



Security Council

Seventy-second year

8115th meeting

Tuesday, 28 November 2017, 11.05 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Lambertini (Italy)

Members:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
Egypt	Mr. Awad
Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Japan	Mr. Bessho
Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
Senegal	Mr. Ciss
Sweden	Mr. Skau
Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mrs. Haley
Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita: I am grateful for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General's 30-day report and on the situation in South Sudan.

I am pleased to report that the deployment of the Regional Protection Force is making good progress, with the main body of the Rwandan infantry battalion expected to complete its deployment by the end of the year. The deployment of the Ethiopian battalion advance party was completed on 22 October and the transportation has commenced for the contingent-owned equipment of the main body of the Ethiopian infantry battalion, passing through Kenya on its road move from Addis Ababa to Juba. While there has been tangible progress in the deployment of the Regional Protection Force and the technical discussions are ongoing with the Government on its concept of operations, I also have to report that certain operations of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) continue to be impeded by the national authorities.

The security situation in South Sudan remains precarious. I am particularly concerned by the real risk of an escalation in violence with the onset of the dry season, as well as the Government's push to assert military dominance across the country, notably when faced with continued resistance from armed opposition groups. New military offensives would seriously undermine the political process and cause further civilian casualties and displacements.

During the past month, the security situation in the Equatorias has remained volatile, with reports of continued clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the pro-Machar forces of the Sudan

People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO). Between 9 and 13 November, the two forces clashed in Kariba on the Maridi-Mundri road, south-west of Mundri town, Western Equatoria. The subsequent SPLA clearing operations on the road reportedly led to the killing of six civilians, the burning of houses and additional civilian displacement. Armed elements allied to different opposition coalitions also fought one another. Clashes were reported between the SPLA-IO and elements of Thomas Cirillo Swaka's National Salvation Front around Kajo Keji on 31 October.

In Greater Upper Nile, fighting continued between the SPLA and pro-Machar SPLA-IO forces in Guit, Koch, Rubkona and Mayendit Counties in central Unity. The fighting has led to the curtailment of humanitarian operations in the area. On 26 October, UNMISS extracted five humanitarian workers from Kuerguini caught in the fighting between SPLA and pro-Machar SPLA-IO forces in Nimni, Guit county. On 27 October, UNMISS facilitated the further extraction of an additional 13 humanitarian staff members and two children, from Nimni west to Nyathol. One national staff member of an international non-governmental organization was killed during the clashes. On 22 November, 21 humanitarian personnel were evacuated from Leer to Rumbek, following an exchange of artillery and heavy machine gun fire between the SPLA and pro-Machar SPLA-IO forces.

Meanwhile, the increasing insecurity around the UNMISS protection-of-civilians site in Bentiu is very worrying. On 4 November, during an exchange of fire between armed groups in proximity to the site, shots were directly fired at UNMISS troops, who subsequently returned fire, repelling the attackers, and apprehending one individual attempting to breach the perimeter of the site.

Finally, on security, I am pleased to report that the tensions arising following President Salva Kiir's issuance of a republican decree on 30 October, ordering the arrest and disarmament of the bodyguards of the former SPLA Chief of General Staff, Paul Malong, were handled without violence in Juba. However, while the dispute surrounding General Malong's house arrest may have been resolved, these tensions point out to the risk of fragmentation within the security apparatus, which could further threaten the stability of the country. This trend will need to be closely monitored.

As transmitted to the Security Council on 16 November, despite repeated assurances from the highest levels of Government, UNMISS uniformed personnel patrols and human rights officers continue to face frequent restrictions on their freedom of movement. On 15 November, a dynamic air patrol on its way to Aburoc, Upper Nile, through Kodok, had to return to Malakal from Kodok as a National Security Service Officer objected that the patrol did not have an SPLA Liaison Officer on board, warned the team against proceeding and threatened the air crew. The patrol was allowed to proceed a week later. On 22 November, an integrated UNMISS patrol from Yei to Lasu, Central Equatoria, was stopped at an SPLA checkpoint on the Yei-Lasu road, officially due to insecurity in the area. The patrol team then observed large movement of SPLA forces on the Yei-Lasu road. These obstructions de facto prevent the Mission from fully implementing its protection-of-civilians mandate. I would like to request the Security Council to impress on the Government to uphold its obligations under the status of forces agreement and cease such obstruction.

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan continues to be dire, compounded by widespread armed conflict, intercommunal violence, large displacements of the civilian population and access restrictions, which prevent the delivery of humanitarian assistance. I am encouraged that the President issued a new order dated 9 November calling for unhindered humanitarian access. This must now be backed by a genuine and concerted effort to ensure that that order takes effect at all levels, down to the lowest levels on the ground, where obstructions frequently occur, to facilitate meaningful improvement in the humanitarian operating environment. The catastrophic consequences of the humanitarian crisis are borne out by shocking statistics. Four million South Sudanese are either internally displaced or have sought refuge in neighbouring countries; an estimated six million people, half of the population, are severely food insecure, including 1.7 million on the brink of famine.

Against this backdrop, the increasing number of incidents targeting humanitarian actors is cause for serious concern. Reported monthly access incidents, which include issues of criminality, armed conflict, targeted violence or bureaucratic impediments, totalled 101 in September and 116 in October, of which 44 and 57 per cent were attributed to State actors, respectively. Two more aid workers were killed in November,

bringing the total number of humanitarians killed in 2017 to 19. Clashes between armed groups and other sources of insecurity also continued to negatively impact the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance. In September, for example, at least 89 aid workers were forced to relocate, hindering humanitarian operations.

