

# Briefing on the situation in South Sudan

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Tomorrow (25 January,) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to hold a briefing session on the situation in South Sudan.

Permanent Representative of Ghana to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month, Amma Adomaa Twum-Amoah, is expected to make opening remarks. AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye, may brief the Council. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for South Sudan, Joram Biswaro, may also brief the Council. As per usual practice, the PSC may also receive the statements of the representative of South Sudan and the representative of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The Special Representative of the Secretary General Hanna Tetteh may also make a statement.

The last time the Council met to discuss South Sudan was in April 2021 following its field mission to the country in March 2021. The PSC adopted a communique welcoming the steady progress in the implementation of the R-ARCSS and urging R-TGoNU, among other things, to take all possible steps to mobilize the necessary resources for the implementation of the R-ARCSS, especially Chapter II relating to transitional security arrangements.

Since then, there has been limited progress across the different pillars of the peace agreement but also challenges that continue to persist. The permanent ceasefire continues to hold in spite of continued intercommunal violence. Important tasks related to the appointment of state assemblies have made progress after significant delays. Disagreements over how to

divide parliamentary seats have also been resolved. The constitution-making process bill has been reviewed and adopted by the council of ministers. A roadmap has been developed and adopted to facilitate the implementation of tasks related to transitional justice and a technical Committee has been established to undertake national consultations on the establishment of the Commission for Truth, Healing and Reconciliation. Furthermore, President Salva Kiir decided to resume talks with the South Sudan Opposition Movement Alliance (SSOMA) in Rome under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egido.

However, more than three years after the signing of the revitalized peace agreement, no tangible progress has been made in establishing the necessary unified forces, which is a key aspect of the peace agreement. According to the UN, the government attributes the delay to the arms embargo imposed against South Sudan and disagreements among signatory parties over the command-and-control structure and share ratio of the necessary unified forces. However, the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (R-JMEC) underscores the need for the government to approve critical bills and avail the necessary resources to complete the transitional security arrangements.

What complicated the situation further is the split within SPLM-IO and the emergence of the Kitwang faction which has eroded trust and confidence in the peace process. The split within SPLA-IO led to deadly clashes between forces loyal to Vice President Riek Machar and those loyal to Kitwang faction led by General Simon Gatwech Dual and his deputy Johnson Olony. President Kiir designated his Presidential Advisor for National Security, Tut Gatluak, to negotiate with the Kitwang faction in Khartoum but SPLM-IO complained that this violates the peace agreement which prohibits the shifting of allegiance. Nevertheless, the Khartoum meeting between SPLM and the Kitwang faction led to the signing of two separate

agreements which, according to media reports, deal with integration of forces loyal to the Kitwang faction into the South Sudanese army with a general amnesty and the settlement of local land disputes.

South Sudan is expected to hold elections in 2023 marking the end of its fragile political transition. The reconstituted transitional national assembly (TNLA) has been slow to operationalize and this has impacted the adoption of critical bills related to constitution-making process, election, public financial reform and others. The constitutional bill, which has already been approved by the Council of Ministers, is yet to be endorsed by the TNLA. This is considered to be a very critical task which paves the way for the country to hold elections in 2023. Delays in the establishment of the TNLA standing committees, which are supposed to consider these bills, was said to be the main obstacle. On January 3rd, the Speaker of TNLA announced the appointment of chairpersons and deputies of the various committees, which hopefully contributes to expediting the legislative process. The coming one year is going to be decisive in making concrete progress in implementing the peace agreement and set the stage for the elections.

The government has already called for international support to hold elections. However, due to other crisis situation in the neighborhood including in Ethiopia and Sudan, South Sudan is not getting the necessary international attention at the moment. Sudan is the current chair of IGAD and one of the guarantors of the revitalized peace agreement but it is undergoing a difficult transition which is facing a serious setback following the October 25 coup. Ethiopia, as previous chair of IGAD played an important role in facilitating the South Sudanese peace process however it is now embroiled in its own crisis. The regional dynamics has weakened IGAD and the leadership position of its key mechanisms tasked with overseeing the implementation of the South Sudanese peace

agreement – RJMEC and CTSAMVM – remain vacant for quite some time. The AU Ad Hoc Committee, established to support IGAD, has not also been very active and there is a need to reactivate the committee to support of the South Sudanese peace process. Uganda, the other guarantor, is planning to host a South Sudan leader retreat in February and the expectation is that this will give renewed impetus to the implementation of the peace agreement.

The expected outcome is a communique. While recognizing some of the progress that has been made the PSC may express concern over the slow implementation of the peace agreement. It may urge the R-TGoNU to mobilize adequate the financial resources, for the implementation of the R-ARCSS, especially Chapter II relating to transitional security arrangements. The PSC may also call for the rapid and full operationalization of the TNLA. It may further underline the importance of expediting the legislative process to lay the foundation for the planned election in 2023. The PSC may reiterate its previous decision on the need to hold a transparent, democratic and credible election at the end of the transition period. It may also call on the international community to provide support for the implementation of R-ARCSS.