



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9274th meeting

Monday, 6 March 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Afonso (Mozambique)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
Ghana	Mr. Korbieh
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

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

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in South Sudan (S/2023/135)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0601 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to Her Excellency Mrs. Vanessa Frazier, Permanent Representative of Malta, for her service as President of the Security Council for the month of February. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing our deep appreciation to Ambassador Frazier and her team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in South Sudan (S/2023/135)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, and Mr. Tareq Talahma, Acting Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/135, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in South Sudan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council on the situation in South Sudan. Today I want to focus on the priorities for this critical phase of the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and to share progress and reflections on the implementation of the mandated objectives of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

In a recent press briefing, the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity confirmed its commitment to implementing the peace agreement in accordance with the timelines in the agreed road map. In the same briefing, the Government stated clearly that there would be no more extensions of the timelines. UNMISS welcomes that public commitment and acknowledges the limited progress achieved during the reporting period, but we also note the slippage in meeting the timelines set out in the road map. Neither the stakeholders nor the international community are of a mind to contemplate further extensions. Accordingly, we see 2023 as a make-or-break year and as a test for all parties to the Agreement. We believe there are some key hurdles that the parties must clear in order to successfully position South Sudan to complete the final leg of the transitional phase next year.

The first is the drafting of a new constitution, which is a critical opportunity for the South Sudanese to agree on the arrangements by which they can live together harmoniously, avoiding a repeat of the two civil wars that have defined the past decade. It will allow them South to consolidate their identity and establish how they want to be governed. It is intended to be an inclusive process that gives a voice to all South Sudanese, including the holdout groups, but especially internally displaced persons and refugees, women, young people, persons with disabilities and other marginalized communities. We therefore call on the Government to immediately reconstitute and fund the National Constitutional Review Commission and to fast-track the establishment of the Constitution Drafting Committee and for Parliament to end its lengthy recess.

That sets the foundation for the second challenge—the preparations for inclusive and credible elections, which are due to be held next year. I can confirm that the United Nations has received a Government request to assist the South Sudanese-owned and -administered elections. Of particular note is the request to support an enabling environment for elections, working with civil society, political parties and the media. There is a need to fast-track all preparatory work now, including with respect to the immediate constitution and operationalization of the Political Parties Council. Most critically, UNMISS urges the finalization of the legal framework and the reconstitution of the National Elections Commission, which has been a largely defunct body for nearly 10 years, lacking human resources and material infrastructure. Key electoral choices must

be determined soon. Those steps cannot be shelved until 2024. Following the recommendations of the United Nations needs-assessment mission in 2021, such United Nations electoral support will first focus on creating the appropriate architecture and environment in which elections can take place. It will only then be able to decide on the modalities for further and concrete electoral assistance in managing the elections process itself.

The third priority is the expansion of civic and political space, which will be a defining legacy of the transitional period as it constitutes the finishing line — the ultimate criteria — by which the credibility of the electoral process will be judged. More important, it will set the foundation for a stable democracy that can avert further conflict. In support of that expansion of civic and political space, UNMISS is engaging non-governmental organizations and political parties to ask the critical questions that must be expected of an appropriate political environment. We have taken note of the sentiments expressed at the recent International Conference on Women's Transformative Leadership, held in Juba, which insisted on ensuring the space for women and girls to embrace their role as change agents. We believe that the visit of the Ecumenical Pilgrimage for Peace, led by His Holiness the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland have served to echo the message of peace, tolerance, reconciliation and civic participation so often called for by the South Sudanese themselves.

The fourth hurdle is the consolidation, strengthening and deployment of the necessary unified forces. I welcome the completion of the first phase of the graduations and encourage the parties to finalize a formula for rank structures and harmonization, proper equipment, welfare and the deployment of the graduated troops. That will enable those forces to meet their responsibility to protect civilians, humanitarian personnel and their assets. The necessary unified forces can be either an asset or a liability during the transition. We appeal for the urgent commencement of the second phase of that process.

The fifth challenge is to tackle the subnational violence that manifests itself in hotspots across the country, such as the Upper Nile, Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, and the areas adjacent to Abyei, as well as through the legacy of the conflict in Tambura and the cattle-related violence in the Equatorias. All those conflicts increasingly present

an ethnic or tribal dimension, and as President Kiir Mayardit noted in his New Year's address, they threaten to unravel the hard-won peace gains achieved to date. We have been shocked at the recent cycle of revenge killings in Kajo Keij and elsewhere, the unacceptable practice of the abduction of women and children, and the use of gender-based violence as a weapon of war.

The sixth challenge that South Sudan must face down is the economic and humanitarian situation in South Sudan caused primarily by climate shocks and conflict. This year, it is estimated that more than two thirds of the population, including refugees, will need humanitarian and protection assistance — an increase of half a million people compared to last year. In December 2022, the humanitarian community in South Sudan released the humanitarian response plan for 2023, which requires funding in the amount of \$1.7 billion dollars in order to reach 6.8 million of the most vulnerable people with urgent, vital support. Sadly, the plan is only 3 per cent supported, as our colleagues in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will confirm in their briefing. The efforts of humanitarians to reach affected people with life-saving support are continuously hampered by insecurity, criminality, operational interference and attacks against humanitarian personnel and assets. From our vantage point, all those priorities are mutually reinforcing.

Undoubtedly, South Sudan is challenged by the need to secure the necessary financing for implementing the peace agreement. I have conveyed to senior Government officials that the international community would likely be more forthcoming in assisting South Sudan were it to demonstrate political will, demonstrable progress in the implementation of the Agreement and a visible contribution of its own resources to that task. Against that backdrop, UNMISS is following the recent developments relating to the removal of the Minister of Defence and Veterans' Affairs. We call on the parties to exercise restraint and engage in a collegial spirit in order to resolve such sensitive national issues.

In the most recent mandate cycle, UNMISS released seven public human rights reports, including a special report on Tambura and southern Unity prepared jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Those reports provide recommendations to the parties, authorities and other stakeholders for improving the overall environment of justice, accountability and reconciliation. In that context, UNMISS is of the view that the four pillars

of our mandate remain valid and that the three-year strategic vision has given us a solid foundation to move ahead. I affirm that the protection of civilians is the heartbeat of that Mission, alongside the women and peace and security agenda. Those two priorities constitute the common cross-cutting elements of all our tasks.