Let me proceed with a few remarks on the political process. On the national dialogue, subnational consultations continued in the Government-controlled areas of Central Equatoria, Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Upper Nile, with plans to continue consultations in other parts of the country in the upcoming weeks. Consultations are also being carried out for South Sudanese living in refugee camps in Uganda. I must reiterate that it is of utmost importance that the national dialogue be complementary to the implementation of the peace agreement, transparent and genuinely inclusive of all political viewpoints, including those of other key political actors and parties to the conflict. Provided that it adheres to these principles, the national dialogue could serve as a useful forum for addressing the underlying conflict drivers of intercommunal violence and root causes of other grievances.

Meanwhile, political forces also started to organize themselves ahead of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) high-level revitalization forum. On 16 November, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Government and the SPLM former detainees issued the Cairo declaration, in which they committed once again to take all possible measures to end the war and support the peace process. On 18 October, six political movements, parties and fronts from the opposition also issued the Nyahururu declaration, following their deliberations in Kenya, which formally established an alliance. These opposition forces also agreed to participate in the IGAD high-level revitalization process through a joint delegation evincing a common position.

The forum itself is now entering its final phase of preparations. Based on initial statements issued by IGAD on the progress of the consultations, all groups consulted to date appear to have stated their full and unconditional support to the IGAD initiative and affirmed their readiness to engage in principle in the high-level revitalization process. It is also clear, however, that they have raised a number of procedural and substantive questions to influence its outcome in their respective favours and we should be ready for a very difficult and arduous discussions. The summary

of findings that the IGAD task force has been working on has now been submitted to the IGAD Council of Ministers, which as we speak is meeting informally in Abidjan and will formally discuss its recommendations during a formal Council of Ministers meeting on 11 and 12 December. The forum is expected to begin soon afterwards.

Let me conclude by underlining the importance of having unified and unconditional international support for this process. As has been mentioned so many times in the past, there can only be a political solution to end the conflict in South Sudan. It will be crucial for the Government and all political parties to constructively engage in the peace agreement revitalization process and start by immediately ceasing all hostilities and taking a defensive military position. I would thus encourage the Council to unanimously express its support for the urgent revitalization of the peace process, so that the suffering of all South Sudanese civilians can come to an end.

The President: I thank Ms. Keita for her comprehensive and very detailed briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

Every member of the Council is familiar with the horrifying statistics being produced by the violence in South Sudan. Millions of South Sudanese are facing famine and have been driven from their homes. Tens of thousands are dead, and thousands of children have been forced into conflict as child soldiers. I, too, knew these statistics before I travelled to South Sudan in October, but that knowledge did not prepare me for the suffering that I saw there. I saw a civilian population that is deeply traumatized by the violence that it has experienced and a population that is unacceptably vulnerable to further violence.

I saw families living under tarps on mud floors. I lost count of the number of women who told me they had been raped, often repeatedly. I heard more stories of husbands being shot and babies being taken and killed than anyone should ever hear.

But maybe the most disturbing thing I saw was the seed of hate being planted in future generations. In the refugee camps, children roam around, malnourished and uneducated. Young boys are traumatized and bored,

but soon they will be adults and will be uneducated, untrained and resentful of the conditions they have been living in. If we do not do something about the way in which South Sudanese kids are being raised, we will be dealing with them as adults on the battlefield.

I took pictures of these children and showed them to President Kiir when we met. I told him that he could not deny what the pictures represented. To his credit, he did not try to deny it. But that is not enough. It was not then, and it is not now. Simply acknowledging the problem is not enough; President Kiir must act.

It is the Government that bears the primary responsibility for the killing, raping and torturing in South Sudan, and it is the Government that bears the primary responsibility for ending the violence, easing the suffering and saving future generations of South Sudanese. President Kiir said all the right things in our meeting; he made promises that he has made before. But now things are different, and I told him so. Going forward, the United States will judge President Kiir and his Government by their actions, not their words, and the actions needed are clear.

There is a way to end the violence in South Sudan. As a first step, President Kiir needs to adhere to the ceasefires he has declared many times. No more promises; we need action.

There is a way to reinvigorate the peace process in South Sudan. The country's leaders, both Government and opposition, must take responsibility and seize the opportunity presented by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. No more pointing fingers; the process must be inclusive. The parties must be willing to reconsider the parts of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan that are not working, and the leaders must now lead.

And there is a way to provide for and protect innocent civilians in South Sudan. It is not complicated; it is actually very simple. President Kiir and his Government must end the violence and allow the United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan to do its job.

Every month we continue to receive a report that shows restrictions being placed on the peacekeeping force. Government security forces stop peacekeeping patrols at checkpoints, ask for documents that are not required and deny personnel of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) entry into South

Sudan, in violation of the status-of-forces agreement. Every month we see reports detailing how peacekeeping personnel are being deliberately and repeatedly harassed, threatened and even physically assaulted by Government forces.

The Government has stooped so low as to impede peacekeepers from providing water to their own personnel and the people they are supposed to protect. It is petty, it is cruel and it must end. Words are no longer sufficient. The United States is prepared to pursue additional measures against the Government or any party, for that matter, if they do not act to end the violence and ease the suffering in South Sudan. That means putting down their weapons, coming to the negotiating table through the high-level revitalization forum and ending the harassment and obstruction of UNMISS and other organizations that are trying to help the South Sudanese people.

President Kiir's recent order requiring free and unhindered access for humanitarian groups in South Sudan was a good sign, and a welcome sign. We encourage him to follow through on his commitment, and, to help encourage him, we make this commitment in return: we will be watching. We are not interested in one-time concessions or a stop-and-go approach to allowing humanitarian access in South Sudan. The South Sudanese need sustained access to food, water and basic supplies.

We are encouraged by the Government's promise to provide sustained humanitarian access. Again, only actions will prove whether this intent is genuine.

