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Seventy-third year

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New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Adom	(Côte d'Ivoire)
<i>Members:</i>	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Edjang Nnaga
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Albanai
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Hunter

Agenda

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

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 2 September to 30 November 2018) (S/2018/1103)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

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 South Sudan (covering the period from 2 September to 30 November 2018) (S/2018/1103)

The President (*spoke in French*): 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. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Ms. Patten is joining today's meeting via video tele-conference from London.

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/2018/1103, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan, covering the period from 2 September to 30 November.

At today's meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings from Mr. Lacroix, Ms. Patten and Ms. Joanna Wronecka, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Poland, in her capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General's report on South Sudan (S/2018/1103), as well as on the peace process and the situation on the ground.

We are encouraged to report that, since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, there has been a significant improvement in the general security situation in the country and the number of incidents

among signatory parties has decreased. Commanders on the ground have reached out to one another, with and without the facilitation of the United Nations, and confidence-building measures have been initiated. That has led to the reopening of roads, the free movement of civilians, the movement of Government and opposition groups in areas under the other's control and the beginning of the return of some displaced populations to their areas of origin.

In Upper Nile, routes between Malakal and Renk and from Fangak to Tonga have been reopened. According to humanitarian partners in Bunj, Maban county, South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF), formerly the Sudan People's Liberation Army, met with their pro-Machar Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) counterparts in Beneshowa and agreed to work together to ensure the unhindered movement of civilians in their respective areas of control. Similar arrangements were also agreed in a trilateral arrangement with the pro-Lam Akol National Democratic Alliance in the area. In Jonglei, as a result of similar meetings between the parties, there are reports that trade resumed from Ayod to Canal and from Wau to Pagong and Mogok. In Central Equatoria, a United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) patrol to Mugwo and Morobo in the Yei River area observed the return of populations from refugee camps to both places. In greater Bahr El-Ghazal, local state authorities in Raja town allowed opposition fighters to return, visit their families and interact with local authorities. On 8 December, after negotiations between SSPDF and pro-Machar forces in greater Bagari, road corridors between Wau town and greater Bagari were formally opened.

Despite those positive developments, sporadic clashes also took place, indicating that improvements remain fragile. Between 4 and 6 December, the pro-Taban Deng-aligned forces allegedly carried out an attack on pro-Machar forces in Bil, Guit county, which resulted in 21 casualties. There are reports of fighting between the SSPDF and the non-signatory group, the National Salvation Front, in the Yei/Amadi area. We also have serious concerns about the attacks against civilians that continue unabated. More rape cases were reported following the abhorrent incidents of rape and sexual assault in areas along Nhialdiu and Guit roads near Bentiu. Intercommunal violence and criminality continue to affect the civilian population in general,

and women and children in particular, the latter being the most vulnerable among civilians.

With regard to the horrific rapes in Bentiu, UNMISS proactively held urgent meetings with authorities and urged them to take immediate action to protect women and girls in the area and to hold the perpetrators of those terrible crimes to account. UNMISS peacekeepers immediately sent patrols to the area to provide a protective presence and the UNMISS human rights team has launched an investigation to identify the perpetrators. UNMISS engineers are also clearing foliage from the sides of the road so attackers will find it harder to conceal their presence. The Mission has also been urging armed forces in the area to guarantee command and control over their troops so as to ensure that rogue elements within their ranks are not involved in such criminal acts.

The humanitarian situation in the country remains of grave concern and is a direct consequence of the conflict. Attacks on humanitarian workers, the dangers posed to them and the impediments created by the parties to the conflict are unacceptable. We remain deeply concerned about the two UNMISS staff members arrested in 2014, whose whereabouts remain unknown. It is incumbent upon all parties, in particular the Government, to ensure a safer and more conducive environment for humanitarian workers who work tirelessly to deliver assistance to the most vulnerable of South Sudanese civilians.

We condemn in the strongest terms the continued prevalence of sexual violence, of which the recent attacks in Unity are a stark reminder. Such brutality is indefensible and the parties must spare no effort in bringing to justice all those who were responsible for those atrocities. There can be no meaningful peace without an end to and accountability for the brutalizing of innocent civilians. However, that is an issue against which the international community must also continue to speak out and remind the parties that with such prevalent impunity, South Sudan will not be able to find the place it deserves in the community of nations.

The responsibility to sustain the momentum in the implementation of the agreement lies solely with the parties. The positivity generated by the return of many of the committees and commissions to Juba, including opposition personnel, is mitigated by their delays and the lack of substantive discussions so far. The National Pre-Transitional Committee, the highest-

level implementation committee, has met but, most recently, failed to achieve a quorum. The Independent Boundary Commission, which is charged with settling the critical issue of state boundaries and the subsequent implementation of the Agreement within them during the transition period, is yet to meet, although the Technical Boundaries Committee met in Juba and discussed modalities before adjourning for the year.

The security-related committees have made little visible progress, with discussions mainly focusing on the cantonment of military forces, their sustainment and subsequent reintegration process, rather than on a more holistic approach to security-sector reform, focusing on the requirements for a national army that is right-sized, affordable, depoliticized and focused on preserving the territorial integrity of South Sudan against external threat. They are expected to meet again this week in Juba and it is nonetheless encouraging that, over the past weekend, some representatives of SPLA-IO and the South Sudan Opposition Alliance are reported to have returned to Juba without force protection to participate in those meetings.

The initial pessimism and outright rejection of the national dialogue by the opposition have transitioned into cautious optimism since President Kiir stepped down as convener. The national dialogue steering committee has advanced as an independent and more credible and transparent mechanism. As a result, the opposition parties suspicious of the process have begun to indicate possible willingness to engage in proceedings. However, we should be under no illusion that the participation of opposition groups in any subnational or community-level dialogue remains largely contingent upon the prospects they see for themselves within the implementation of the peace agreement at the national level. It is essential that the parties continue to build confidence and show the political will to work together to ensure a protective and inclusive environment that will allow all South Sudanese stakeholders, including civil society, women and youth, to meaningfully engage in the full implementation of the agreement.

Moving forward, we strongly believe that there are two critical benchmarks that must be given top priority during the pre-transition period, which ends in May 2019. First, the parties must come to a comprehensive agreement on the security sector and on the establishment of transitional security arrangements. That is necessary to build confidence among the parties and to ensure the return and permanent presence of all

the opposition in Juba. A security agreement will be needed to be communicated within the ranks and to reassure the commanders and combatants about their future. Without those, the institutions of transition, even when established, are unlikely to be functional. Incidents are likely to occur and the peace process will remain fragile. I would like to encourage the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to prioritize the finalization of the negotiations, which the United Nations stands ready to support. Secondly, a new Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) also needs urgently to be appointed to shepherd the critical pre-transition negotiations and bring the architecture of the peace process to start substantive political preparations for the transition.

We have been made aware of the IGAD Chiefs of Defence forces proposal to increase the strength of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) to support the transitional security arrangements which, as I mentioned, are yet to be agreed upon by the parties. The proposal recommends that the Sudan, Uganda, Somalia and Djibouti be added as troop-contributing countries to the UNMISS RPF. We have taken note of that proposal, which we understand will soon be communicated to the Security Council.

On that issue, I would like to stress that the United Nations continues to commend the active role of the countries of the region, IGAD and the African Union, which made possible the conclusion of the Revitalized Agreement, and we are fully committed to supporting its implementation as required and mandated by the Council. With regard to a possible reconfiguration of the UNMISS military component, I would like to reiterate some of the principles that we currently uphold with respect to all of our peacekeeping operations.

First, the reconfiguration of UNMISS to support the transition must be preceded by the finalization of the agreement on transitional security arrangements, including a clear definition of the tasks that UNMISS would need to perform, which will then allow us to identify the capabilities required, their strength, and possible additional resources needed by the Mission. The RPF is a constituent part of UNMISS, and we will have to consider the totality of the Force requirements for its tasking.

Secondly, unity of command within all blue helmets cannot be compromised. There can only be one

UNMISS force to implement the Mission's mandate, and one chain of command for the force.

Thirdly, as a United Nations force mandated by the Security Council, all future troop-contributing countries to be considered must satisfy United Nations standards in terms of training, equipment, human rights vetting, and political neutrality and impartiality.