We take seriously our responsibility to continuously interrogate whether we are fit for purpose. With the upcoming electoral cycle and the heightened political and security tensions that will accompany it, we are considering whether there is a case for strengthening our uniformed deployment, although it is well within our authorized ceiling. After conducting an internal review, I have now requested Headquarters to carry out a capability study to assess our capacity to adequately protect civilians and support the implementation of the peace agreement. The principle of partnerships underpins our strategic vision to prevent a return to civil war and build durable peace. We value the support and engagement of the troika, the European Union, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, as well as the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. UNMISS engages continuously with the neighbours of South Sudan, most recently Kenya, with regard to the obligation to support the South Sudanese in their transition. The recent visit of the African Union Peace and Security Council is a demonstration of its consistent effort to deepen the continent's capacity to leverage helpful outcomes in South Sudan.

The leaders of South Sudan now face a stark choice: they can embark upon a road of mutual cooperation and reconciliation in the urgent implementation of their peace agreement, or they can take a low road that privileges self-interest and conflict over nation-building. There is still sufficient time to achieve the ideals, goals and timelines as set out in the peace agreement. We would want to believe that the South Sudanese would make the most of this fast-closing opportunity.

The President: I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Talahma.

Mr. Talahma: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in South Sudan.

Since we briefed the Council in June last year (see S/PV.9067), the humanitarian situation has worsened. Violence, displacement, hunger, climate-related

shocks and public-health challenges continue to drive humanitarian needs, as already highlighted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. This year, a record 9.4 million people, which is actually 76 per cent of the country's population, including 350,000 refugees, may need humanitarian assistance, which is an increase of 5 per cent since last year.

The latest food-security assessment projects that an estimated 7.8 million people will face crisis levels of acute food insecurity during the April to July lean season, with 43,000 people in Jonglei and Unity states likely to be in catastrophic or famine conditions known as Integrated Phase Classification level 5. An estimated 1.4 million children under the age of five are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition. More than 675,000 pregnant and lactating women are expected to be at risk of acute malnutrition. These numbers of malnourished and severely food-insecure people have reached a record high, surpassing what was seen during the conflict in 2013 and 2016.

Violence continued to be one of the many drivers of displacement and food insecurity, with incidents of armed conflict and intercommunal violence recorded across the country. In 2022, thousands of people were newly displaced, of whom 70 per cent were children and women, as highlighted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. During the last quarter of 2022, conflict in northern Jonglei and Upper Nile states caused major displacement, cutting people off from essential services and resulting in serious violations against women and children, in particular violations linked to gender-based violence.

Climate change has further driven humanitarian needs. Last year, the country experienced a fourth consecutive year of intense flooding. Over a million people were affected as water swept homes and livestock away, flooded farmlands and submerged water resources, all of which further exaggerated the already dire food-insecurity situation. Early action is vital to intervene ahead of predicted shocks to safeguard lives and assets. For example, in the capital of Unity state, flood waters did not recede, leaving its population, including people in the largest camp for internal displaced persons, on an island protected only by dikes. Severe flooding impacts were lessened by humanitarians collaborating with the Government and other actors to reinforce fragile dikes, averting a humanitarian catastrophe.

The early release of funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund in May 2022 further supported early action. As a humanitarian community, we commit to protecting more lives and livelihoods throughout by expanding early-action measures.

Extended and repeated displacement is deepening vulnerability. Over 2.2 million people remain internally displaced — some since 2013, that is, for almost 10 years. Over 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees live in neighbouring countries.

Sustainable solutions are needed for affected people to return, integrate or move to another location, which is a determination they make for themselves. There are already many good examples of places to go, such as the Western Bahr El Ghazal, where the governor and her team devised a four-year strategic development plan to support conflict- and disaster-affected communities, in alignment with the Government's strategic development plan.

The launch of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and the selection of South Sudan as a pilot country also presents an opportunity to reinforce sustainable-solution mechanisms for displaced people. Allow me to extend my deep appreciation to the humanitarian partners who are working in extremely difficult environments and who have shown an unwavering commitment to staying and delivering, as pointed out by the Special Representative.

South Sudan remains one of the most dangerous places for aid workers. Sadly, in January this year, three aid workers were killed in the line of duty. Nine lost their lives in 2022, during the escalation of intercommunal violence in different areas; these casualties came mostly from the non-governmental organizations. Yet despite these challenges, humanitarian partners reached nearly 5 million people with assistance and services in 2022. Over 4 million people received food assistance and livelihood support.

Together we need to do more in 2023. This year, the humanitarian response plan requires the number of people being assisted to go from 1.7 million of the most vulnerable people to 6.8 million. To date, the response, as indicated by the Special Representative, is only 3.5 per cent funded.

Let me conclude by reiterating three key messages. First and foremost, we urge all actors to ensure the de-escalation of violence and uphold their commitment to protecting civilian and civilian assets. We emphasize the importance of providing safe and unhindered access so that people in need can be reached and helped.

Secondly, international support for South Sudan needs a strong peace and humanitarian and development cooperation if it is to address the drivers of the protracted crisis and the multiplicity of people's needs. To this end, I am pleased to note the recent strengthening of the Office of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator through the establishment of the integrated office to support the role of the triple hat in cross-pillar cooperation and advancing joint peace, development and humanitarian outcomes. That will bring greater alignment and avoid more silos.

Thirdly, the CERF and the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund continue to play an important role. In 2022, the Emergency Relief Coordinator approved \$54 million through the CERF for South Sudan, which makes it the second-largest recipient globally. We would like to reiterate our call for the Council's continuing general support for the humanitarian operation in South Sudan through the provision of flexible, unearmarked and early funding to scale.

The President: I thank Mr. Talahma for his briefing.

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

Mr. Wood (United States of America): First, I would like to congratulate Malta on its successful presidency last month, and we wish Mozambique the best of luck with the beginning of their presidency of the Council this month.

Secondly, we thank Special Representative Haysom for his thoughtful briefing today. I would also like to thank Mr. Talahma for his insights on the evolving situation in South Sudan.

The United States remains greatly appreciative of the leadership of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the people of UNMISS, the troop- and police-contributing countries and humanitarian partners who serve to protect civilians in South Sudan and mitigate conflict in many volatile areas.