In the midst of all the suffering I saw, I was struck by the hope and the dignity of the people of South Sudan. They want nothing more than to live normal lives. They want to be productive and self-sufficient. In every camp we visited, we asked the children, if there was one wish they could have come true, what would it be? In each and every case, they said they wanted to go to school. Most amazing of all were the mothers. With all the physical and emotional hardship they have suffered and the constant fear of being raped, they did what mothers do. They were still more worried about their children than they were about themselves. They see the promise of their young country slipping away. More importantly, they see their children's futures being lost to chaos and hate. These mothers' desire for their children to have a better life should motivate us to act. It should make us intolerant of more promises

and impatient for results, because these mothers know better than any of us ever could that time is running out for the children of South Sudan.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her briefing.

By mere coincidence, as the Assistant Secretary-General said, even as we are discussing South Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Council of Ministers is also meeting in Abidjan and discussing the same matter, focusing on the progress made in the implementation of the high-level revitalization forum.

The overall situation in South Sudan continues to be of serious concern. The security situation remains fragile, and the conflict continues unabated. The economic and financial problems in the country are worrying. The humanitarian situation has not been mitigated and continues to cause concern. That is what makes the cessation of all hostilities an absolute priority.

As stated in the latest report of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission,

“Unless hostilities cease, the economic and humanitarian situation will continue to worsen. More lives will be lost and responses will be further complicated.”

We welcome President Salva Kiir's decree ordering the free, unimpeded and unhindered movement of humanitarian organizations in the country, and in particular his pledge to hold accountable those who intentionally obstruct the delivery of humanitarian aid and services or impose taxes on humanitarian convoys. We believe that the effective implementation of the decree will facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need.

We really appreciate the visit by Ambassador Nikki Haley to the region, including South Sudan. We have no doubt that her visit has made a significant difference, and we thank her for her commitment. We must stress that the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan remains the only viable way to bring an end to the conflict and restore peace and stability in South Sudan.

Although the Council of Ministers of South Sudan recently approved the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan amendment deal, which is a step in the right direction, a lot remains to be

done in order to ensure meaningful progress in the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement. IGAD has presented the parties with an opportunity in the form of the high-level revitalization forum to restore the permanent ceasefire and fully implement the peace agreement.

My Prime Minister met with President Kiir yesterday in Nairobi and reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to supporting those efforts, both as a neighbouring country of South Sudan and as Chair of IGAD. We remain hopeful that President Kiir will continue his cooperation with IGAD. We would have liked to have received a briefing from Special Envoy Ismail Wais himself on the substantive progress that IGAD has made towards the convening of the high-level forum. Unfortunately, he had to attend the IGAD meeting in Abidjan on the same matter and could not make it to this meeting.

In any case, Ethiopia understands that we all have access, one way or another, to the information on the extensive consultations that the IGAD Council of Ministers and the Special Envoy held with the South Sudanese stakeholders and the tireless efforts made to consolidate the views and positions expressed in those consultations and the upcoming IGAD Council of Ministers meeting. We also all expect that the meeting will provide guidance with regard to the actual convening of the forum and the way forward. That is indeed very meaningful progress and, exactly because of that, we believe that the stage has now been more or less set for the actual convening of the forum. However, we have to realize that the process is bound to be complex and, given the nature of our region, one would not be surprised if developments were to occur occasionally that might complicate matters even more, rather than helping lessen existing complications.

As I said at an earlier meeting (see S/PV.8071), IGAD does not have a magic wand to create miracles in South Sudan. The support of the international community, particularly that of the Security Council, is absolutely critical. We are extremely grateful for the support provided by the United Nations and the African Union (AU) in the process leading to the convening of the IGAD forum, as part of maintaining the unity of purpose among the United Nations, the AU and IGAD in the search for lasting peace, security and stability in South Sudan.

Once again, we encourage the United Nations, the AU and IGAD to redouble their efforts and further strengthen that positive trend. No doubt, more and frequent consultations are imperative, as the preparations for the forum are approaching the final phase. Once again, no matter what we in the region and the rest of the international community might do, we understand that the success of the revitalization process, as well as success in addressing the enormous challenge that South Sudan is facing, will depend greatly upon the willingness of all parties. We still remain hopeful that all parties will seize the opportunity provided to them and work towards the achievement of the purposes of the revitalization agenda.

Finally, as the Assistant Secretary-General already stressed, we recognize the progress made with regard to the deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF). We are pleased to witness improved cooperation from the Government in that regard. The successful deployment of the Ethiopian battalion advance party and the recruited contingent to South Sudan was possible because of that improved cooperation. We reiterate our commitment to the deployment, as well as the rationale of the RPF. In that regard, we would like to inform the Council that the main body of the Ethiopian battalion has concluded its preparations and remains ready to be deployed in South Sudan as early as 18 December.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Bintou Keita, for updating us on the situation in South Sudan.

We are deeply concerned by certain information that we have seen in recent weeks. From October to December, 4.8 million people — around 45 per cent of the population of South Sudan — have been reported as severely food insecure. That represents 1.4 million more people than during the same period last year. The number of South Sudanese forced to flee their country could approach the 3 million mark — one in every four citizens of the country — by the end of 2018, unless security improves. That represents almost 1 million more people than the current number. Additionally, the number of internally displaced persons remains at 1.86 million, while 210,000 reside in protection-of-civilian sites. The people of South Sudan deserve better. They deserve peace.

I thank Ambassador Nikki Haley for adding real and vivid images just now to those statistics in her

recounting of recent experiences in that country. Innocent people, many of them women and children, are suffering. The primary responsibility for protecting civilians lies with the Government. The Government must take further concrete action to alleviate their suffering, including food insecurity and displacement.

