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PRESS RELEASE

IGAD deeply concerned by spiraling violent conflict across South Sudan and strongly condemns deliberate targeting of civilians

24 April 2014, Nairobi: The IGAD Executive Secretary, Ambassador (Eng.) Mahboub Maalim expresses deep concern over the spiraling violent conflict across South Sudan and the worsening humanitarian situation in the country. He also strongly condemns the deliberate targeting of civilians in the conflict as evidenced during the recent fighting in Bentiu (Unity State), as well as the 17 April attack in the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) compound in Bor.

These incidents constitute a grave violation of the commitment by the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) and the SPLM/A (in Opposition) to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement that was signed on 23 January 2014 under the auspices of the IGAD-led Mediation Process, and can only serve to undermine the ongoing peace process. These recent incidents are particularly alarming as they involved a deliberate targeting of civilians in massacre proportions including the killing of 200 civilians and the injury of over 400 in a single incident in a Mosque in Bentiu on 15 April 2014. The 17 April attack on unarmed civilians in the UNMISS compound in Bor has also resulted in over 40 deaths and injury to more than 70.

“I call upon the Parties to honor their commitment to all of the terms of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement including ensuring the protection of civilians,” remarked the Executive Secretary, and urged the Parties to demonstrate their commitment to the IGAD-led Mediation Process as the only viable means of resolving the conflict. He further called on the Parties to cooperate with the ongoing investigation into these incidents by the IGAD Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM).

The effects of the five-month long violent conflict in South Sudan have already proved catastrophic with thousands of lives lost and over a million people displaced. The conflict has also seriously disrupted economic activity and food production with imminent risk of serious famine. In this respect, the Executive Secretary calls on the international community to act now to put pressure on both parties to stop the war and prevent a deeper catastrophe from unfolding in South Sudan. ####

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