We are gravely alarmed at the rise, during the reporting period, of violence against civilians in South Sudan, where killings of civilians increased by 79 per cent, civilians harmed increased by 87 per cent, abductions of women and children increased by 464 per cent and conflict-related sexual violence increased by 360 per cent, compared to last year, according to a recent UNMISS report. We reiterate our view that South Sudan's transitional leaders bear responsibility to end subnational violence against its people and hold perpetrators accountable. We remind the transitional Government of South Sudan that it has not upheld its primary responsibility to protect the civilians of South Sudan. If the transitional Government wishes to achieve a successful transition to a permanent Government, then it is imperative that it take responsibility to protect civilians and create a secure and stable electoral environment.

We are encouraged to hear that impediments to the Mission's freedom of movement have been reduced. We note that the freedom of movement of UNMISS, in line with its mandate, is critical for the Mission to implement its mandated tasks. We urge UNMISS to become more proactive in implementing its protection-of-civilians mandate and deploy peacekeepers to areas of heightened violence — irrespective of approval of the local or national authorities — where civilians are at the greatest risk of physical violence, now that movement restrictions have improved. We also stress that South Sudan's transitional leaders must deliver the results to which they committed in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and address immediate issues such as the ongoing violence in Upper Nile state and the dire humanitarian situation.

Turning to the humanitarian situation, we strongly call on the transitional Government of South Sudan to facilitate unhindered access throughout the country, including access along the Nile River corridor to UNMISS peacekeepers, personnel and humanitarian partners, to adequately respond to outbreaks of subnational violence and provide life-saving aid to the South Sudanese people.

This will be a critical year for South Sudanese leaders to uphold their commitments on implementing key benchmarks of the peace agreement. We recognize the Government's request for Mission support for elections, but underscore that for elections to be free and fair, transitional leaders must first expand civic

space and create conditions under which all political parties, civil society, internally displaced persons and South Sudanese citizens, including women, youth and displaced persons, will have full, equal and meaningful inclusion in the peace process that will shape South Sudan's future. We call upon the transitional Government to act now to show the political will to create such conditions, including by ensuring that South Sudanese men and women can freely express their political views without fear of arrest.

The last point I would like to express is our deep concern about the humanitarian crisis. The transitional Government reported \$1.6 billion in oil revenue last year, yet continues to fail to allocate those resources to address the humanitarian needs of its population. We urgently call on South Sudanese officials to dedicate more of its oil revenue to addressing the crisis and to allow and facilitate the safe access and delivery of humanitarian assistance in South Sudan.

We also condemn the killings of five humanitarian aid workers since the beginning of the year and call on the Government to fully support humanitarian access and protect humanitarian aid personnel working tirelessly to deliver aid to South Sudanese people. The United States remains committed to the cause of peace and to the people of South Sudan.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I, too, wish to begin by thanking Malta for its excellent work last month and wishing Mozambique every success this month.

I thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and Mr. Tareq Talahma, Acting Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings. I also acknowledge the presence of the Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of South Sudan to the United Nations at this meeting.

I would like to start by highlighting the work of UNMISS in supporting the transitional national authorities in the implementation of the peace process and the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. We encourage the Government to continue those efforts in the next phase of political transition towards national reconciliation.

Ecuador hopes that these, the first elections in the history of South Sudan, will take place freely, peacefully and without further delays. It is a critical phase that requires a process with broad participation, especially of women and youth, whose contribution is and will be essential in strengthening the social fabric of the country. In that regard, we encourage the Government to intensify its efforts to reach the minimum quota of 35 per cent of women in the transitional institutions and executive bodies.

The holding in Juba of the first International Conference on Women's Transformational Leadership two weeks ago should be a point of reflection and analysis. The recommendations emanating from that important event should be internalized in a cross-cutting manner in the peace and development agenda of South Sudan.

My delegation is concerned about the complexity of the political, humanitarian, security and development challenges facing the nation.

On the political front, we must recognize the progress made by the Government towards a rule of law that will allow the electoral process to take place. However, there are concerns about harassment, intimidation and obstacles to freedom of expression and journalistic practice, as well as the intimidation of civil society. It is paramount that the Government create a safe and enabling environment free from reprisals.

My delegation condemns sexual violence and abuse, abductions, extrajudicial killings, the recruitment of children and young people, killings and maiming, which, according to the most recent reports of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (S/2023/135) and on children and armed conflict (S/2022/493), are even committed by security forces. Those crimes, which mainly affect women, youth and children, cannot go unpunished. Addressing the outstanding issues, in particular the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, will advance the fight against impunity in the country.

The Council should expand its efforts to call on the Government of South Sudan to comply with its obligations under international law, including those relating to the protection of children. That country must comply with the United Nations 2020 Comprehensive Action Plan to End and Prevent all Grave Violations against Children in order to strengthen the legal framework for the protection of children's rights.

We are pleased to learn about the involvement of the Peacebuilding Commission in the process of peacebuilding in South Sudan through institution-building and governance. We are convinced that it is the correct tool for strengthening such initiatives, with a view to supporting internal processes that will sustain peace in the long term.

In addition, we express our solidarity with the people of South Sudan for the grave humanitarian situation they are facing. The Government must provide and facilitate safe access and protection for humanitarian workers.

Finally, I would also like to reiterate Ecuador's commitment to UNMISS, to which it contributes personnel as part of its support to the Organization in pursuit of sustainable and lasting peace process solutions. That is why I also call on the Organization to provide sufficient resources for the fulfilment of the UNMISS mandate.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I congratulate the Republic of Mozambique on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and wish His Excellency the Ambassador and his team success in leading the work of the Council. The United Arab Emirates will provide them with full support. I also thank Malta for its outstanding presidency of the Council's work last month and Special Representative Haysom and Mr. Talahma for their comprehensive briefings and welcome the participation of the representative of South Sudan in our meeting today.

During the recent visit to South Sudan, His Holiness Pope Francis delivered a message of hope and optimism to the South Sudanese people about the prospect of peacebuilding and putting the country on the path of security and stability. He called on all actors to achieve reconciliation, turn the page on disagreement and reject hatred. The Council's meeting today represents an important opportunity to build on that momentum by sending a similar message emphasizing the need to continue to work towards implementing the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

For those peace endeavours to be successful, the concerning security situation in the country and its implications for the humanitarian situation must be addressed. In that regard, we condemn acts of violence such as the kidnapping of women, children and other civilians, and the acts of violence committed against humanitarian workers.