Regrettably, the Secretary-General has continued to report persistent violations of the status-of-forces agreement. On 9 November, President Salva Kiir ordered that humanitarian convoys and non-governmental organizations should be granted free, unimpeded and unhindered movement in South Sudan. His entire Government has the responsibility for fully implementing that order. The Council stands with the people of South Sudan and will continue to urge the Government, as well as the opposition, to allow humanitarian access. A genuinely inclusive political process, including the national dialogue, is the only way to achieve a political solution. Parties must understand that true peace will never come from fighting.

In that regard, Japan strongly supports the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) revitalization forum process. We are encouraged that IGAD Ministers have approached the broad range of parties of South Sudan and obtained their commitment to, and cooperation with, that initiative, including a commitment to the cessation of hostilities. The regional forum will take place in the coming weeks. We urge all the parties in South Sudan to fully engage and seriously cooperate with IGAD in good faith. All parties involved in that process must come to the table with a genuine desire for peace, and leave behind political games.

At the same time, IGAD should continue to display unified efforts and strong determination during the preparation of options and recommendations for that process. We look forward to concrete results, as a result of those efforts, with a revised time frame on the revitalization and implementation of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including elections, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform.

Japan shares the view of the African Union Peace and Security Council, in their communiqué of 20 September, that this process represents a unique window of opportunity, but also a last chance for the parties to really achieve peace and stability. The Council should remain vigilant in ensuring that all parties are

actively engaged in an inclusive political process, such as the IGAD Forum, aimed at achieving lasting peace in South Sudan. Japan will spare no effort to find the best way forward to support the people of South Sudan in their search for lasting peace and security.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Keita for her briefing. Time and time again, we have voiced our despair at the depth of the suffering of the people of South Sudan. The scale of the numbers is deeply shocking: one third of the population has been forced to flee their homes and more than half the population lacks enough food to feed themselves and their families. Yet the parties to the conflict, including the Government, continue to mount offensives against innocent civilians. They are deaf to the misery of their own people. It is more important than ever that the international community show the people of South Sudan that we will act together to work for peace, even if South Sudan's leaders will not.

Innocent civilians continue to pay the price for the failures of the political elite. President Kiir's long-overdue decree ordering safe passage for humanitarian agencies is welcome. We hope that that will result in real improvements in getting assistance to those who so desperately need it, as physical restrictions — whether resolved or not — represent just the tip of the iceberg of the bureaucratic impediments, including the cost of registration fees and delays in receiving permits, which prevent humanitarians from reaching those most in need.

Like others, we are extremely concerned that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) continues to face significant restrictions of movement, including restrictions imposed by Government forces. We are particularly troubled by a disturbing trend of harassment, threats and physical assault on United Nations staff. That must stop immediately. Those responsible will be judged by their actions, not their words.

South Sudan is at a crossroads: its leaders are being offered a last chance to commit to peace and demonstrate that they care for their people and for their country, which they have repeatedly failed to do. Too many times ceasefires have been declared while gunshots continue to ring out, but the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) revitalization forum offers hope for the people of South Sudan. I would like to reiterate

the United Kingdom's full support for that process and to thank both IGAD and the African Union for their hard work over recent months.

IGAD Foreign Ministers and the Special Envoy have actively reached out to both the elites and civil society across the region as part of their revitalization process. The United Kingdom stands ready to support the region's work to bring an end to the conflict and suffering in South Sudan, and we welcome the African Union Peace and Security Council's clearly worded communiqué of 22 September.

The international community must use the full range of options to ensure that all the parties meaningfully and constructively engage. That cannot be an open-ended process that allows more delays, leading to more suffering for the people of South Sudan. As the African Union communiqué of 20 September states, it must be clear that this is a final chance and that there will be consequences for not engaging. As a Council, we should commit to return to this issue early in the new year in order to consider whether we have seen enough progress and whether there are individuals or parties that are blocking peace, and we should be ready to take appropriate action if so.

Given the fragile situation in South Sudan, we are concerned that the Government is considering holding elections next year. There is no possibility that the conditions for good elections will be in place next year. Seeking to hold them when the conditions are not right is likely to drive further conflict. As the African Union and IGAD have stated, the timelines in the peace agreement must be revised to allow for a conducive environment for holding elections. The national dialogue must be held in support of the revitalization of the peace agreement — it cannot provide a solution in itself.

I want to conclude by reiterating our plea to the leaders of South Sudan to stop the violence and to engage meaningfully in the revitalization process, to stop blocking and impeding UNMISS and the Regional Protection Force, to stop attacks against United Nations and humanitarian workers and to stop denying humanitarian aid from reaching their people, whom they are starving to death. South Sudan is at a crossroads, and we should do all that we can to support the region's efforts to ensure its leaders choose the right path.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Bintou Keita, for the informative briefing that she delivered to the Security Council today.

Once again, we must voice our concern regarding the precariousness of the situation in South Sudan. The humanitarian, security and economic crises show no signs of visible improvement to date and are driving hundreds of South Sudanese to leave their homes on a daily basis, thereby generating internal displacements that only exacerbate the crisis.

On 23 March, the Council called for compliance with the ceasefire declared by the Government (see S/PV.7906); that has, however, been ignored to date. Throughout all this time, confrontations have persisted, meaning that the necessary conditions for establishing a real dialogue never materialized. It is therefore impossible to speak of real progress, if such confrontations between the parties do not cease. We believe that the lack of political determination and leadership is still evident.

Bolivia reaffirms that a sustainable solution to the conflict in South Sudan lies in a credible political process and inclusive dialogue that will pave the way for full compliance with the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of 2015. The efforts spearheaded by regional organizations are vital and require the support of the international community, as well as, first and foremost, the commitment of the Government and all opposition groups in South Sudan.

In that regard, my delegation believes that the need to ensure support for the steps being taken by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are be indisputable. The high-level revitalization forum is the only existing concrete initiative, for which we appreciate the efforts of and express our support to both IGAD and the African Union. As mentioned by the representative of Ethiopia, the fact that IGAD has held consultations with all of the stakeholders is a good sign. It is often said that, in order to advance the political process in South Sudan, inclusivity must be one of its pillars. IGAD has demonstrated its determination to deliver on that principle.