Last but certainly not least, in the light of the dire humanitarian situation and the continued plight of civilians, additional tasks that UNMISS could be asked to perform to support the peace process should not be at the operational or political cost of performing its protection functions, which remain absolutely essential in the current environment. In that regard, UNMISS will need to continue to dedicate adequate resources to its protection tasks in order to fully implement its mandate.

In conclusion, as we find ourselves almost to the day exactly five years after the beginning of this conflict, I would like to re-emphasize our key message to the Council here today. The chance for peace in South Sudan has been created. More progress has been made in the past four months than in the previous four years. We need to acknowledge that new political reality and commend the parties, IGAD and the region for their efforts and achievement. Nonetheless, the peace process is not yet assessed as being fully sustainable and irreversible and will need positive engagement and compromise from the parties and continued reinforcement if it is to deliver genuine hope and relief to the suffering South Sudanese populations. I also need to reiterate the imperative for IGAD and the African Union to continue their efforts in support of the peace process, and I reconfirm the commitment of the United Nations to assist their efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Patten.

Ms. Patten: I appreciate this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in South Sudan.

The harrowing reports in November of the brutal mass rapes of women and girls in Bentiu while on their way to a food distribution site have sent shock waves around the world. The facts and details of the perpetrators and those who bear command responsibility for this latest incident are still being investigated by the United Nations team on the ground. National authorities have

also opened investigations headed by the Minister for Gender, Child and Social Welfare, deployed to Bentiu since 15 December. In the course of the investigations, it is crucial that the Government ensure that victims and witnesses are fully protected and do not face any reprisal for coming forward.

Although the investigations are still ongoing, what is clear is that this latest attack in Bentiu is part of a systematic trend and pattern of sexual violence that has escalated dramatically in 2018, despite recent commitments by South Sudan's leaders to a cessation of hostilities and a revitalized peace agreement.

Since 2013 in particular, we have witnessed systematic patterns of sexual violence, primarily against women and girls, as well as reported incidents against men and boys. Sexual violence remains rampant in the country, and it is used as part of a strategy to degrade, shame and humiliate both the victims and communities, often along ethnic and/or political lines. Sexual violence has also been used as a driver of forced displacement and as a tactic and weapon of war by all the parties to the conflict.

In 2018, there has been a clear and alarming increase in the documented number of cases and victims of conflict-related sexual violence. The number of victims in 2018 has already reached 1,157, making it the highest number recorded in the past three years. By comparison, in 2017 the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) documented 196 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, affecting 128 women and 68 girls.

In July, I heard the first-hand testimony of survivors and witnesses during my mission to South Sudan. I visited protection of civilians sites in Juba and Malakal and spoke with women who had survived sexual violence and continue to live in situations of acute vulnerability, both inside and outside the camps. Their accounts indicate clearly that rape was used by the attackers to exercise power over their victims, impose extreme humiliation, destroy their dignity and fracture families and the community.

In a protection of civilians site in Juba, I met with a group of deeply traumatized women and men who had recently arrived from Unity state, displaced as a result of the military offensives of April and May. The survivors recounted brutal and shocking patterns of conflict-related sexual violence occurring alongside other atrocity crimes. Their horrific testimonies were

fully consistent with the report released on 10 July by UNMISS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the indiscriminate attacks against civilians in southern Unity state, which found that at least 120 women and girls, including pregnant and lactating mothers, and girls as young as four years old, had been raped and gangraped. For example, a six-year-old girl was gang raped by eight soldiers who continued to violate her even as she became unconscious. Some victims were raped to death, not surviving the sexual violence to which they were subjected. Additionally, the report documented the abduction of 132 women and girls for purposes of sexual slavery.

In October, in the Western Equatoria region, 43 cases of rape and gang rape and the abduction of 505 women and 63 girls for the purpose of sexual slavery were documented. Survivors were reportedly tied to trees and gang raped until they passed out. In SPLA-in-Opposition (Machar) transit points or bases, women and girls as young as 12 were lined up for the commanders to choose as "wives". Those who were not picked were left for other fighters and subjected to repeated rapes. Sexual violence stopped only after the abducted women agreed to become fighters, which is consistent with information that part of the objective of the SPLA-in-Opposition (Machar) was to forcibly recruit fighters to bolster its ranks.

Sexual violence leaves deep physical, psychological and social scars. All the survivors I met desperately asked for greater support to restore their physical and psychological well-being. They face enormous challenges to receiving appropriate medical treatment. The humanitarian facilities that provide treatment are often inaccessible. Given the collapse of health-care systems due to the conflict, those living in rural areas often have nowhere to go. The total breakdown of State public and service-provision infrastructure means that women and girls are at a greater risk of unplanned pregnancy and severe sexual and reproductive injuries. They are also prone to contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

In addition to the physical effects, feelings of shame and stigma and rejection by spouses and family members add to their distress. I met several women with their babies born of rape and saw how they are set on a trajectory of poverty, discrimination and violence. All the survivors demanded that the perpetrators be brought to justice and punished. They all felt that this

was the only way to break the cycle of violence and secure a peaceful future for South Sudan.

During my visit, I met with the Minister of Defence, the Minister in the Office of the President and other senior Government officials, all of whom acknowledged the high prevalence of sexual violence and reiterated that these violations are unacceptable and shameful. However, this sense of outrage must be translated into concrete action. A zero-tolerance policy cannot be underpinned by a zero-consequence reality. The fact is that rape in South Sudan is still largely cost free for the perpetrator. Until we raise the cost and consequences for committing, commanding or condoning these crimes, we will not end the prevailing impunity that is a driver of sexual violence. Therefore, consistent prosecution and accountability of perpetrators is central to the prevention of sexual violence in South Sudan.

At the same time, the international community must be prepared to use all the compliance tools at its disposal to send the signal of our zero tolerance for these crimes. We cannot underestimate the importance of sanctions and other targeted measures as a potential deterrent for perpetrators and would-be perpetrators.

On 24 October 2018, I briefed the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan. In terms of those who are believed to bear command responsibility for sexual violence in the southern Unity offensives of July 2018, verified reports of the United Nations mainly attribute responsibility for violations to the national army — the SPLA — and SPLA-in-Opposition (Deng) and youth militia. It is believed that three senior officials are among those who bear command responsibility. Regarding the Western Equatoria offensives of October 2018, three commanders of the SPLA-in-Opposition (Machar) identified by victims and witnesses are believed to bear command responsibility.

In follow up to my briefing to the Sanctions Committee, yesterday my Office, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, submitted a confidential joint letter to the Chair of the South Sudan Sanctions Committee that includes the names of the three alleged perpetrators from southern Unity state, for the Committee's consideration. I wish to conclude with the following recommendations.

First, I urge the Government of South Sudan to rigorously and expeditiously investigate all incidents

of sexual violence, share the results with the United Nations, and hold all perpetrators accountable regardless of rank or seniority. Furthermore, I urge the Government to establish the Hybrid Court of South Sudan without delay and to ensure that it prosecutes all cases of sexual violence. My Office stands ready to provide support to the Government of South Sudan, pursuant to the joint communiqué signed with President Salva Kiir in 2014.

Secondly, I urge the Security Council to consistently apply sanctions for crimes of sexual violence as a critical aspect of deterrence and prevention, utilizing the stand-alone designation criteria on sexual violence that are articulated in resolution 2428 (2018).

Thirdly, comprehensive services must be provided to survivors, especially medical and psychosocial care. I urge all parties to the conflict to grant unhindered access to humanitarian organizations and UNMISS to reach victims and displaced civilians. I also call on the international community to maintain resources for life-saving services.

Finally, given the scale and consequences of these violations, conflict-related sexual violence should be addressed as a central aspect of the revitalized peace agreement of 2018. This includes ensuring that crimes of sexual violence are not amnestied and that victims receive the reparations and livelihood support that they need to rebuild their lives. Sexual violence considerations should be part of any peacebuilding, reconstruction, transitional-justice and truth-and-reconciliation arrangements.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Patten for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Wronecka.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): In my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), concerning South Sudan, I have the honour to brief the members of the Council on developments in the Committee since my previous briefing in this Chamber in May (see S/PV.8249).

I intend to first focus on the visit that I made to South Sudan and the region in June. Secondly, I will elaborate on the recommendations set out in the interim report of the Panel of Experts, which was submitted to the Committee on 2 November and published as a document of the Security Council on 26 November (S/2018/1049). The Committee had an opportunity

to engage with the Coordinator of the Panel on its findings and recommendations on 15 November, and subsequently to consider various follow-up actions in an effort aimed at improving the implementation and effectiveness of the regime. Thirdly, I will provide a brief overview of the developments in the Committee since my briefing in May.