The level of violence has decreased since the beginning of this year, compared to the last quarter of the past year, owing to strengthened security procedures undertaken by South Sudan and an increase in patrols by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). However, the main challenge today is to find ways to end the vicious cycle of violence and address its root causes. That requires a comprehensive approach and prioritizing peaceful solutions and dialogue, coupled with serious steps in the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In that regard, we commend the efforts and initiatives of UNMISS to encourage inter-communal dialogue and stress the importance of taking actual steps to preserve the results of those initiatives. We also stress that peace, stability and development cannot be maintained in an environment of violence stemming from ethnic affiliation and competition for resources. The national interest must be placed above any other considerations.

We also encourage building on what has been achieved in the first phase of the unification of forces by undertaking the necessary security reforms and building the security capacity of South Sudan to enable it to play its role in building peace in the country.

On the political front, we hope that South Sudan takes practical steps to implement recently adopted legislation, including the constitution-making process bill, which will contribute to building on recent hard-won gains. We hope that the recently resumed Rome peace talks will help to find solutions to the existing challenges by aligning the views of — and building trust among — the various stakeholders.

We emphasize in that regard the important role of regional and international organizations in developing appropriate mechanisms to support South Sudan, including by providing support to the electoral preparations process, as South Sudan recently requested.

In the light of the recent visit of the African Union Peace and Security Council to South Sudan, we hope that the results of that visit and the continued support of regional leadership to the country will help South Sudan to complete its transition period.

We also affirm the importance of involving the youth and ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political discussion, as it is important for the success of the transitional period. In that regard, we welcome the Peacebuilding Commission's recent recommendations on that matter, as well as

the convening of the first International Conference on Women's Transformational Leadership in Juba last month, with the participation of a number of women leaders. It is essential to fully invest in women's expertise for achieving peace.

In conclusion, we need to improve our understanding of the linkages between climate and security and to identify the tools available to address them. My country is keen to discuss that in the various relevant forums, whether as co-Chair of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security, as the incoming President of the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or in the context of the ongoing negotiations to renew the mandate of UNMISS. We also need to work on ways to mitigate the damage of climate change and find suitable energy solutions, including through the work of UNMISS, which has made commendable progress in the transition to renewable energy sources. The Mission will therefore leave an important legacy for those communities after its eventual exit from the country.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate Malta on its successful presidency of the Security Council in February. I express our full support to you, Mr. President, during your presidency this month.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Haysom, and the Acting Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Talahma, for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of the representative of South Sudan at this meeting.

We thank the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and its staff for their tireless efforts for lasting peace in the country.

With the start of the implementation of the road map, South Sudan has entered a decisive phase of the transition. The expectations of the population must not be disappointed. Two key milestones must be reached: the drafting of the constitution and the first electoral process since the country's independence. Switzerland reiterates its full support for the people and the transitional Government of South Sudan in those important efforts.

I would like to highlight three aspects that are essential for the peace process to move forward in this critical phase.

First, the adoption of several important laws, including the law on the constitution-making process, paves the way for the next steps in the constitutional process. We congratulate the Government on that, and we welcome its request for UNMISS to support the electoral process. Nevertheless, in order to move forward politically, we encourage the parties to adhere to the deadlines set out in the road map, establish the institutions for which it provides and protect a free political and civic space by ensuring freedom of expression, of assembly and of the press. Developing a new constitution means a transformation of the South Sudanese social contract. It must be done in an inclusive manner by taking into account the voices of all, in particular women, as recently reaffirmed in Juba at the International Conference on Women's Transformational Leadership.

Secondly, the resumption of armed conflict and the escalation of violence at the subnational level in the Upper Nile, Jonglei and Equatoria states and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area are alarming. We call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law. We condemn all human rights violations and abuses, in particular sexual violence and those committed against children, which are unacceptable. We reiterate that the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians lies with the Government. In order to reduce violence and strengthen peaceful coexistence, intercommunal dialogues, supported by UNMISS, are essential. In recent years, Switzerland has worked with the South Sudan Council of Churches to support such dialogues, in particular in Tambura, Western Equatoria.

Thirdly, the country is facing the worst humanitarian crisis since independence. We are deeply concerned about the level of human suffering. The crisis is compounded by the effects of climate change, which exacerbate the consequences of the conflict. Ninety-five per cent of the population depends on climate-sensitive livelihoods. Massive flooding in much of the country — the situation in Bentiu being a case in point — is exacerbating food insecurity and fuelling subnational violence, particularly in view of prolonged displacement and transhumance. We encourage the Government, with the support of UNMISS, to address those challenges, including through joint climate-sensitive assessments and projects.

The next few months will require all actors at the local, national, regional and international levels to work together to move the transition forward. We therefore call for supporting South Sudan in its efforts to carry out those measures and include the whole civilian population in all its diversity. The renewal of the UNMISS mandate is under way. The strategic vision and the four pillars of the mandate remain relevant. Switzerland is committed to supporting a mandate that is up to the task of overcoming the challenges that the peace process entails. I want to reiterate our full support to the Special Representative and the Mission in carrying out its mandate.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I would like to begin by congratulating Mozambique on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I thank Mr. Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and Mr. Talahma, Acting Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to this meeting.

The implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and the peace process remains central to South Sudan's trajectory. Malta is strongly committed to ensuring that the road map leads towards the conclusion of the transitional period without any additional delays. We welcome the progress made on the constitutional process bill and on the preparations for holding national elections in 2024, as well as the recent graduation of the unified forces, for which we encourage the further harmonization of ranks. In order to ensure the most effective and sustained form of lasting peace, we need consolidated political will and commitment, which should be demonstrated as quickly as possible by ensuring that all of the parties to the peace agreement, along with South Sudan's leadership, come together to address any deficiencies that might jeopardize its implementation. We call for accelerating that process so that it can meet its intended deadline.

Over the past two years, the Council has been briefed by women from civil society in South Sudan six times. We share their frustration with the pace of reform, the unmet quotas for women's political participation and the high level of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. We urge South Sudan

to ensure that civil-society organizations, including those for women and young people, are safe and respected and that their freedom remains unhindered. In that context, we welcomed the holding in Juba last month of the International Conference on Women's Transformational Leadership.

Malta is deeply alarmed by the security situation, as civilians continue to bear the brunt of the violence. Three humanitarian workers have also been killed on duty this year alone. We emphasize that humanitarian aid workers provide essential assistance to those who need it most, and their safety and security must be ensured at all times. We strongly condemn all killings, the destruction of livelihoods, the abduction of women and children and sexual and gender-based violence, and we call for justice and accountability in that regard. We welcomed the creation in 2020 of the country's first Gender-Based Violence and Juvenile Court in an effort to end impunity for such crimes. We also call for the immediate implementation of the joint Action Plan for the Armed Forces and Police on Addressing Conflict-related Sexual Violence in South Sudan.