We welcome the news of the participation and support of the stakeholders in the process. We urge

all parties to continue constructively engaging with the forum. That represents a unique opportunity for the South Sudanese people to establish a dialogue that allows for the restoration of a permanent ceasefire, the implementation of the peace agreement and the development of a realistic timeline for holding democratic elections at the end of the transition period. All eyes will be on the upcoming extraordinary session of the IGAD Council of Ministers so that we can learn more about the forum and its modalities, structure and organization.

With regard to the Regional Protection Force, we welcome the progress made in the deployment of the main body of its battalions. We note an improvement in terms of Government cooperation, and we consider it essential to work in partnership with the Government in order to meet the deadlines for the deployment of the regional protection force and to enable its proper functioning. Its presence will allow the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to extend its presence to other areas of conflict where the protection of civilians and humanitarian assistance are so urgently required at this time.

In conclusion, we express our thanks to the United Nations country team and to UNMISS for the work that they have been carrying out in South Sudan. We call on the parties to ensure unhindered and safe access for UNMISS and the humanitarian personnel so that they can provide the people affected by the conflict with the necessary assistance.

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I express my appreciation for the briefing delivered by Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, which has provided us with a comprehensive overview of the latest events in South Sudan.

I reiterate once again Uruguay's profound concern about the crisis affecting South Sudan, whose political leaders are primarily responsible for the situation there. We must never lose sight of the horrendous suffering that the South Sudanese have had to undergo for far too long. The personal ambitions of the country's main political leaders, who have put their ambitions to wield or obtain positions of power before the needs of their people, are at the root cause of that protracted crisis.

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission conducted its most recent plenary meeting last Monday, 20 November. At that meeting, the Chairperson of the

Commission, Mr. Festus Mogae, enumerated a list of requirements essential to achieving the revitalization of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of August 2015. Uruguay agrees in its entirety with Mr. Mogae's statement, and I take the liberty of presenting several of those requirements, which must be implemented without delay.

First, there is the need to establish a complete and permanent cessation of hostilities, which must be inclusive of all armed groups. Secondly, an inclusive, transparent and political process with guarantees that unites all South Sudanese parties is necessary. Thirdly, a plan of action is needed to address the serious humanitarian situation, which must provide unrestricted access to humanitarian actors so that they can help the people most in need.

We eagerly await the upcoming high-level revitalization forum — aimed at revitalizing the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of August 2015 — under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which represents a unique opportunity to restart the political process in South Sudan and pave the way for the holding of democratic elections at the end of the transition period. We reiterate that it will be fundamental for all stakeholders involved to find a solution to the conflict, in particular the United Nations and the African Union, and to support that initiative and speak with a single voice, while, at the same time, expressing a firm and unequivocal message to the parties with regard to the importance that this opportunity represents in terms of making progress in finding a solution to the conflict and restore longed-for peace to the country's people.

Lastly, we regret to learn that the 30-day report of the Secretary-General presented by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to the Security Council (see S/PV.8071) once again gives an account of all kinds of restrictions imposed on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) by the Government, at a time when the Regional Protection Force, which was approved by the Council more than a year ago, remains far from being 100 per cent operational, despite the recent progress that Ms. Keita just mentioned.

To reiterate what we have said previously, States cannot unilaterally prevent the normal functioning of

a mission. Moreover, it is incumbent upon the Security Council to demand and obtain from host States full respect and fulfilment of the terms of status-of-forces agreements, which provide guarantees for protecting personnel that countries voluntarily contribute to peacekeeping operations. In that regard, we underscore the informative forum recently organized by UNMISS for members of the Legislative Assembly of South Sudan, which presented information on the importance of respect for the status-of-forces agreement between the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan concerning the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. We hope that that event helped to raise awareness among political actors of South Sudan.

At this juncture, it is clear that getting the two political parties to abandon speculation aimed at maintaining power, which seems to be their primary concern, will be key to achieving the peace and stability that the country needs.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Keita for her informative briefing to the Security Council today.

As we just heard, the situation in South Sudan remains gravely worrying, not least for civilians caught up in a seemingly endless nightmare of conflict, displacement and hunger. We remain deeply concerned about reports of continued fighting, as well as preparations for renewed offensive operations, which point to a lack of commitment by the parties to finding a solution to the conflict through dialogue. Let me reiterate that an immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties — the Government and the armed groups alike — is a *sine qua non*, not only to alleviate suffering but also to allow for a meaningful political process.

All parties must recognize that only a political solution can resolve the conflict. In that regard, we strongly commend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for preparing the high-level revitalization forum as a means of reinvigorating the peace process. The forum represents a unique window of opportunity that merits our full and active support. It is imperative that the forum take place without delay. The legitimacy and success of the forum will be strengthened by ensuring that the process is transparent and inclusive, with the effective participation of women and civil society. Building on the communiqué of the African Union Peace and Security Council of

20 September, the Council must now stand unified and speak with one voice to provide the forum with the best possible prospects for taking a genuine step forward. We note, in that regard, the support also voiced by the European Union in its statement of 7 November. A national dialogue could be one part of the way forward, but only if it is genuinely inclusive, impartial and transparent. A national dialogue will not be credible while violence continues and the freedom of expression is restricted. Although a national dialogue cannot replace the peace agreement, it could serve as a complement as part of a national reconciliation process.