From 16 to 26 June, I had the opportunity to visit South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya, in that order. The objective of my visit was threefold: first, to obtain a first-hand account of the implementation of the sanctions measures; secondly, to provide information for the Council's review of the mandate, pursuant to paragraph 2 of resolution 2353 (2017); and, thirdly, to strengthen dialogue and engagement with the States concerned regarding the implementation of the measures, including any needs for assistance. The visit coincided with the review period set out in resolution 2418 (2018) and preceded the imposition of the arms embargo on 13 July, through the adoption of resolution 2428 (2018). My visit also preceded the adoption by the parties of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, concluded on 12 September.

Before turning to the Committee's actions taken in response to the observations made during my visit, I would like to highlight the key issues observed and raised during the visit.

First, with regard to the humanitarian and human rights situation in South Sudan, I personally observed the pressing need for us all to continue our efforts to find a resolution to the crisis in the country. I am particularly concerned about the environment in which South Sudan's next generation is growing up and the effect of the acts of sexual violence on the victims and their communities. I acknowledge and support the calls by community leaders for accountability in that regard.

I further wish to recall the press statement of 7 December (SC/13611), in which members condemned in the strongest terms the brutal incidents of sexual and gender-based violence against women near Bentiu in northern South Sudan in recent weeks. Members also underlined the Council's request for the Government of South Sudan to condemn the attacks, to ensure that a full investigation is carried out and those responsible are held accountable, and to break the cycle of impunity for sexual and gender-based violence. I also recall that the members of the Council reaffirmed

their willingness to impose targeted sanctions against individuals or entities responsible for actions or policies that threaten the peace, security or stability of South Sudan including the targeting of civilians, including women and children, through the commission of acts of violence, including killing, maiming, torture or rape or other sexual violence. The Committee counts on the Panel of Experts to present to it relevant information in that regard. It also counts on all parties and all Member States to ensure cooperation with the Panel, in accordance with paragraph 21 of resolution 2428 (2018).

In connection with paragraph 22 of resolution 2428 (2018), as Chair of the Committee, I will also continue to strengthen the Committee's cooperation with the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in order to facilitate the sharing of information relevant to the Committee's mandate. In relation to paragraphs 18 and 25 of the same resolution, I will also continue to engage with the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism and the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission to allow for information sharing.

Secondly, I am encouraged by the progress made on the political front since my visit. I strongly hope that the Revitalized Agreement signed on 12 September signals the beginning of the end of the cycles of violence that have permeated the lives of the people of South Sudan, such that the parties honour their responsibilities in respecting and implementing the Agreement. As noted by many counterparts during my visit, that struggle for power has resulted in inconceivable suffering and must end without any further delay.

Support from the region and the wider international community will remain essential for the establishment of peace and stability in the country. I am encouraged by the common ground identified in my conversations with senior officials in the countries neighbouring South Sudan. I remain hopeful that the international community will stand united in implementing the sanctions regime as part of its overall efforts to support the people of South Sudan in achieving peace, stability and security.

In that regard, I intend to continue my efforts to clarify to the leadership of South Sudan that the sanctions regime has been put in place in support of the

political process to achieve peace. With regard to the region, I propose to continue efforts to encourage the regional States to keep the Committee informed of their efforts to implement the sanctions in place, including by submitting implementation reports on the targeted measures of the asset freeze and the travel ban and inspection reports in connection with the newly imposed arms embargo, as well as by observing the procedures in place for notifying and seeking exemption requests for the three sanctions measures in place concerning South Sudan. Without its full implementation, the sanctions regime risks losing its significance and impact, and the Committee its legitimacy, to the potential detriment of the civilian population of South Sudan.

In an effort to further strengthen the implementation of the sanctions regime, and in response to the recommendations emanating from my visit, the Committee agreed to eight different actions, one of which was the briefing to inform the Council of my observations during the June visit to the four countries. The Committee also agreed to write to the four countries, thanking them for their hospitality and reflecting the matters discussed in connection with the South Sudan sanctions regime. It further agreed to send a note verbale to all Member States, reminding them of their obligations under the expanded sanctions regime established by resolution 2206 (2015), which was transmitted on 23 November, and to convene a briefing open to all Member States to allow those not members to also engage with the Committee. It is envisaged that that meeting will take place in January 2019.

The Committee also invited the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to brief it again this year, pursuant to her last briefing in March last year, and to ask the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to keep the Committee informed of relevant information, pursuant to her last briefing in April. In reference to paragraph 22 of resolution 2428 (2018), the Committee invited the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights to also share any relevant information with it. Lastly, in connection with paragraph 18 of the same resolution, the Committee invited the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to brief the Committee following the next IGAD summit on South Sudan.

Let me now turn to the second focus of my briefing — the interim report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan submitted pursuant to resolution

2428 (2018) and, more specifically, the actions taken by the Committee in response to the findings and recommendations of the Panel.

I will not repeat in detail the contents of the interim report given that it was transmitted to the members of the Council and is now available as document S/2018/1049. Let me remind members only that the Panel of Experts has presented its findings with regard to the political and security situation in South Sudan; violations of human rights and international humanitarian law; obstruction of humanitarian and peacekeeping missions; the illicit exploitation of natural resources by armed groups or criminal networks; arms procurement and the transfer of arms and provision of related technical assistance in violation of resolution 2428 (2018); and the implementation of the sanctions measures in South Sudan, which, for the first time in such a report, include the arms embargo introduced in July of this year, in addition to the targeted financial and travel measures that were originally imposed by resolution 2206 (2015) in March 2015. Based on its findings, the Panel made five recommendations in its interim report, consistent with the Panel's conclusion that, in spite of the progress on the political front, the patterns of the conflict reported to the Council earlier have persisted, with a humanitarian crisis, violence and instability still prevailing across most of the country. The recommendations and subsequent Committee actions were the following.

First, with the aim of ensuring the effective implementation of the arms embargo introduced by resolution 2428 (2018), the Panel recommended that the Committee develop and make available on its website an Implementation Assistance Notice to assist Member States in the implementation of the arms embargo, including by further detailing the process by which exemptions may be sought. The Committee agreed to revert to that recommendation upon the adoption of updated guidelines for the conduct of its work, which will take into account the provisions of resolution 2428 (2018).

Secondly, in order to ensure compliance with the targeted measures in place against the eight individuals who are currently on the sanctions list under resolution 2206 (2015) and in order to ensure their effectiveness, the Panel recommended that the Committee issue a press release reiterating the obligation of all Member States to enforce the travel ban and the asset-freeze measures on individuals designated pursuant to resolution 2206

(2015) and extended by resolution 2428 (2018). The Committee agreed in principle to that recommendation and is currently considering a draft text of the press release.

The Committee took note of the third and fourth recommendations of the Panel, which were aimed at discouraging the misappropriation and diversion of public resources posing a risk to the peace, security and stability of South Sudan, and at preventing the illicit exploitation of or trade in natural resources in ways that may destabilize South Sudan, as described in paragraph 14(j) of resolution 2428 (2018).

In its fifth, and final, recommendation, the Panel encouraged the Committee to urge the immediate release of all child soldiers and recommended strengthening coordination among all relevant agencies working on the demobilization of child soldiers, especially during the cantonment process described in the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. The Committee agreed to that recommendation and, in the interest of harmonizing the work and messaging of the Council's subsidiary organs, intends to discuss a text upon the adoption of new conclusions on children and armed conflict in South Sudan by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which are currently under discussion.

Turning to the third, and final, element of my statement today, I would like to provide a brief overview of the Committee's work since my briefing to the Council in May.

On 25 July, in connection with the establishment of an arms embargo on the territory of South Sudan pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 2428 (2018) and in the absence of an arms expert on the Panel and related reporting on the situation of arms in South Sudan at the time, the Committee received a briefing by the United Nations Mine Action Service.

During informal consultations held on 27 August, the Committee discussed the report of the Chair's visit to South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya, which was elaborated on earlier. On 14 September, the Committee heard a presentation by the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts pursuant to resolution 2428 (2018) in connection with the Panel's work programme.