We are deeply concerned about the fact that many acts of violence are committed by young people. We welcome the ongoing efforts supported by UNMISS aimed at fostering a transformative, cohesive social approach to the youth of South Sudan and fostering dialogue with them. We are very disturbed about the possibility that as many as 77 verified grave violations have been committed against children. We commend UNMISS for raising awareness about child protection and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, for her invaluable work in the area.

The worsening effects of climate change in South Sudan are clear. An unprecedented four-year period of flooding has submerged large swathes of the country, destroying crops, displacing hundreds of thousands of people and affecting millions, especially women and girls. We are concerned about the fact that the climate-induced loss and forced migration of livestock have become major drivers of intercommunal conflict, and we support UNMISS's call for facilitating dialogue and peaceful coexistence between farmers and pastoralists. With 90 per cent of the population dependent on climate-sensitive livelihoods and a staggering eight of 10 states suffering from the ongoing flooding, the South Sudanese people are acutely vulnerable to climate- and conflict-induced food and

water insecurity. We will continue to support key European Union-funded humanitarian projects in order to respond to the situation.

In conclusion, Malta reiterates its continued support for South Sudan and its people, and we look forward to the renewal of the UNMISS mandate later this month. A peaceful and prosperous future requires a committed presence at all levels, without which the transition will falter. By building trust and consolidating the progress made, the people of South Sudan will be one step closer to realizing their aspirations.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Let me start by thanking Malta for its work as President of the Security Council during February and congratulating Mozambique on its assumption of the presidency for the month of March. Brazil knows that we are in firm and good hands. I thank Special Representative Haysom and Acting Director Talahma for their informative briefings and welcome the delegation of South Sudan to this meeting. I also want to express our appreciation for the work of all the military, police and civilian personnel who make up the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and especially of the troop- and police-contributing countries.

Brazil is proud to be part of UNMISS, a peacekeeping operation that has made critical contributions to South Sudan for almost as long as the country has been independent. We acknowledge the significant challenges that UNMISS and particularly South Sudan face. We have noted South Sudan's request to the United Nations for assistance in preparing and conducting the 2024 elections. Considering the considerable experience of the personnel who serve within the United Nations, we are confident that UNMISS will be able to provide valuable skills and technical support that will meet the country's logistical needs. At the same time, we acknowledge that it is the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity and all the major South Sudanese stakeholders who should be taking the most important steps to ensure an environment conducive to the smooth progress of the electoral process.

We appreciate South Sudan's growing cooperation with the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). We believe that a myriad of local South Sudanese projects, initiatives and leaders will benefit from a deeper connection with the PBC. The Peacebuilding Fund already supports essential projects in the country. In

making use of the unique convening power that the PBC has to offer, it will be critical for the transitional Government and the representatives of civil society to engage with peacebuilding principles on a larger scale. South Sudan can count on Brazil's support for its increasing involvement with the PBC.

We cannot ignore the severe humanitarian crisis that millions of South Sudanese people are facing. We have heard those awful statistics again today, and we call on the international community to step up its efforts to assist the country. Food insecurity should not be a challenge anywhere for anyone, let alone for one of the world's youngest populations.

We regret that South Sudan remains among the most dangerous places to be a humanitarian worker. We deplore the attacks that have killed humanitarian workers in the line of duty and express our condolences to their families and loved ones. Creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance is one of the priorities of the UNMISS mandate. We expect that pillar of the UNMISS mandate to be implemented in safer conditions, especially if local authorities bring to justice the perpetrators of acts against humanitarian agents. We also hope that humanitarian agencies and workers can soon enjoy unhindered access, within the Nile corridor, in order to provide goods and services to the most vulnerable people in South Sudan.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): We join other colleagues in commending the successful presidency of Malta and congratulate Mozambique on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Mr. Nicholas Haysom, and Acting Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Tareq Talahma, for their insightful briefings.

Japan takes note of the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/135) on the situation in South Sudan, which describes the progress and challenges of South Sudan and highlights the relevance of the UNMISS mandate. Japan would like to thank all UNMISS personnel for their service in protecting civilians and mitigating violence in challenging environments. As one of the troop-contributing countries, we are committed to continuing the deployment of UNMISS.

I would like to make the following points concerning the long-term stability and security of South Sudan, which is closely linked to the UNMISS mandate.

First, it remains crucial to implement the outstanding elements of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. In particular, they should be implemented in line with the timelines established in its road map, as the basis for sustained peace in South Sudan. We commend the progress made in the implementation of a number of aspects of the Revitalized Agreement, including the building of the necessary unified forces and the preparations under way on key draft legislation, in particular with respect to the constitution-making process. We encourage the transitional Government of South Sudan to implement the road map inclusively and ensure the full participation of women and young people in the process. We would like to note that freedom of speech is one of the key ingredients to ensure that the process can be truly successful. We also urge UNMISS to prioritize its efforts in that regard.

On the other hand, the level of violence and the human rights violations and abuses are matters of grave concern, in particular the widespread availability of arms in the country. We need to ensure that the arms embargo in place is properly observed. We urge the South Sudanese authorities to make further efforts to meet the benchmarks so that the embargo can be lifted as soon as possible. All sexual and gender-based violence and the recruitment and use of children by armed forces must be stopped. The South Sudanese authorities need to take the necessary steps to combat the drivers of conflict and insecurity. In that regard, we commend the humanitarian players, who are doing a remarkable job. We call on all actors to ensure full and unimpeded humanitarian access and to protect humanitarian workers and resources from attacks, threats and looting.

South Sudan faces complex political, security, humanitarian and development challenges. The Council needs to pay close attention to the effects of climate change, food insecurity and the related displacement, to name only a few of those challenges. Japan emphasizes the need to adopt a cross-pillar peacebuilding approach to address the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which requires partnership with a variety of stakeholders, such as civil society, regional organizations, international financial institutions and international partners, while ensuring full respect for national ownership.

In addition, continued efforts are important for building effective, accountable, inclusive and resilient institutions at all levels. It is critical for institutions to be able to provide security for civilians and deliver basic public services so that they can foster trust with the authorities. For the success of the democratic transition, the protection of civic space for every South Sudanese citizen is also crucial. South Sudan needs international support more than ever before. Japan welcomes the Peacebuilding Commission's increasing engagement with the country, as demonstrated by the two meetings held by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in the past six months. Japan also thanks the PBC for its written advice. Interaction between the Security Council and the PBC on issues of common interest should be further enhanced.