The humanitarian and human rights situation for millions of people in South Sudan remains perilous. We are extremely alarmed by accounts that the access to food is being used to further military objectives. Such serious reports should be actively followed up. It is unacceptable that violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law continue. Restrictions on the access to health care, attacks against medical facilities and transport, and wide-spread looting of medical facilities by all parties to the conflict are also unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. That clearly shows that the work of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is crucial and that there is a need to make further progress in connection with the deployment of the regional protection force. The establishment of the Hybrid Court will act as a further strong deterrent against atrocity crimes. We welcome the steps taken thus far towards its establishment.

Time is running out for millions of South Sudanese. Every day that the conflict continues makes building peace, recovery and reconciliation even more difficult. We fully support the leadership being shown by IGAD and the region. It is now essential that we exhaust every avenue in the search for peace in South Sudan.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Keita for her substantive briefing. We regret the fact that we were unable to hear the views of Mr. Ismail Wais, Special Envoy for South Sudan of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), due to the fact that he is taking part in a meeting of IGAD Ministers in Abidjan. The sole way to stabilize the state of affairs in South Sudan is through the launch of a genuinely inclusive process of national reconciliation.

We do not think it is fair to continue to lay all the blame for the persistent violence on Juba alone. The Government has worked to meet the opposition halfway, and now it is up to the opposition to do the same and take a more constructive position. Unfortunately, all we are seeing from them is destructive action instead. There is no other way to describe the attempts to launch a counteroffensive on the eve of the December negotiations in Addis Ababa. We affirm our position that it is counterproductive to impose targeted sanctions or an arms embargo. Such measures will worsen the crisis rather than easing it.

We are pleased with the speed with which the Regional Protection Force (RPF) is deploying in South Sudan. It should continue its operations while respecting the country's sovereignty and the core principles of peacekeeping. We are pleased that mutually acceptable modalities for the operation are being worked out with the South Sudan authorities, including the RPF's deployment in the area of the capital's airport. It is important that the advance unit is already patrolling critical supply routes in the region of the capital and that preparations for the arrival of the main part of the force are on schedule. We urge South Sudan and the troop-contributing countries to work together to ensure that the RPF is fully operationalized.

We hope to see the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's high-level revitalization forum succeed. We note the mediation efforts of Kampala and Nairobi and should not omit to mention the attempt in Cairo in mid-November to consolidate the opposition parties. However, we should once again emphasize the importance of coordinating all the negotiation tracks. It is also very important to ensure that the approaches of the regional Powers to the settlement in South Sudan remain united. Any destructive competition or attempt to advance narrow national agendas via the South Sudan efforts could adversely affect the peace process.

While noting the balanced nature of the Secretary-General's latest monthly report, we should also point out that much of the factual information in it has already been presented to the Council in one form or another. We believe that the overall situation with the deployment of the Regional Protection Force should enable us to think seriously about reducing the frequency of the reports with a view to improving the general effectiveness of our work.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her very informative briefing on the situation in South Sudan, the work of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the importance of the Security Council's role and support.

The initiative undertaken in July to hold a revitalization forum represents a significant step in the efforts to relaunch the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and advance its implementation. The Agreement is still the cornerstone of the political process and, if fully implemented with the support of all relevant stakeholders, could help to bring the stabilization that South Sudan so badly needs. France therefore reiterates its full support for the forum and for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union High Representative, the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General and his Special Representative for South Sudan to get the process moving. In that regard, we welcome the consultations that have been held in the past few weeks with the various parties with the aim of putting an inclusive process in place. It is vital that substantial progress be made quickly and before the end of the year, at the latest. We hope that the special regional envoys will be able to update the Council on the status of the efforts at a future meeting.

As the Council, IGAD and the African Union have stated repeatedly, the parties must engage in the process in good faith. We therefore call on them to fully participate and quickly identify the modalities for implementing the peace agreement, or we will have to consider imposing sanctions on the individuals trying to impede the process.

The international community must continue its efforts to provide the necessary support to the people of South Sudan and make ending the suffering of women and children a priority. The people of South Sudan continues to endure insecurity, violence, threats of violence, the spectre of famine and malnutrition and horrendous humanitarian conditions. In that regard, we condemn anyone obstructing the efforts of UNMISS and the humanitarian workers supporting them. Ms. Keita has rightly asked for the Council's support in this. Blocking UNMISS patrols and arresting and intimidating its officers and humanitarian personnel cannot be permitted. UNMISS must be able to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the Council. We call on

the Government of South Sudan to fully comply with its commitments under the status of forces agreement, as well as its own commitments on the deployment of the Regional Protection Force. The international community must be prepared to take every possible measure that could help to reduce the violence. An arms embargo would contribute to that.

Lasting peace also implies ensuring that crimes and human rights violations do not go unpunished. Establishing the Hybrid Court provided for in the peace agreement, in which the African Union would play a leading role, would help. UNMISS also contributes to that through the investigations it conducts into such acts in accordance with its mandate. We are particularly concerned about the information gathered by the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan on abuses allegedly committed in Wau and parts of Upper Nile, which should be fully clarified.

Mr. Awad (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for her briefing to the Security Council. The delegation of Egypt would like to emphasize a number of points.

First, the three-year-long conflict in South Sudan and its economic, political and humanitarian consequences, as well as its repercussions throughout the region, have shown that the only way to end the crisis is through a comprehensive political settlement that transcends political power-sharing and can achieve comprehensive, complete and genuine national reconciliation both for ordinary people and the political elites, with the aim of resolving the issues and ensuring lasting peace based on the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. From that perspective, it is important to ensure that international efforts stress support for the political process, in order to enhance the capacity of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to support that process and help to prepare a comprehensive plan for rebuilding the State after the transition period.

Secondly, the high-level revitalization forum for the peace agreement represents an opportunity that must be seized and taken seriously. We must also step up international support for promoting and backing the efforts of the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, in view of the fact that the peace agreement's transition period is coming to an

end and their efforts represent a major opportunity of avoiding further complications of the situation.