On 24 October, the Committee received a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Again, the chilling

facts presented to the Committee on that occasion, including the finding that the number of victims of sexual and gender-based crimes recorded in 2018 at that time constituted the highest number recorded in the past three years, underscore the imminent need for the Government of South Sudan to act now, put an end to those brutal crimes and hold accountable those responsible for crimes committed as soon as possible.

On 15 November, the Committee heard a presentation by the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts on the Panel's interim report and discussed the recommendations contained therein, which was also earlier elaborated on.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge and welcome the increased engagement by countries in the region in contacting the Committee to seek clarification on the measures and related exemption procedures. Since my previous briefing, the Committee received, for the first time, two exemption requests from Member States for travel by designated individuals, both of which were approved. Information supporting one such request allowed the Committee to update information in the sanctions list under resolution 2206 (2015) on 21 November, thereby facilitating the implementation by Member States of the targeted measures on the sanctioned individual Gabriel Jok Riak Makol.

Looking ahead, apart from the regular Committee meetings, it is my intention to continue convening informal informals for interested members of the Committee at the Permanent Mission of Poland. Also, other than the usual work of the Committee, I aim to return to South Sudan in 2019, and possibly to neighbouring countries, on which occasion I truly hope to see some progress in the daily lives, safety and security of South Sudan's people, as a reflection of the high-level progress made on the political front.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Wronecka for her briefing.

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

Mr. Hunter (United States of America): We thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his updates on the situation in South Sudan, which, along with the briefing by Special Representative Patten, reminds us why the international community needs to strengthen calls for accountability for horrific atrocities. We thank them very much for their work and for giving a voice to

those who cannot always speak for themselves. We also greatly welcome the briefing by Ambassador Wroniecka and thank her for her tireless work on the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), on South Sudan sanctions, which now, more than ever, is a key pillar of the Council's commitment to peace in South Sudan.

Let me begin by commending the Council for reaching consensus on the Security Council press statement of 7 December (SC/13611) regarding the horrific sexual and gender-based violence in northern South Sudan. The United States remains deeply concerned, particularly by the inadequate response from the Government of South Sudan. Although those incidents of coordinated sexual violence occurred weeks ago, the Government has neither condemned the attacks nor held anyone accountable.

Three months since the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, the international community and, most important, the South Sudanese people have seen some progress on the implementation of pre-transitional arrangements. As we said last month in this Chamber (see S/PV.8403), we welcome the reduction in violent clashes and the formation of some of the pre-transitional committees. We are pleased to observe some confidence-building measures between the parties, including at the local level. The inclusion of women's groups, civil-society organizations and other stakeholders in the implementation is a positive step, and we urge the effort to continue and to be even more expansive. However, the United States is concerned that the parties have shown little progress in negotiating a solution on security arrangements. We call on the leaders of South Sudan to commit fully to making those tough decisions, which proved to be a significant obstacle to the implementation of the previous peace agreement.

In the spirit of implementing the peace agreement, the United States reiterates its call for the release of those who have been arbitrarily detained and the prisoners of war. Many individuals, including Peter Biar Ajak, remain imprisoned without the ability to seek legal review of their detentions. The failure to release all political detainees runs counter to the letter and spirit of the latest peace agreement and previous agreements.

The United States strongly condemns the bureaucratic and physical impediments imposed by the Government of South Sudan, opposition forces and others that prevent the United Nations and humanitarian and development actors from providing life-saving assistance and security to the most vulnerable. Even one incident of the Government restricting the movement of United Nations personnel is one too many. But 19 incidents, as reported in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2018/1103), is completely unacceptable. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) must have full and unrestricted movement throughout South Sudan, in accordance with 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.

With nearly 2 million South Sudanese internally displaced and over 6 million facing food insecurity, denying access to those working to protect and save lives is unconscionable. Most parts of the country will continue to face severe hunger through January, with famine a real possibility in many conflict-affected areas, should insecurity or access denial continue to disrupt the delivery of emergency assistance to people in need. We call on the Government and opposition groups to provide the United Nations, ceasefire monitors, humanitarian actors and development partners with free and unhindered access throughout the entirety of South Sudan in order to provide life-saving assistance to all those in need.

South Sudan's taxation policies present another impediment to humanitarian and development actors. We noted the recent taxation circular published on 5 December, and we urge the Government to institute a temporary waiver on taxes and fees for all international staff of humanitarian and development organizations for the duration of the crisis.

If the recent peace agreement is to have any chance of success, South Sudan's leaders must be willing to break the cycle of impunity for those responsible for atrocities, as well as any actors who fuel the conflict in South Sudan. In support of the commitment of the United States to peace and stability in South Sudan, on 14 December the United States Government imposed sanctions on three individuals. Sanctions were imposed on Israel Ziv and Obac William Olawo for their roles in expanding or extending the conflict, and on Gregory Vasili for actions that have undermined peace, stability and security in South Sudan.

We commend regional actors for their leadership and commitment to supporting peace in South Sudan, and we are counting on the region to maintain pressure on the parties to implement the peace agreement and uphold the United Nations arms embargo aimed at preventing the flow of weapons into South Sudan, which would further destabilize the country and the region.

In conclusion, the United States continues to support the people of South Sudan and their aspirations for freedom, peace and prosperity. We call on South Sudan's leaders to make those aspirations a reality by implementing the revitalized Peace Agreement, ending the cycle of impunity for perpetrators of atrocities and allowing UNMISS to operate freely, in accordance with its mandate.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We thank the Under Secretary-General, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Pramila Patten, for their respective briefings.

We would also like to add our voice in condemning in the strongest terms the incidents of sexual and gender-based violence against women near Bentiu, and we call for the perpetrators of those egregious crimes to be held to account as a matter of urgency. We hope that the expressed commitments of the parties to combating sexual and gender-based violence will be translated into action by conducting a thorough investigation into the incidents.

The prolonged conflict in South Sudan has brought about huge devastation in the country and exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation and the economy there. Pondering over who to blame or dwelling on the failures of past attempts to bring about peace will not get South Sudan out of the quagmire it is in or bring a sigh of relief to its people, who have suffered so much for far too long. As the Secretary-General has rightly pointed out in his 90-day report,

“the Revitalized Agreement provides an unparalleled opportunity to end the conflict in South Sudan” (*S/2018/1103, para. 71*).

It was concerted regional efforts and the dedication of the parties to turning the tide that led to the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. That is exactly why we have been stressing for quite some time and reiterate once more before we finish our tenure on the Council, that all of our collective efforts should be

directed towards ensuring the full implementation of this revised Agreement.

We truly appreciate — in fact, we are extremely grateful for — the steadfastness of the African Union and the United Nations, including at the highest leadership level, to work hand in hand with the region in order to resolve the conflict. We have been advocating throughout our tenure on the Council for the three organizations to maintain their unity of purpose in the search for lasting peace in South Sudan, and we would be the first to affirm that the progress achieved so far in the peace process would not have been possible without that generous support. Maintaining that unity of purpose still remains vital during the post-revitalization period. The support of the two organizations should be extended to the implementation of the revised Agreement as well.

It is unfortunate that the same cannot be said of the Security Council. In recent memory the Council did not heed the call of the region protesting the timing of the imposition of an arms embargo on South Sudan. We have all heard, either directly or indirectly, including from the Secretariat, the repercussions of that unfortunate timing. Yet again, the Council failed to pronounce itself on the revised peace agreement. That is very regrettable, and we have not seen a valid reason for that. Ironically, the Council's members are the first to demand its implementation and ask the region to do more. That raises the question how it can be reasonable for an entity to fiercely advocate the implementation of an agreement when that entity did not go the extra mile in welcoming the agreement in the first place.

Of course, we understand that there may have been doubts among Council members with regard to the commitment of the parties to the implementation of the agreement, but being a bystander is not the solution. We believe that the Security Council has a particular role to play in supporting the implementation of the revised peace agreement. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development summit requested the support of the Council with regard to ensuring the full deployment of the Regional Protection Force and a further review of its mandate so that it might be in a better position to support the implementation of the revised agreement. We still hope that the Council will respond positively to that request.

As I said earlier, I would like to make it clear that it was mainly the determination of the parties to be flexible and accommodate one another that led to the

signing of the peace agreement. The positive trends and developments that followed the peace agreement have further strengthened our faith in the parties and encouraged us to redouble our efforts in supporting them to fully implement the revised agreement. We are also encouraged by the confidence-building measures being taken by the parties. However, time is not on our side. The parties should accelerate their efforts so as to compensate for the time lost. By implementing the pre-transitional period tasks, as stipulated in the peace agreement, the implementation matrix would lay the foundations for a successful transitional period. The longer the pre-transitional period, the smaller the chances will be of making meaningful progress. We hope that the parties will stay committed to the agreement signed, and we encourage them to do so.