In conclusion, Japan stands by the Government and the people of South Sudan in their efforts to achieve a peaceful and prosperous nation through the steady implementation of the Revitalized Agreement, and it strongly supports UNMISS and humanitarian players in that regard. Japan expresses its readiness to work constructively towards the renewal of the UNMISS mandate.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the start of Mozambique's presidency of the Security Council and wish your delegation every success. I would also like to thank Malta for leading the Council's work in February.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Nicholas Haysom, and the representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Tareq Talahma, for their briefings. We have taken a close look at the most recent quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the situation in South Sudan (S/2023/135), and we also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of South Sudan in today's meeting.

We are closely following developments in South Sudan. In recent months, the authorities of that young African State have made progress in implementing their commitments under the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The Parliament is fully operational, and the National Human Rights Council has been established. Several important laws have been enacted, including a constitution-making law. Preparations for

general elections to be held in December 2024 are under way. However, it is a matter of concern that the above-mentioned activities are lagging behind the previously agreed timetable. We believe that the decision to extend the transitional period until February 2025 is the right one under the current circumstances. The road map adopted in that connection must be rigorously implemented, and all the structures operating within the framework of the peace agreement must be provided with the necessary financing.

We continue to view as a priority the targeted work of the South Sudanese authorities to form a unified armed force of South Sudan as a guarantor for the further advancement of the peace process and the successful holding of the general elections planned for the end of 2024. We note the completion of the first phase of establishing the unified army. However, owing to several unresolved differences, including with respect to the deployment plan and the command structure, the launch of the second phase remains stalled. Against the background of a general improvement in the country's macroeconomic indicators, we are concerned about the reports of continuing outbreaks of violence in some peripheral areas of the country, localized fighting and intercommunal armed conflicts, which lead to new flows of refugees and displaced civilians. We firmly condemn all violations of the peace agreement and acts of violence against civilians, including humanitarian workers. We note the steps taken by the Government in response.

We commend the mediation efforts of the African Union and the member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. We welcome the resumption of work by the Community of Sant'Egidio. We note in particular the effective work of the peacekeeping mission, headed by Mr. Haysom. We call on all non-signatories to the Revitalized Agreement to join the peace process.

At the end of January, the United Nations received a request from South Sudan for assistance in holding elections. We hope that the Blue Helmets will provide the necessary assistance without any preconditions, in accordance with previous decisions of the Security Council. In general, we urge UNMISS to pay more attention to stabilizing the security situation and assisting the South Sudanese authorities in the timely implementation of the peace agreement and the road map adopted in August 2022.

In terms of the process of reaching agreement on a draft resolution on the annual extension of the Mission's mandate, we believe it is important to develop a balanced text that reflects the positions of all members of the Council and, most important, meets the aspirations of the South Sudanese people.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me join others in congratulating Malta on its successful presidency in February and wishing you, Sir, the best for yours in March. My thanks also go to Special Representative Haysom and Mr. Talahma for their briefings, as well as to the Peacebuilding Commission for the additional material provided. I welcome the presence of the representative of South Sudan at our meeting today.

First, I would like to echo the messages delivered by the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland during their historic visit to South Sudan. The United Kingdom endorses their calls to the Government of South Sudan to end the violence and corruption and deliver basic services for the South Sudanese people. Recent legislative steps, such as the progress on the constitution-making process bill and the public procurement and disposal of assets authority, are welcome. The key is now to implement such laws. We also call on the Government to take immediate steps to reconstitute the Political Parties Council and adopt the National Elections Act, among other urgent tasks. We echo Special Representative Haysom's message that 2023 has to be the year in which the South Sudanese Government delivers for its people.

Secondly, I would like to note our concerns about the escalation of subnational conflict across South Sudan. The church leaders were clear that the failure to implement the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is driving subnational conflict and humanitarian suffering. Violence has caused significant loss of life, displaced thousands of civilians and led to large-scale abductions of women and children. The United Kingdom commends the continued efforts of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to protect civilians in such challenging circumstances. We are therefore deeply concerned about the reports of the intimidation of United Nations peacekeepers and UNMISS personnel by armed groups across the country. We call on the South Sudanese authorities to respect the status of forces agreement, and where necessary to see that thorough investigations take place to ensure accountability.

Thirdly, we reiterate our call for the South Sudanese Government to remove all constraints on humanitarian access and to act immediately to address the ongoing theft of humanitarian resources. It is imperative to ensure that safe, unimpeded help can reach the most vulnerable, including those along the River Nile.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom remains committed to the South Sudanese people's request for peace, prosperity and democracy. The leadership must now deliver real change to that end.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating Malta on its successful presidency in February and in wishing you, Sir, every success in your presidency this month. You can count on our full support. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, and Mr. Tareq Talahma for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the representative of South Sudan in this meeting. I would like to highlight four points.

First, we recognize that progress has been achieved in the implementation of the peace process over the course of the past year. The launch of the constitution-making process, the agreement on the unified command of the armed forces and the graduation of the first batch of the necessary unified forces are significant steps forward. We welcome in particular the recent signing of several equally important conventions related to human rights and disarmament.

Secondly, it will be essential to accelerate the implementation of the road map in order to make the prospect of holding elections in December 2024 a credible one. The South Sudanese authorities have now requested assistance from the United Nations in preparing for the elections, which is a useful clarification. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan is mandated to provide such assistance, but as we know, the impetus must come from the leadership. We encourage them to earmark the necessary budgetary resources for holding the elections, defining their legislative and constitutional framework and establishing the National Elections Commission and the Political Parties Council. It is also vital to create conditions that promote the full participation of civil society, especially women and young people.

There is also an urgent need to stabilize the security situation in the country, given that the electoral context risks stoking new tensions. The priority here is to

continue the integration of combatants and to properly equip, pay and deploy those forces. Ongoing efforts must be accelerated both to narrow the remit of the various security forces and to reduce their numbers. We also call on the authorities and other actors in the region to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the violence proliferating in several areas of South Sudan.

The end of the transition cannot be an end in itself. The elections will restore peace and stability in South Sudan only if they are preceded by efforts to guarantee their legitimacy, strengthen institutions and the rule of law and reduce violence. Any further delay in undertaking those tasks will run the risk of fuelling disillusionment.