Thirdly, the current political situation and the peace agreement require that every effort be made to unify the factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition and bring together the various opposition groups, with the goal of forging a united political front that rejects violence and that is capable of being a serious political partner representing every sector of society and of the political spectrum, without narrow tribal prejudices, and of acting as a peaceful political opposition in the modern meaning of the term. In that regard, we believe it is key to support the ongoing efforts to unify the opposition through the Arusha process in order to ensure that it can be a partner capable of participating in a positive way in the future political life of South Sudan.

Fourthly, in that context, the ongoing efforts of Egypt and Uganda resulted in the signing on 16 November of the Cairo declaration between the Government of South Sudan and a group of former detainees. The efforts were based on the Arusha Agreement, signed in 2015 and supported by the entire international community. We would like to point out that they support and are geared to the same result as those that other regional and international actors have made towards reaching a comprehensive settlement of the conflict by ensuring agreement among all the political forces and parties.

Fifthly, in parallel with the strengthening of political and diplomatic efforts, we would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring that the international community and all international and regional partners are working to build up every component of the South Sudanese State, help it to rebuild its institutional and development structures and protect and promote them in the future through a comprehensive reconstruction plan. The Council's experience with other conflicts has made it abundantly aware that a vacuum left by the collapse of such institutions will be filled only by chaos.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Ms. Bintou Keita for the important updates that she has given us. We also want to commend the efforts of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which, despite the difficulties it encounters, continues to operate in a hostile environment, thanks to the

multiple obstacles that it still faces in carrying out its daily activities. Senegal welcomes the practical progress seen in the deployment of the Regional Protection Force and encourages UNMISS, the South Sudanese authorities and all the troop-contributing countries, whose dedication we salute, to take all necessary measures in that regard.

In a humanitarian context that remains fragile, I would also like to emphasize that we are concerned about the obstacles facing humanitarian workers, including the increasing attacks on them, which we condemn. In that regard, we call on all parties to allow free and unhindered access for humanitarian actors to the affected civilian populations, and we urge the Transitional Government of National Unity to assume its full responsibility for ensuring the protection of civilian populations and the security of humanitarian workers. And as the countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have already done, we also condemn the ongoing human rights violations by both the Government and the opposition.

We all agree that settling the conflict in South Sudan requires more than a negotiated political solution. In that regard, we welcome the increasingly active leadership being shown in the region and encourage the initiatives that its countries have announced to revitalize the political process. The fact is that regional actors have a key role to play in the quest for lasting stability and peace in South Sudan. My delegation would therefore like to reiterate its support for the high-level revitalization forum in bringing together the two parties to the 2015 peace agreement and other influential stakeholders outside the current arrangement in order to make progress in its implementation. We also welcome IGAD's decision to provide an update as soon as possible on the progress made with regard to the initiative of the forum, in order to enable the Council to take appropriate measures in support of its decisions.

The efforts of the African Union are also important. They include the decision taken by its Peace and Security Council at its 720th meeting, held on 20 September, on the report of the Chairperson of the Commission on South Sudan, according to which the African Union Commission and the Government of South Sudan should urgently conclude a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the Hybrid Court in December, in accordance with the time lines agreed. In that context, the Peace and Security Council

called on the Transitional Government to ensure that the memorandum is integrated into national legislation through the Transitional Legislative Assembly.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that it is also imperative to tackle the worrying economic situation in South Sudan, since, in addition to the country's insecurity and humanitarian crisis, it is one of the causes of the displacement of the population. On top of that, it is contributing to the weakening of the South Sudanese State, particularly its ability to manage its entire chain of command and implement all its commitments in a timely way.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita for her briefing. In recent weeks the Government of South Sudan has shown its commitment to maintaining national stability and promoting socioeconomic development, which China commends. However, the situation on the political, security and humanitarian fronts remains challenging. The international community should make moving South Sudan's political process forward an urgent priority.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has recently been actively preparing for its high-level revitalization forum by conducting broad consultations with stakeholders in South Sudan and with other countries in the region. Much has been done to improve mutual understanding among the parties and make the political dialogue more inclusive. China welcomes the efforts of IGAD and Ethiopia in that regard. The parties in South Sudan have demonstrated to varying degrees their readiness to engage in dialogue.

We hope that IGAD will continue to promote communication and coordination between the South Sudanese Government and various stakeholders in the interest of smooth preparations for the high-level revitalization forum. We also call on the international community to continue to provide support for IGAD and other regional and subregional organizations, respect their leadership in the mediation process as they work in close coordination with each other, and speak with one voice to send out a consistent message to all parties in South Sudan, thereby forming a synergy that favours a political settlement. In addition, the international community should respect the Government of South Sudan in exercising its ownership and leadership

vis-à-vis the political process so as to motivate it to that end.

In addition to the revitalization forum-related efforts led by IGAD, we should actively encourage all parties to participate in national dialogue and other domestic reconciliation processes. At the same time, necessary humanitarian and economic assistance should continue to be provided with a view to helping the country rebuild.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has been playing an important role in safeguarding South Sudan's peace and stability and moving the political process forward. China commends the efforts of UNMISS and will continue to support the Mission in fulfilling its mandate. We hope that the Secretariat and UNMISS will step up their engagement with the Government of South Sudan and the troop-contributing countries concerned so as to properly settle any issues that may arise in the course of the deployment of the Regional Protection Force, as well as to further boost the Mission's capacity and effectiveness in implementing its mandate.

As the main troop-contributing country in UNMISS and an important partner of South Sudan, China has been a consistent supporter of South Sudan's peace process. We have been committed to peace and development in South Sudan through bilateral and multilateral channels. China is ready to continue its constructive role in South Sudan's quest for lasting peace and stability and sustainable development.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): I join previous speakers in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Keita for her comprehensive briefing on the situation on the ground in South Sudan.