In conclusion, ensuring the further reduction of conflict and the total cessation of hostilities is critically important. That will facilitate the unhindered delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance. The parties need to prioritize the implementation of the permanent ceasefire on the cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and humanitarian access. The restoration of a permanent ceasefire is essential for unhindered access to the affected population and the safety of humanitarian personnel and aid delivery.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to express our gratitude to the three briefers for their enlightening briefings and for their ongoing commitment to peace in South Sudan.

I would like to focus on three main points: the peace process, the humanitarian situation and the Regional Protection Force of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). My first point is that we must give the peace process a full chance.

The signing on 12 September of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan presents a historic opportunity to emerge from the conflict. That opportunity must not be missed. The current pre-transitional phase is a moment that is crucial to the success of the Revitalized Agreement. The pre-transitional structures have begun to meet, which is a step in the right direction. The ceasefire is generally being respected, which is encouraging.

But I want to be very clear — the hardest part of the process still lies ahead. The pre-transitional institutions must become fully operational in order to ensure the

success of the pre-transitional phase and the formation of the new unitary Government. Those institutions must, during the transition phase, set security arrangements, which include the cantonment of armed groups and the training of the joint security force. Further anticipated efforts include concrete progress on the drafting of a transitional constitution and the redrawing of internal borders. France encourages the parties to address all of those issues head-on and to seek political agreement on them. The ongoing suffering of people underlines the urgent need to move forward in the peace process.

That brings me to my second point, concerning our outrage at the suffering of the peoples of South Sudan, especially the women. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains unbearable. The figures speak for themselves — 2 million people have been displaced, 7 million people in South Sudan require humanitarian assistance and nearly half of the population suffers from severe malnutrition. South Sudan is now the most dangerous country for humanitarian workers. That seriously hinders the delivery of humanitarian assistance. We must therefore do everything we can to protect humanitarian workers, who continue to be the target of attacks, and we must continue our efforts to ensure that those heinous crimes do not go unpunished. It is also essential that we ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access throughout the country so that we can meet the extensive needs of the population. The efforts of UNMISS to protect humanitarian convoys are crucial in that regard. The Council can count on France's constant commitment to those issues.

The level of sexual violence that Ms. Patten has described is also deeply appalling. The mass rapes that took place in Bentiu at the end of November are atrocious, and those despicable crimes must not go unpunished. Following the Council's press statement of 7 December (SC/13611), France condemns in the strongest terms the use of sexual violence against civilians, which can constitute a war crime, especially when it is used as a tactic of war. My delegation calls once again on the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan to fully mobilize itself against those who commit and sponsor sexual violence. South Sudan must take all necessary measures to ensure that the crimes committed do not go unpunished. That is essential if we are to put an end to the cycle of violence and counter-violence, and it is key to any national reconciliation process. In that regard,

the establishment and operationalization of a hybrid court for South Sudan must remain a priority.

My third point concerns the Regional Protection Force. I would like once again to commend the valuable contribution that the region — in particular the Sudan and Uganda — has made to the peace process in South Sudan. The Revitalized Agreement would not have been possible without the investment and commitment of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). We understand that the IGAD countries want to participate in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement by deploying troops to the UNMISS Regional Protection Force, but we must recognize that the safe return of opposition leaders and the cantonment of armed groups can be ensured only through a political agreement. The deployment of additional troops to the UNMISS Regional Protection Force cannot compensate for the lack of political agreement on those issues. We must also ensure that we maintain a single chain of command within UNMISS and that the Regional Protection Force is part of that chain of command. Finally, the rules and requirements — particularly those relating to capacity, training, the prevention of sexual violence, the provision of care for victims of sexual violence and the respect for human rights — must apply to the troops deployed in the Regional Protection Force.

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to the women and men who have been deployed in UNMISS for their important work, particularly in the area of civilian protection.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, for their comprehensive updates on the latest developments in South Sudan. We also commend Ambassador Wronecka for her enormous efforts and valuable insights on the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan. We also welcome Ambassador Akuei Bona Malwal, Permanent Representative of South Sudan, to the Chamber. Additionally, we welcome the 90-day report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1103), as well as his monthly assessment on obstructions facing the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). I would now like to make some observations.

First, with regard to the political situation, we acknowledge that the signing on 12 September of

the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan was a major step towards peace in the country. We welcome the progress made with regard to the implementation that Agreement and have high expectations that it will lay the foundations for durable peace and stability in the country. We therefore call on the signatory parties in South Sudan to demonstrate a spirit of compromise and genuine political will to implement, in a timely manner, the outstanding provisions of the Revitalized Agreement on cantonment and the integration of forces, in order to ensure that the Agreement will not meet the fate of other failed attempts at peace in South Sudan. We also call on the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union, the United Nations and neighbouring States to continue their concerted efforts to build trust and confidence among the parties and assist in the implementation of the provisions of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, as the representative of Ethiopia has just proposed. We welcome the signing of the Revitalized Agreement by the members of the African Union Ad Hoc Committee on South Sudan on 21 November and reiterate the need to urge non-signatories to join the peace process.

Secondly, despite the overall improvement in the security situation and the reduction in the number of human rights violations, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains fragile and volatile. Civilians, especially women and children, continue to bear the brunt of the crisis, suffering from violence, displacement and critical levels of food insecurity. We therefore call on all parties in South Sudan to implement the permanent cessation of hostilities, completely stop the violence by bringing their forces under control, halt attacks against humanitarian workers and strictly comply with international humanitarian law.

We strongly condemn the series of attacks against women in Bentiu between 19 and 29 November. It is important to investigate those attacks and hold perpetrators accountable. We also encourage donor countries to provide adequate and sustained funding for humanitarian assistance to the population. In order to genuinely address the fragile situation in South Sudan, humanitarian assistance should be accompanied by development efforts and the addressing of the root causes of conflict. Conflict can be somewhat resolved or minimized by reducing tribal rivalries, implementing confidence-building measures among local populations, providing basic services and increasing job creation.

Women and youth need to play an important role in those processes.

Thirdly, regarding UNMISS, our delegation is concerned that some violations of the status-of-forces agreement persist. We call on all parties to the conflict to take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of UNMISS personnel. We welcome the initiative of the IGAD countries to participate in the Regional Protection Force. At the same time, we underscore the importance of preserving a unified command and control structure of UNMISS and ensuring that the Regional Protection Force complies with United Nations standards.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan commends UNMISS for implementing its mandated tasks under very difficult circumstances, and we reaffirm our unfailing support for its efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in South Sudan.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Five years ago, fighting broke out in South Sudan. Over the past five years, nearly 400,000 people have been killed. Lives have been lost and futures have ended. But in 2018 we have seen significant progress. A year ago, the peace process was stalled. In September, the parties signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. We have consistently welcomed that as an important step towards bringing peace to South Sudan. We also welcome the efforts made by the region, the parties to the conflict and our colleagues in the United Nations for their contribution to securing this important progress.

We have been encouraged by the drop in the overall levels of violence in South Sudan as a sign that the Agreement is beginning to make life better for the people of South Sudan, although we are concerned by the continuing outbreaks of fighting and breaches of the ceasefire. In addition, although progress has been slow, we are also encouraged by the progress made by the parties in establishing some of the technical committees and processes required to implement the agreement.

Our sincere hope is that 2019 will see this progress sustained and built upon, but we should be under no illusion that this will be easy. We must not divert our attention from South Sudan. More than ever, the unified action of the Council to support peace is needed to translate hope into real change.

The Council has made clear its revulsion at the acts of rape and brutalization of women and girls reported near Bentiu last month and set out so movingly by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten in this Chamber today. This is, sadly, not unprecedented in South Sudan, as seen by the reports that 900 civilians were abducted in Western Equatoria between April and August, included for sexual slavery. The sexual violence against girls as young as 8 near Bentiu was truly horrendous and was committed while the parties claimed to be implementing peace. The victims deserve accountability for the crimes committed against them. Full and thorough investigations must be carried out, support provided to survivors and those responsible held to account. Like Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten, we urge that the hybrid court be established as soon as possible.