Finally, we are counting on the support of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the countries of the region to bolster the efforts of the United Nations during such a critical time for South Sudan.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Let me begin by congratulating Mozambique on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for March. I am confident that under your leadership, Sir, the work of the Security Council this month will be a success. I also congratulate Malta on its excellent work last month. I thank Special Representative Haysom and Acting Director Talahma for their briefings and welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of South Sudan at today's meeting.

This year will be a crucial one for South Sudan as it implements the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and advances the political transition. We welcome its enactment of key legislation, including the constitution-making process bill, as well as the graduation of the first batch of the necessary unified forces and the steady progress achieved in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement. We also welcome South Sudan's ratification of four international conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which testifies to the Government's commitment to civil rights. These efforts are vital to improving South Sudan's national governance structure and to ensuring a smooth electoral process. We encourage all parties in South Sudan to continue to remain politically engaged and to maintain a greater sense of urgency in the

implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and the benchmarks set out in the road map, in order to ensure that the country is fully prepared for a smooth political transition, including the holding of elections.

At this critical juncture, the international community should remain patient, provide South Sudan with greater support and encouragement, and take practical action to assist the country in resolving any difficulties related to the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and the preparations for elections. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the countries of the region have played an important role in the South Sudanese peace process. We note that the South Sudanese Government has submitted a request to the United Nations for electoral assistance, and we look forward to a clearer and more targeted electoral support programme to be agreed on between UNMISS and the Government of South Sudan. We also call on the international community to provide political, technical and logistical support to the IGAD-supported reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism in order to ensure their continued smooth functioning.

Recently, we have seen an escalation of violence across many regions in South Sudan, including in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Equatoria states. The security and humanitarian situation there is worrisome. We call on all the parties concerned to immediately cease the hostilities and settle their differences through dialogue and negotiations. The Government's deployment of security forces in the Nile corridor has helped to stabilize the local situation, fully demonstrating that the country's security must be maintained by its Government. The international community should focus on assisting South Sudan in its efforts to accelerate security sector reform, advance the deployment of the unified forces and implement the mandate on security arrangements pursuant to chapter II of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, among other things.

The Council's sanctions on South Sudan have restricted the Government's security capacity to protect civilians and must be lifted immediately.

UNMISS has made important contributions to peace and stability in South Sudan. As one of the main troop-contributing countries to UNMISS, China stands

ready to work with fellow troop- and police-contributing countries to continue our unremitting efforts to advance the peace process in South Sudan. It is worth noting that, in recent years, some aspects of the UMMISS mandate have expanded to an extent that clearly goes beyond the competence of a peacekeeping mission, which could undermine the trust between the Mission and the host Government. We hope that the Security Council will concentrate on the core mandates of peacekeeping operations when discussing the draft resolution on the renewal of the UNMISS mandate, abide by the three principles of peacekeeping and set out realistic arrangements in the face of the most pressing tasks in South Sudan.

China is a steadfast supporter of the peace process in South Sudan. We attach great importance to addressing the economic, social and humanitarian situation in the country. In providing assistance to and cooperating with South Sudan, we have always adhered to a people-oriented approach and set great store in livelihood-related projects that benefit the local people. We have just signed a new round of agreements with South Sudan on a number of well-drilling and water-supply projects, which we expect will provide improved water-supply facilities for local residents, leading to a better quality of life and increased agricultural production.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): Let me begin by joining others in congratulating Malta on its successful presidency of the Security Council in February and by wishing you, Mr. President, all the best in the month of March.

Returning to the topic of discussion, I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom and Mr. Talahma for their updates. My thanks also go to the Peacebuilding Commission for its information. I also welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of South Sudan at today's meeting.

As we heard, the situation in South Sudan remains complex and is challenged by humanitarian needs, insecurity, climate change and forced displacement. I will briefly touch on those issues.

First, the timely implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and the road map remains crucial during the extension of the transition period. It is therefore imperative that South Sudan leaders respect the Agreement, signed with all parties, and redouble

their efforts to implement the outstanding benchmarks, which are long overdue. The Government's request for assistance from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for the preparation of elections is welcome, but the parties must create conditions that are conducive to inclusive and credible elections, with broad political consensus and the inclusion of women, young people and civil society.

Secondly, we are deeply concerned about the security situation and the increased subnational violence, which have provoked the displacement of thousands of civilians, and we urge the Government to guarantee unhindered access for UNMISS. The alarming increase of conflict-related sexual violence and the large-scale abductions of women and children clearly indicate a need for the protection of civilians to remain a key priority for the Government and the Mission. Albania strongly condemns the violence and calls on the Government to take all action necessary to tackle human rights violations and hold the perpetrators to account. We welcome the Government's deployment of troops to de-escalate tensions. However, further efforts must be taken to prevent an escalation of violence and enhance the protection of women and girls, including by making gains on implementing the security arrangements by initiating the second phase of the process and deploying the necessary unified forces, with adequate budgetary and logistical support.

Thirdly, approximately 9.4 million people will require humanitarian or protection needs this year, while at the same time struggling with climate-induced insecurity — that is alarming for a population of 11.5 million people. We urge the Government of South Sudan to fulfil its responsibilities, respond to the situation and ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers as they deliver on those critical needs.

In conclusion, as South Sudan prepares to hold elections, it is clear that much more work lies ahead to ensure the holding of free, fair and credible elections. We look forward to continuing engagement with the Council to ensure that UNMISS is provided with a robust mandate in order to respond to the challenges it faces and ensure the critical protection of civilians. Albania reaffirms its support for the people of South Sudan in their efforts to find lasting peace and develop their country.

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

(spoke in French)

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Gabon, Ghana and my country, Mozambique.

The A3 commends the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the most recent developments on the ground in South Sudan (S/2023/135). We thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and Mr. Tareq Talahma, Acting Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings on the situation on the ground. We also welcome the participation of our brother, His Excellency Mr. Akuei Bona Malwal, Permanent Representative of South Sudan, in today's meeting.

(spoke in English)

The A3 wishes to reiterate its solidarity with the people of South Sudan, whose patience and resilience have been tested and overstretched by political uncertainty, conflict and economic hardship. We remain fully cognizant of their sobering history and unrelenting quest to overcome the formidable security, political and socioeconomic challenges they face. In that regard, our statement will focus on four issues: the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan; the transitional security arrangements; the humanitarian and economic situation; and the activities of UNMISS.

