the deadline for the Principals expecting this final effort to signal the end of the terrible tragedy that has befallen South Sudan since December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

The Principals obviously did not keep the planned date that they had agreed to resume negotiations prevaricating various reasons. The pressure that the Chairperson of the IGAD Assembly and the region exerted on the Principals made them reconvene their planned meeting after a delay for a couple of days.

The mediation, in a parallel way, assembled the negotiation teams of the three negotiating stakeholders and the remaining observer stakeholders to finalize negotiation on the other outstanding issues to be resolved at their level. Both efforts, at the Principals and at the negotiating teams levels, did not produce the necessary breakthrough as the Principals failed to make arduous but necessary compromises.

The Principals rather than taking the right decisions opted to extend the suffering of the people of South Sudan prolonging of a senseless war in the country. The Principals made those choices not only due to their respective obstinate positions but also because they were not confident if their respective constituencies would welcome their decisions to work together towards peace. The pressures from

their respective hardliners, who see a resolution of the crisis as a zero sum game, had also played its role in this regard. What can all of us do if they do not choose to share the pains of their people and their country and end the tragedy unfolding in their country?

As the Chairman of the IGAD Assembly announced to the people of South Sudan, this failure by the leaders of South Sudan is unacceptable, both morally and politically. Following the failure to show leadership and achieve a breakthrough, the Chairperson of the IGAD Assembly called on the people of South Sudan to refuse to support those who militate for war, destruction and killing and to be unequivocal with their leaders: to choose reconciliation and not injustice; choose dialogue and not rigidity and to choose peace and not conflict. This should be the direction of all of us in the mediation and we hope that this august body would make similar appeals to the people of South Sudan.

What is worrying is, both parties reiterate their readiness for peace, when they address their people, the international community and us all in the region. But what they do on the ground is very different. How they can make peace if they refuse the return of Dr. Riek to Juba? The GRSS wants the SPLM/A-IO to be a negative force in South Sudan. How can they make the necessary compromises if they reject their counterparts to share power so that their respective constituencies would lay arms and become the constituencies of peace? Both sides continue to engage in war that is killing their people and destroying what ever is leftover in the country? So long as they fail to accept each other as partners for peace, the continuation of the war is evident.

If the Principals and their respective constituencies are ready for peace, they should make it happen. War making is the easiest course of action to avoid accountability and to take responsibility; given the longstanding fragility and breakdown of the social fabric in the newest country of the Republic of South Sudan. Peace needs brevity, determination and is definitely a hell-lot expensive. If the leaders do not make the right choice today, peace tomorrow is going to be more costly, since reversing the situation is much more convenient today than tomorrow. Compromises made today are cheaper than those that are made tomorrow. A single day passing without making peace costs the people of South Sudan and the entire region severely. That is why the international community should exert all the necessary pressure on these actors to make difficult but necessary concessions to make peace now!

IGAD, recognizing that its efforts have not yet produced the necessary results, decided to alter the way it engages the Parties in the crisis in a reinvigorated and reformed way. IGAD is saying that we cannot expect a different outcome while going the same way and hence we should alter the way we should deal with the Parties. But this is not to opt to abandon South Sudan. Not at all! IGAD cannot afford to ignore its sick family member. IGAD is calling all friends of South Sudan to redouble their effort to reinforce what IGAD, in collaboration with partners, take an enhanced role.

Hence, the realistic view on what would be needed to ensure support for this IGAD PLUS approach is to make the final agreement, which draws heavily on the parties' inputs over the last year, and thinks boldly about what is truly required to make peace in South Sudan a reality. This needs a combination of compromise positions that is acceptable and genuine.

The recent joint AU PSC and UNSC meeting has, inter alia, welcomed the call by the Chairman of the IGAD Assembly to further enhance the mediation process, in close consultation with the other leaders of the region, the AU and the UN, and expressed their readiness to support this process as well as reiterated the commitment of the AU and the UN to continue to support the people of South Sudan to achieve their legitimate aspiration for lasting peace, stability and national reconciliation.

The decision and expeditious establishment of the AU High-Level Ad Hoc Committee to assist IGAD should be looked at in this context. I therefore call on this august body to quickly nominate the five member countries of the Au High-Level Ad Hoc Committee so that the Chairman of the IGAD Assembly quickly communicates the way forward to the leaders of those committee members.

I thank you!