The Council, for its part, should continue to maintain the pressure on those who act against peace in South Sudan and end the culture of impunity that has endured for too long. All Member States should uphold in full the sanctions in place already as a clear message that those who work against peace will not succeed. In that light, I welcome the briefing delivered by Ambassador Wroncka and her activism over the past year.

Despite the commitments made in the 12 September peace deal, humanitarian workers continue to face obstruction to the delivery of aid by all sides. The 2019 humanitarian response plan released last week highlights the fact that 7.1 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2019. It is absolutely vital that free and unhindered access be granted. However, restrictions continue. A total of 52 access incidents were reported in November; 39 per cent of these involved violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, more than a third caused by State groups. We call on the leaders of South Sudan to allow humanitarian work to proceed unencumbered by threat or hindrance in 2019.

Our partners in the region have been key to the progress seen in 2018. We applaud the role of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and its members in this respect and urge continued engagement, as it is essential to helping ensure that this latest Agreement delivers a lasting peace. We reiterate our call on the region to engage fully with the United Nations and the members of the Security Council on any proposal to deploy troops in support of the Agreement.

I would echo the comments made by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2018/1103) that any deployment of troops by the region in support of the deal cannot compensate for the lack of political action by the South Sudanese on security issues. We support the comments made by Under-Secretary-General Lacroix during our most recent meeting (see S/PV.8403) that any forces deployed to support would need to be under a unified United Nations chain of command and comply with United Nations peacekeeping standards.

In conclusion, I hope that we can look to 2019 with optimism for the people of South Sudan. To make a reality of their hopes for peace and progress, their leaders will need to demonstrate their commitment and will to implement the agreement. This includes putting the mechanisms for peace in place, including finalizing the transitional security arrangements and forming the revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, as highlighted by the Secretary-General. It must also include putting an end to the fighting completely; prioritizing protection from violence, including sexual violence, for the people of South Sudan; pursuing accountability for those that commit violations; and enabling unhindered access to the delivery of humanitarian assistance for all those in need and for human rights and Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism monitors, who were blocked several times in November. If we make progress on these fronts, the people of South Sudan may begin to believe that their hopes can be realized.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting and for the important briefings of Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Ms. Pramila Patten and Ambassador Joanna Wronecka.

Just a few months after the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and its ratification by the transitional national legislature, we await expectantly the initial measures to carry out pre-transition tasks. We deem positive the meetings held by the various committees over the past two months, including that of the National Pre-Transitional Committee and the National Constitutional Amendment Committee, which agreed on working modalities and the manner in which pre-transition tasks will be carried out. We would also highlight the joint visits of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in Opposition. We believe

that these are important steps in fostering the trust needed to build sustainable peace in South Sudan.

Nevertheless, we must express our concern at the fact that the ceasefire is not being fully respected throughout the territory of South Sudan, especially in Yei, Central Equatoria and the Wau triangle, in Western Bahr el-Ghazal. We stress the importance of regional forums for dialogue and the need for them to be inclusive and impartial. We call on opposition groups to participate in national dialogue, as true peace in South Sudan will be possible only through political will and inclusive dialogue involving all parties.

We support the call of the Secretary-General on the leaders of South Sudan to establish transitional security arrangements and to form the revitalized Government of National Unity.

With regard to the formation of the Government, we deplore and call for a review of the appointment of Mr. Malek Reuben Riak as Deputy Minister of Defence, as he is the subject of sanctions imposed by the Council and must be accountable to justice for having armed groups of young people involved in atrocity crimes.

Peru condemns most emphatically the countless cases of sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan, as described for us by Ms. Patten. The recent brutal attacks on more than 150 women and girls in an area close to Bentiu, in the northern part of South Sudan, cannot go unpunished. This is happening in a context of ongoing violations of human rights. The United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting on children in armed conflict documented 90 grave incidents, including recruitment, sexual violence, killings and mutilations.

For this reason, we believe that the visit of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict last November was timely. We hope that it will contribute to the South Sudanese authorities making progress and drawing up a comprehensive action plan aimed at putting an end to the grave violations of human rights taking place in that country. We also deplore the gravity of the humanitarian situation and condemn the acts of violence committed against humanitarian workers and their assets.

We were saddened by the deaths of three humanitarian workers in September and October, and call on the Government of South Sudan to make every effort to put an end to the violence and restore

the dignity of women and girls, as well as punish those responsible for these atrocity crimes. We are certain that the setting up of a hybrid court will contribute to peace and reconciliation. We also note with concern violations of the sanctions imposed by the Council, including the arms embargo imposed last July. We call on the countries responsible for these violations, as indicated by Ambassador Wronecka, to meet their obligations.

We acknowledge the work done by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, particularly the positive results achieved by the mobile courts, which will contribute to ensuring justice and security in protection-of-civilians sites.

Lastly, I would highlight the work and the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union. We reiterate the importance of the Council remaining united in the process of ensuring the support and political follow-up necessary to continue making progress in the South Sudanese peace process, as well as that of working closely with the African Union and IGAD.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to join other colleagues in thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Patten for their briefings. We also thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on South Sudan (S/2018/1103). We share its observations and recommendations.

Allow me to complement my statement as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan with two additional points on the political and security situation and the situation of the civilian population.

Three months after the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, we have seen some encouraging developments. However, the peace process remains fragile, and clashes between parties to the conflict still occur. There must be an end to the violence. We call on South Sudanese actors to immediately observe the provisions of the cessation of hostilities agreement of December 2017 and disengage and separate their forces. We also believe that transitional security arrangements need to be put in place without any further delay.

We are deeply concerned about the recent reports of the targeting of civilians and serious human rights violations and abuses, some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Poland is appalled by the recent incidents of sexual violence against women and girls near Bentiu. We call on all parties in South Sudan to hold the perpetrators to account and to ensure that transitional justice and accountability mechanisms are put in place. We also believe that the Security Council should stand ready to impose targeted sanctions against those who threaten the peace and stability of South Sudan and target the civilian population, including those who are most vulnerable — women and children.

Despite years of war and disappointment, the people of South Sudan have faith in the Revitalized Agreement. They believe that it may be a stepping stone towards rebuilding their lives and putting the conflict behind them. With the Revitalized Agreement, the leaders of South Sudan have a unique opportunity to restore peace and rebuild the country. It is their sole responsibility to ensure the full and timely implementation of the agreement. It also provides them with a chance to demonstrate real commitment and political maturity and — by proving that they are finally putting the people of South Sudan first — to restore the confidence of the international community.

Last but not least, let me seize this opportunity to convey my country's appreciation to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and to the humanitarian actors on the ground for their tireless efforts and sacrifice.

Mr. Edjang Nnaga (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to express my thanks to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean Pierre Lacroix, for the hard work he has undertaken within the scope of his mandate and especially for the excellent briefing he gave us today. I am also grateful for the briefings delivered by Ms. Pramila Patten and the Ambassador of Poland.

The Government of Equatorial Guinea welcomes the recent joint field visits between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and opposition forces. We call on the Government of South Sudan to continue organizing such joint visits to all areas of the country in order to promote peace and reconciliation among the South Sudanese people. That will enable the parties to help silence the guns in South Sudan.

With regard to the conflict there, my country welcomes the positive political atmosphere that has prevailed in South Sudan since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in September. We praise all parties to the conflict for their political will and commitment. However, we are concerned about the latest reports of sexual abuse against women and girls. We strongly condemn those events and call on the Government of South Sudan to identify the perpetrators of these terrible actions and hold them accountable.

We are also concerned about the humanitarian situation, which remains precarious. That is why we want to respectfully remind all parties involved that, in addition to seeking peace, there is an obligation to alleviate the humanitarian needs of the population, who are facing poverty, food insecurity and a shortage of basic services. The successful fulfilment of that obligation will be achieved only if humanitarian operations are facilitated and the threats and risks faced by humanitarian organizations and their brave personnel are eliminated. Attacks on humanitarian workers are unacceptable.

I express my gratitude to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan staff, the police and the other organizations that work courageously to protect civilians in vulnerable situations, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, protect human rights and support the peace process. I once again commend the United Nations team and non-governmental organizations for their immense bravery and sacrifice in providing humanitarian aid.

In conclusion, my Government thanks the Special Envoy of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for his efforts in directing the peace process and supporting the first steps of the implementation process. We also commend the tireless efforts of the Heads of State and Government of IGAD for the steadfast manner in which they have guided the peace process.