On the political front, we take note of the important progress made by the Government and the people of South Sudan in their efforts to consolidate the State-building process since the country became independent on 9 July 2011. In recognizing those efforts, the A3 is cognizant of the complexities resulting from the process and commends the Government's determination to maintain the Revitalized Agreement. In that context, the A3 welcomes the role played by the trilateral task force, composed of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation

Commission, in enhancing awareness of the road map and the Revitalized Agreement for peace and political stability in South Sudan.

The A3 welcomes and is deeply encouraged by President Salva Kiir Mayardit's appeal to the people of South Sudan to refrain from engaging in violent actions and embrace joint synergies to overcome the country's challenges. We very much welcome the adoption of relevant legislation on the Transitional Constitution and of bills establishing the National Police Service Act and National Prison Service Act. We believe that those important tools will not only consolidate peace and State institutions but will also pave the way for further accelerating steps towards political stability, as well as tackling localized conflicts within communities.

Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique firmly believe that political stability in South Sudan is urgently needed. In that regard, the A3 expresses concern about the deterioration of the current security situation in the country, as it will not contribute to the aim of consolidating the national reconciliation process but will rather only aggravate the current economic and humanitarian challenges confronting South Sudan, the youngest in our community of nations. In that regard, the A3 would like to take this opportunity to urge the South Sudanese people to remain committed to the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement. We encourage the political actors to continue showing leadership and patriotism. They must build on the benefits of Pope Francis's visit to the country from 3 to 5 February, which was aimed at reviving the peace process. We also commend the statements made by the international partners of South Sudan calling for the parties' greater engagement in ending the conflict and restoring peace.

On the humanitarian track, the A3 underlines that South Sudan is facing the worst humanitarian crisis since its independence. Among other factors, the situation is the result of intercommunal clashes and the effects of climate change, particularly four years of unprecedented floods, which have caused massive displacements and crop destruction. The extreme weather conditions are wearing down the resilience of the displaced communities, which have been hit by repeated disasters. We reiterate that the Horn of Africa is bearing the brunt of the consequences of climate change. In our view, South Sudan is a perfect

illustration of the link between security issues and climate change. We therefore call for the enhanced support of the international community.

We commend the efforts of humanitarian workers, especially those working under enormous challenges to bring relief to women, children and other internally displaced people. We therefore strongly condemn attacks on humanitarian workers. We welcome their commitment, despite the security situation in South Sudan, and call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and allow unhindered access for humanitarian organizations. Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique welcome all initiatives from the various sources willing to provide assistance to the people affected, and we urge the competent South Sudanese authorities to maintain their commitment by collaborating with humanitarian workers and securing their working environment.

The A3 believes that the effective implementation of the Revitalized Agreement is a crucial pathway to lasting peace in South Sudan. Most important, the root causes of conflict should be addressed. As the most vulnerable groups in societies facing protracted conflict, women and young people should be a focus of the decision-making process. From the A3's perspective, addressing the need to include young people and women in the peace processes would yield the desired results and improve the cohesion among communities, owing to their influential role in those communities, which can contribute to strengthening the collective responsibility to preserve peace. In that context, the A3 encourages the Government and political and civil-society leaders to promote their participation and build consensus in order to better achieve full implementation of the agreed benchmarks in the political process.

The A3 believes that sustaining the peace process requires paying attention to critical issues. In that connection, we would like to draw the Council's attention to and express serious concern about the limitations and technical, financial and resource challenges facing South Sudan. In a difficult economic context, the financial support of the international community is crucial to the effective implementation of the road map and the Revitalized Agreement. The continued support of the international community will allow South Sudan to carry out the implementation of pending initiatives

related to the creation of the command-and-control structure of the army, redeployment and logistics, and for the country to adequately address the challenges and root causes of the conflict.

The A3 values the training of the necessary unified forces for phase I, which involved about 50,000 trainees. We hope that the process will move to phase II with financial support from the international community.

The A3 once again calls on the South Sudanese parties and the Government to commit the necessary political capital and resources, which they can harness internally, to expediting the implementation of all pending tasks within the agreed timelines. The implementation process must continue to fully represent the spectrum of all South Sudanese populations including all regions of the country, political affiliations, and women, youth and civil society.

Before we conclude, the A3 wishes to convey its deep appreciation to the troop- and police-contributing countries and to UNMISS for their work in South Sudan.

(spoke in French)

We encourage UNMISS to continue to engage in the coordination and implementation of the partnership with all relevant actors, such as the African Union, IGAD, the European Union and the troika — the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway — in support of the Government and the people of South Sudan for a lasting peace. Accordingly, we strongly hope that we, the members of the Security Council, will be able during the negotiations on the renewal of the UNMISS mandate to agree on ways to support the strengthening of South Sudan's logistical, material, financial and judicial capacities for the enhanced protection of civilians.

(spoke in English)

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your delegation for winning the trust of the continent to serve for the next two years on the Security Council and for your presidency of the Council during this month of March. My delegation stands ready to work closely with you, Sir, and to offer its support to you and your team. In addition, allow me to take this opportunity to sincerely

thank the outgoing delegations of Kenya and India for the support and valuable advice they offered my country and our mission over the last two years when they were serving on the Council. We will be forever grateful for the friendship they have extended to the people of South Sudan.

My delegation would like to welcome the briefers before us today. In particular, my delegation appreciates the presence of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom and his delegation, as well as Mr. Talahma from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

My delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council pursuant to resolution 2625 (2022) (S/2023/135).

As we stressed in our previous statement to the Council (see S/PV.9219), it is imperative to note that climate change has resulted in severe implications for many South Sudanese, with livelihoods gravely affected. The nation is currently grappling with an unprecedented combination of floods and droughts, the devastation of fields of crops and of animal husbandry in rural areas. Without prompt action from both the Government and the global community in the coming

months, some regions may face a famine crisis. The indicators show that impending starvation is already visible across the countryside.

Allow me now to address what I would call the elephant in the room. The 24-month extension of the transition period began 10 days ago, marking a new chapter in South Sudan's journey towards lasting peace and stability. However, recent reports indicate that differences have emerged between the signatories of the peace agreement with regard to changes made to the Ministries for Defence and Interior. While this is a concerning development, we believe that it is important to address these issues early on so that the signatories of the agreement are prevented from escalating their differences. We therefore call upon our regional and international partners to step in and help find a swift resolution. We remain hopeful that South Sudan can move forward towards a brighter future and build upon the progress already made towards achieving lasting peace.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.