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OPENING REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR SEYOUM MESFIN, CHAIRPERSON OF THE IGAD SPECIAL ENVOYS FOR SOUTH SUDAN AT THE LAUNCH OF MULTI- STAKEHOLDER NEGOTIATIONS FOR SOUTH SUDAN

**20 JUNE 2014,
RADISSON BLU HOTEL, ADDIS ABABA**

**Distinguished delegates of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan;
Distinguished SPLM Leaders (Former Detainees);
Distinguished representatives of the Political Parties, Civil Society and
Faith-based organisations; and eminent personalities
Distinguished representatives of the African Union, United Nations,
European Union, the Troika, the People's Republic of China, IGAD Partners
Forum and other partners here with us as observers;
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen;**

Please allow me to welcome you to the launch of the multi-stakeholder, round-table negotiations for South Sudan. For the first time, the South Sudan negotiations include multiple stakeholders – political parties, the SPLM Leaders (Former Detainees), Civil Society and Faith Based Leaders – and ensure a broad range of interests and constituencies are represented. An inclusive process will be the best way to achieve lasting peace in South Sudan.

I, therefore, wish to begin by congratulating the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and the SPLM/A – In Opposition, despite their absence today, with the hope that all of us will spare no effort to prevail on them to join us here sooner rather than later – for demonstrating the courage to commit to an inclusive process, as affirmed in the 9 May 2014 Agreement to Resolve the Crisis in South Sudan signed by H.E. Salva Kiir Mayardit, the President of the Republic of South Sudan and Dr. Riek Machar, former Vice-President and Leader of the SPLM/A (In Opposition), an Agreement that has been re-affirmed by the Principals on 10 June 2014 and fully endorsed by the IGAD region as a whole. The 9 May Agreement is the basis for these talks and is not open for re-negotiation. Now is the time to move beyond talks about

talks. We hope that all the stakeholders will be able to join us as we continue the talks tomorrow.

The agenda for these negotiations is clear. First, we must stop the war. We can and we must stop the conflict without further delay and end the suffering of the people of South Sudan. Let me remind you of the latest statistics: nearly 1.5 million people have been displaced. Almost 4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, and there is no sign that these numbers will stop rising. These figures are unacceptable. I call on all parties to ensure the fighting is stopped and humanitarian access is guaranteed.

I am pleased to announce that yesterday the first military personnel of the Regional Protection Force, an integral part of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), were deployed in South Sudan. The new Force Commander of the restructured UNMISS force has been appointed and is already in South Sudan to take up his command. The deployment of the Regional Protection Force is ongoing and will continue rapidly – I am also pleased to announce today that the Government of the Republic of Djibouti will also deploy a contingent to the Protection Force to join the Ethiopian, Kenyan and Rwandese troops already committed. The goal of this strengthened UNMISS mission, integrating the Regional Protection Force, is not to fight; it is, very simply, to take all steps necessary to protect civilians and the monitors verifying the cessation of hostilities between the warring parties.

Work to expand the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism is also ongoing. The robust Monitoring and Verification Mechanism has the unconditional support of the region and the international community and will be an essential tool in supporting the cessation of hostilities agreement.

The second agenda for these talks are the political negotiations. On June 10 President Kiir and Dr. Machar agreed that within sixty days, dialogue on the terms of formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity would be achieved. We have already lost 10 days. We must not delay further – the people of South Sudan are waiting.

All stakeholders must engage in the necessary political discussions on a transitional agenda; on the establishment of transitional institutions and a transitional government; on the parameters for a permanent constitutional process; on security

issues; and, we must not forget, on mechanisms for justice, reconciliation and healing of South Sudanese communities. The national interest must come first, before any partisan or individual concerns. There should be no more delay for peace in South Sudan.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, every day of delay is a day where ordinary people in South Sudan suffer. Every day of delay means the conflict continues. Every day of delay frustrates the potential of South Sudan and is of grave concern to us in the region and to the entire world. I therefore implore you to end this crisis; to engage in these talks to make progress and make progress quickly. This peace process belongs to you. IGAD stands ready to provide, as we have over the past months, whatever support and assistance possible. Our responsibility here is not only to our respective constituencies and interests: it is to the people of South Sudan. Let us not disappoint them any longer. I thank you. ###