



Amb. Seyoum Mesfin Remarks on South Sudan
December 15, 2014

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

A year has passed since the terrible conflict in South Sudan consumed our region's, and the world's, newest country. It is tragic that the suffering and pain that the South Sudanese people have known for decades endures today, despite South Sudan's entry into the community of independent nations.

We, your neighbours and friends, feel great sadness that the crisis continues. We feel your grief and despair at this most difficult time in the life of your country.

Today, there is still much uncertainty about your country's future. Until today, nobody knows how many thousands have been killed. The war is so cruel that nobody has even indicated whether they hold prisoners of war. Millions are displaced inside South Sudan and to neighbouring countries. Millions more are struggling to survive. And the war continues to claim the lives of combatants and innocent civilians.

There is much mistrust and suspicion amongst communities, and the wounds inflicted by the conflict of the last twelve months have yet to begin to heal.

On this sad anniversary, I appeal to all the citizens of South Sudan to not be drawn into a return to violence, retribution and destruction. Be not influenced by rumours and unhelpful rhetoric, from wherever they may emanate. Be not influenced by hatred and vengeance.

The interests of the country, of the nation, of the people – *all* the people – must come first.

Let us make this last, appalling year of horror and tragedy, not an indicator of South Sudan's future but a shocking reminder of the dangers of choosing war over peace, division over harmony, destruction over creation, hate over empathy. These choices have caused so much suffering. Let us not continue these mistakes any longer.

We in the region know the depth of feelings of the people and that many say that living together with other communities is impossible. I cannot tell you to forget the wrongs that have been committed against you. But I can urge that these wrongs not beget new wrongs.

And I can assure you of the region's commitment to help South Sudanese find a peace that is more than the absence of war. A peace that is meaningful, durable and prosperous. It is my hope, and my plea, on behalf of the IGAD leaders, my colleagues the IGAD Special Envoys for South Sudan, and the partners and friends of South Sudan, that the leaders and people of South Sudan make this choice, too: to consign the means of violence to history, and not to see violence as the way to resolve our political problems.

On behalf of my colleagues the IGAD Special Envoys for South Sudan, I thank the international community for its support of the South Sudan peace process to date, and call on the international community to intensify its support for our efforts to find a lasting solution to the crisis in South Sudan.

It is my fervent wish that this Christmas season brings peace to South Sudan, and that the leaders of the country ensure that this is the last year of unnecessary suffering for their people.