Like others, we are gravely concerned at the persistent clashes between parties in South Sudan, which are causing food insecurity in the country to escalate and the number of refugees, internally displaced persons and humanitarian-access incidents to increase. We are worried that the humanitarian situation will get even worse in the upcoming dry season as the economic situation continues to deteriorate. We express hope that the recent presidential decree calling for free movement for humanitarian organizations in the country will be instrumental in improving humanitarian access.

My country is concerned about the slow implementation of the peace agreement in South

Sudan, since the agreement remains the only viable option for achieving sustainable peace. We appreciate the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development aimed at organizing the much-awaited high-level revitalization forum, which is now planned to be convened alongside the meeting of the organization's Council of Ministers in mid-December. At the same time, we need to ensure that the political negotiations to resolve the conflict in South Sudan are accompanied by efforts to address the complex causes of conflict and implement comprehensive strategies for the provision of international assistance in numerous areas, such as, inter alia, sustainable economic growth, education, health care, social services and the protection of the agriculture and rural livelihood sectors, including livestock.

Most of all, intercommunal reconciliation is absolutely necessary. It can be fostered through joint livelihood projects that build trust and confidence among local populations. There can be no real progress unless women and young people are fully engaged and assume leadership in efforts to sustain peace at all levels, from the highest echelons to grass-roots levels.

Lastly, Kazakhstan will work with others in the regional and international community to foster constructive understanding among the various parties to the conflict, with a view to achieving the common goal of peace and security in South Sudan.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita for her valuable briefing.

Ukraine, like others, strongly condemns last week's armed clashes between Government and opposition forces in the south of South Sudan, resulting in many civilians and soldiers from both sides being killed. We are also outraged by the instance of shooting at personnel from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

We took note of President Kiir's order to South Sudan's security organs to tighten the current level of security in Juba and throughout the country. We hope that the order will help to ensure the safety of the South Sudanese citizens during the winter holidays.

There is a risk that the onset of the dry season in South Sudan may lead to renewed fighting between the Government and rebels. It is therefore vital that the unilateral ceasefire declared by President Kiir is

upheld. For its part, the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition must also cease all hostilities and engage in political dialogue.

The recent armed clashes all but underline the urgency for parties to engage in the political process, which is the only way to achieve lasting peace in South Sudan. In this context, we welcome the approval by the South Sudanese cabinet of the constitutional amendment bill, which would pave the way to establishing institutions and mechanisms provided for in the 2015 agreement. Ukraine looks forward to swift certification of those amendments by the Transitional National Legislative Assembly.

All efforts on the national level must go hand in hand with those of the region, which Ukraine fully supports. In this regard, we took note of the five-point approach proposed by the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, President Festus Mogae, aimed at ending the conflict in South Sudan, and Ukraine looks forward to the outcome of the meeting of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development currently under way in Abidjan.

While Ukraine welcomes the recent tangible progress in the deployment of the Regional Protection Force, we are concerned by ongoing obstructions faced by UNMISS and humanitarian organizations. This situation requires redress as soon as possible, given that the Mission and humanitarian actors need to have unhindered access throughout the country, especially in the areas affected by renewed armed clashes.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Ukraine's strong readiness and commitment to contributing to peace and reconciliation in South Sudan, including through our participation in UNMISS.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Italy.

At the outset, like others, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita for her briefing. We reiterate our position in support of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and its leadership in efforts aimed at increasing the protection civilians and contributing to restoring peace and stability in South Sudan. I will focus my statement on three aspects, namely, the humanitarian situation, UNMISS and the Regional Protection Force (RPF) and the political process.

As the fighting continues, the humanitarian situation remains tragic. The people of South Sudan are paying the highest price for four years of an inconclusive man-made conflict. Every day, displacement and hunger are condemning young people in South Sudan to seeing their hopes wane and disappear. Instead of being allowed to study or work to improve their country, forward-looking men and women of South Sudan are doomed to die or escape the country, which was not the promise the newborn South Sudan made to them just six years ago. It is completely the opposite.

We continue to receive multiple reports of attacks on humanitarian workers in violation of the Status of Forces Agreement between South Sudan and UNMISS. We have also learned that President Kiir has ordered to remove all obstructions to humanitarian access. We urge all parties, especially the Government, to be consistent with this order and fulfil their international commitments as well.

UNMISS must be allowed to enforce its presence where civilians need it most, namely, Unity state, Upper Nile, Bahr el-Ghazal, and Equatoria. In this regard, the full deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) cannot be postponed indefinitely. Despite some recent progress, one year after its establishment, the RPF has yet to be allowed to fully operate in Juba.

With regard to the political process, we have fully supported the efforts made by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to revitalize the peace agreement. Indeed, the crisis in South Sudan needs to be seen within the context of the region. Only with regional guidance can it be genuinely solved.

The outcome of the IGAD preliminary consultations is a promising starting point for the upcoming high-level forum. The exercise has so far been inconclusive as to whether all stakeholders have agreed to participate in the forum. We commend the regional actors for their efforts. We also encourage the South Sudanese stakeholders to invest in the IGAD process in the most serious manner.

We appreciate the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan's recent endorsement of the bill to incorporate the draft Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan into the 2011 Transitional Constitution. We hope that the Transitional National Legislative Assembly will responsibly approve the bill by mid-December, as expected. The Peace and Security Council of the

African Union made clear the potential further course of action, should the IGAD exercise fail or be postponed owing to the unwillingness to find peaceful solutions to a situation that gravely affects regional stability. As one of the Chairs of the IGAD Partners Forum, Italy will continue to do its part for the success of the high-level forum and help restore peace in the country.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I note that all Council members have spoken in the Chamber, so, with the consent of the members, I intend to adjourn the meeting without proceeding to informal consultations. There being no objection, the meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.