I express my sincere thanks to the Chairperson of the African Union for his valuable efforts for peace in South Sudan, and I offer him my country's full support.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix; Special Representative of

the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten; and Ambassador Joanna Wronecka, in her capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, for their detailed briefings on the current situation in South Sudan.

The people of South Sudan have endured a long and painful process until now. Today, we are witnessing encouraging progress towards a political solution. That is thanks mainly to the great commitment of the leaders of neighbouring countries, regional organizations and the parties involved. It is clear that the latter face the main challenge in moving towards the proper implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

The signing of the Revitalized Agreement represents a fundamental step towards peace in the country. Despite major challenges, the Agreement has allowed the ceasefire to be respected in most of the South Sudanese territory; progress is being made in the establishment of various committees and mechanisms for the implementation of the agreement; and macroeconomic indicators are becoming relatively stable, as indicated by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2018/1103). However, Ms. Patten's report leaves us deeply indignant, throwing a bucket of cold water over the kindling of the cautious optimism that we might have had for progress at the political level. As long as the bodies of women and girls are seen as spoils and weapons of war, there can be neither peace nor justice nor a future.

Just as we recognize that the situation in South Sudan remains complicated, we cannot but highlight the positive achievements made. At the same time, we must be clear that the road ahead — towards the implementation of peace — will surely present challenges that must be overcome with the political will of the leaders of South Sudan. In the same vein, the continued support of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union and the Security Council is fundamental to efforts to follow up on implementation. Much effort has been invested in the promotion of the political process, and it is therefore vital to work together in harmony so as to continue advancing towards the building of sustainable peace, alongside justice, accountability and respect for human rights, particularly those of women and girls.

As almost everyone in the Chamber has expressed on several occasions, there is no other solution than a political one. Dialogue aimed at addressing the fundamental problems, reconciliation, capacity-building in several areas, support for development, and the definition of security measures, inter alia, are important steps to follow. The Agreement presents a unique opportunity to address several of those problems prior to, during and after the transition period. To that end, the active participation of civil society, young people and, of course, women is essential. We must continue to work to encourage the presence and participation of women in the implementation of the agreement and reach at least 35 per cent of representation by women, as established in the agreement.

Despite progress in the political field, it is undeniable that the population is still affected by the terrible effects of the conflict, especially on the humanitarian front. There is a lack of basic services for the almost 2 million displaced persons and refugees. The civilian population also continues to fall victim of violent attacks. My delegation condemns in the strongest possible terms the sexual violence that more than 100 women and girls recently fell victim to in northern South Sudan. Those attacks are unacceptable and must be investigated, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. We urge the parties to take concrete action in that regard. Impunity when it comes to that kind of brutal action against the civil population prevents the achievement of genuine peace.

We thank the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for her efforts to shed light on that issue and combat it. We reiterate our support for the work that her Office is carrying out. As mentioned in resolution 2428 (2018), the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan will be very important in that regard.

The time has come for South Sudan to create an environment of protection for women, to combat sexual violence and to develop transitional justice in the interests of accountability. In that connection, the establishment of a hybrid tribunal, under the leadership of the African Union, will be critical.

It is clear that, at this stage, all our efforts must be directed towards the implementation of the Agreement. The cooperation of the international community is needed to mobilize political and financial resources

to assist in the implementation of the Agreement. Similarly, it is very important that the Security Council remain united and work in harmony with the African Union and IGAD, especially in restoring confidence among the parties. We must therefore maintain a neutral and constructive position. In order to do that, we must coordinate our actions with those of the region. It is also very important that the parties ensure an optimal operational environment for the United Nations Mission in Southern Sudan (UNMISS) and the humanitarian workers, in compliance with international law and international humanitarian law.

We reiterate our gratitude to the countries of the region for the leadership that they have shown, especially Ethiopia, the Sudan and Uganda, which have made important progress in the political process possible. Similarly, we emphasize and appreciate the committed work of UNMISS.

Lastly, we thank IGAD and the African Union, in particular, for the vital role they are playing in bringing peace to South Sudan.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): On behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix; Her Excellency Ms. Joanna Wronecka; and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, for their valuable briefings. We pay tribute to the commitment of each one of them to the promotion of peace, justice and development in South Sudan.

It has been little over three months since the parties to the conflict in South Sudan signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Since the signing, we have been able to welcome some important developments. In particular, we welcome the convening of pre-transitional committees and mechanisms and the implementation of confidence-building measures, such as joint field visits and the release of some political prisoners. However, as stated many times, the strength of a peace agreement will be determined by its ability to deliver safety and stability to the people of South Sudan. In that context, we are concerned by the continuing ceasefire violations, in particular around greater Baggari. In addition, the recent attacks on civilians near Bentiu, where at least 125 women, including elderly and pregnant women and

minors, were raped within the space of one week, were cowardly and horrendous.

These events represent a serious setback to the peace process and demonstrate the ongoing need for further progress on the following three points: first, full implementation of the Peace Agreement; secondly, accountability; and, thirdly, priority for the protection of civilians by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

My first point is about the need for the full implementation of the peace agreement. That is the only sustainable way to protect the people of South Sudan, but as deadlines are slipping by, continued action is necessary to maintain the existing momentum. We therefore call for an immediate stop to the ongoing fighting, the finalization of negotiations for the transitional security arrangements and a greater effort to reach the 35-per cent quota for women's participation. We also call on all sides to facilitate, and not frustrate, humanitarian access and put an end to the bureaucratic impediments that humanitarian actors currently face.

In addition, we look to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to continue to demonstrate leadership and unite the international community in order to provide the necessary support and pressure needed during the implementation process. The United Nations, the African Union, the African Union High-level Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan and the European Union have stated their commitment to supporting the process, and we sincerely hope IGAD will seize that opportunity.

My second point is about the need for accountability. There is a clear need to show that there are consequences for those who continue to attack civilians, commit sexual violence or violate human rights. It is the responsibilities of the parties, in particular the Government of South Sudan, to show leadership on that issue. That includes holding perpetrators accountable and making concrete progress towards the implementation of all of the chapter V provisions of the Peace Agreement. In particular, the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing and the Hybrid Court for South Sudan are essential to guaranteeing justice and reconciliation. At the same time, we all have a responsibility to do what we can to deter such heinous crimes. We remind everyone that the Council has decided on a specific designation criterion for sexual violence, and we reaffirm the readiness of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to act on that criterion.

That brings me to my third point, concerning the ongoing need for the protection of civilians by UNMISS. The ongoing sexual violence is a painful reminder that UNMISS remains the primary source of protection for the people of South Sudan. It also demonstrates the importance of a robust, nimble and forward-leaning presence by UNMISS outside the protection-of-civilians sites. Equally important is close coordination on security issues among UNMISS and humanitarian actors and local communities, especially women. The Kingdom of the Netherlands invites the Secretary-General to proactively and consistently share with the Council the steps that the Mission continues to take to implement and sustain the lessons on those issues.

In conclusion, an even greater, sustained and united effort by all of us is necessary, but in the end, only the leaders of South Sudan determine whether there will be sustainable peace in the country. They told us that they are serious about peace, and now we ask them to show us.

Mr. Albanai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Permanent Representative of Poland and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their briefings.

Today, I will address the subject of the debate from three perspectives: political developments, the humanitarian situation and justice.

Our meeting today is different. Three months ago, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan was signed and the National Pre-Transitional Committee held its meetings. That gave us hope that peace will be sustained and the vicious cycle of the conflict in South Sudan will be broken.

We welcome the meeting of the Special Envoy of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) with non-signatory parties to the agreement. Those parties managed to join their forces in South Sudan under State sovereignty and a unified command, while they renamed the armed forces. All of that gives us more hope that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated, and that the country's citizens should play the major role in protecting their country, while the United Nations and regional forces play a complementary role in protecting its citizens.

Despite the positive political developments, the humanitarian situation remains a major source of concern. There are still more than 4 million displaced persons and refugees even after the signing of the peace Agreement. Food insecurity remains high in one of the country's most fertile regions, reminding us of the importance of advancing the political solution while simultaneously providing support to reconstruction, development and the continued unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance. In that connection, I welcome yesterday's announcement of a cooperation framework between the United Nations and South Sudan for the next three years.

I would like to recall the Arab-African Summit held five years ago in Kuwait at which Kuwaiti and South Sudanese officials agreed to launch a new phase of development cooperation. The eruption of the war in December 2013 prevented the implementation of the agreement, and we hope that the transitional period will now provide an opportunity to renew that cooperation.

We firmly condemn crimes of sexual violence in conflict, whether in Wau state or anywhere else. We look forward to achieving justice for the survivors from those heinous crimes and holding the perpetrators accountable. We thank our colleague the Permanent Representative of South Sudan for stressing his country's commitment to holding the perpetrators accountable, and we look forward to seeing the efforts to end impunity continue, as was the case with the perpetrators in the incident at the Terrain Hotel. The courts play an important role in ensuring that citizens feel that their country is stable, and that was the case with the mobile court in Malakal, which recently moved to Bentiu. We look forward to the launch of the Hybrid Court. We also appreciate the central role of Ms. Patten's Office, in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in helping us fight violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law, and in ensuring justice for all.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our colleagues in the Ethiopian delegation for their efforts to help neighbouring countries, including South Sudan, during Ethiopia's term on the Security Council. I also thank our brothers in the Sudan for their prominent role in helping to achieve peace for their brothers in South Sudan, and the other States members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for

their exemplary modelling of coexistence and good-neighbourly relations this year.

Another issue I would like to address is that today, 18 December, is International Arabic Language Day. On this very day in 1973, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3190 (XXVIII), by which Arabic became an official language of the United Nations. I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to all of the interpreters and translators in the United Nations, particularly those working in the Arabic language services. They have made an enormous contribution to bringing the voice of my country and every Arab country in this Chamber to the rest of the world, and we would like to express our deep appreciation and respect for them.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Special Representative Patten and Ambassador Wronecka, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, for their briefings.

At the moment the situation in South Sudan remains generally stable. The parties are working to implement the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and have made progress. The ceasefire has taken hold in most areas. In recent months, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, the National Pre-Transitional Committee and the National Constitutional Amendment Committee have begun their work. The Joint Defence Board, the Joint Transitional Security Committee and the Strategic Defence and Security Review Board have also been established as security mechanisms. The South Sudanese Government has mobilized resources and allocated funds to support the implementation of the Agreement. Activities for raising awareness about the Revitalized Agreement are continuing across the country.

China welcomes the efforts and progress made by all parties, including the Government. In the meantime, we note that some opposition factions have not yet agreed to support the Revitalized Agreement. Intercommunal tensions persist and the humanitarian situation remains serious. All of those issues pose challenges to long-term peace in South Sudan. The international community and the Security Council should be fully aware of the complexity of the situation in South Sudan and should provide the country with constructive assistance in

addressing the problems on the ground. The task now at hand is implementing the Revitalized Agreement, and the Security Council and the international community should focus on the following two points to that end.

First, the political will of the South Sudanese parties must be maintained, as it is critical to the implementation of the Agreement. On the one hand, we should fully respect the prerogative of the leadership of South Sudan to deal with its own issues, encourage the parties to use their initiative and avoid imposing solutions on them. On the other hand, we should continue to support the mediation efforts of regional organizations such as the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and focus on helping the South Sudanese parties build mutual trust, take on their commitments in earnest and achieve a full cessation of hostilities. We agree with the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1103) that establishing the transitional security arrangements and forming a transitional Government should be priorities for the pre-transitional period. That will be conducive to confidence-building and maintaining the political will of the parties.

Secondly, international partners should work quickly to provide South Sudan with assistance and support. There is a great deal to be done in a country emerging from a prolonged conflict. Implementing the Revitalized Agreement and relaunching economic development require a great deal of money and support. We call on the international community to provide funding for the Revitalized Agreement as soon as possible. At the same time, we should step up humanitarian assistance and economic support to South Sudan, enhance its recovery and development capacity, help it to rebuild and prioritize investments in sectors such as agriculture, energy, infrastructure, education and health so that people can enjoy peace dividends as soon as possible.

China commends the United Nations Mission in South Sudan for its significant contribution to maintaining peace and stability in South Sudan and supports the Mission in its continued implementation of the tasks mandated by the Council's resolutions in support of South Sudan's political and peace processes.

It has been China's consistent position that sanctions are a means, not an end. The Security Council should be prudent in its use of sanctions to ensure that the measures taken are helpful to the

political settlement in South Sudan. China has always supported South Sudan's peace and development. In line with our commitment made at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, China has provided the country with ¥300 million in aid and the equivalent of ¥100 million in emergency humanitarian food assistance. As always, China will continue to be an active supporter and constructive participant in the South Sudan peace process, and will play a constructive role in South Sudan's achievement of lasting peace and sustainable development.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for their briefings to the Security Council today. I would also like to thank Ambassador Wronecka for her briefing and for her professional leadership of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

Three months have passed since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which was a watershed moment in returning South Sudan to a path to peace and stability. We again commend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the facilitators for that achievement. We are now seeing promising steps being taken to implement it, albeit behind schedule, and progress being made on the various pre-transitional institutions and mechanisms. We are also encouraged by signs that the ceasefire has been upheld in most parts of South Sudan. I note the assessment by the United Nations that the security situation has significantly improved. The efforts by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition to open direct communication lines have contributed to important confidence-building measures.

What is needed now is sustained political will on the part of the parties to implement what has been agreed on, including making progress on a comprehensive agreement on security arrangements and engaging in genuine peacebuilding and reconciliation. We agree with the point made earlier today by the representative of Ethiopia that it is now important to ensure that the Council remains actively engaged in support of the region, acting firmly on shortcomings but also, and importantly, recognizing and acknowledging progress when it is made. The Council can do better

at recognizing progress as a means of contributing to further progress.

The peace process remains fragile, however, and fighting has continued in some parts of the country, with unacceptable consequences for civilians. A complete cessation of hostilities by all parties, the Government and armed groups alike, must be unconditional in order to enable a meaningful political process as we move forward. There must be consequences for violations of the Agreement. We welcome the region's continued engagement in monitoring its implementation and hope that a new Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission will be appointed soon. Holding the parties to account will be vital, and the United Nations and the African Union must continue to support and engage in the regional effort. As we advance the political process, it will be essential to ensure the effective participation of all stakeholders, including women, young people and civil society. Gender issues are central to peace and security, and we call on the parties to ensure that the 35 per cent quota for women outlined in the peace agreement is met, not just at the national and State level but for all pre-transitional and transitional structures.

We welcome Special Representative Patten's engagement on South Sudan and thank her for her efforts to break the cycle of impunity for sexual and gender-based violence. I almost choked listening to her moving accounts of the heinous sexual and gender-based attacks on women near Bentiu in recent weeks, which must be condemned in the strongest terms. We very much welcome the Council's swift and clear statement (SC/13611) on those incidents, which underline the critical importance of taking firm action to advance accountability and bring those responsible to justice, which in itself is also a way to prevent further such attacks. The transitional justice mechanisms of the peace agreement, including the Hybrid Court, are important in that regard, and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) must be given access to investigate alleged human rights violations and abuses. In the face of such horrific acts of sexual violence against women and girls as reported from Bentiu, the Council must also act and consider targeted measures against those responsible, in line with the stand-alone sanctions criteria on sexual and gender-based violence. We fully agree with Special Representative Patten that we must raise the costs and consequences for committing, commanding and condoning such crimes,

so as to end the prevailing impunity, which is a driver of sexual violence today.

We remain very concerned about the grave humanitarian situation, which is affected directly and indirectly by the conflict. We call on the parties, particularly the Transitional Government of National Unity, to address the dangerous conditions facing humanitarian workers. All impediments to the rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of relief across South Sudan must be removed. We commend the efforts of UNMISS, the World Health Organization and other humanitarian partners to conduct Ebola preparedness contingency planning in response to the outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Attacks on health care continue to be reported from South Sudan. We must redouble our efforts to implement the UNMISS mandate and resolution 2286 (2016). The Arria Formula meeting to be held on Friday will be an opportunity to further discuss the matter with representatives of the Sudan and other affected countries.

We fully agree with Ambassador Wronecka's assessment of her visit earlier this year, which is very similar to the conclusions that Ambassador Skoog arrived at following his visit last month in his capacity as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We also very much appreciate her efforts to ensure the immediate release of all child soldiers, as the conflict in South Sudan has had a devastating effect on children there. The shocking recruitment and use of children by armed groups or forces must come to an end. Only today the Working Group adopted its conclusions on children and armed conflict in South Sudan, in which we welcomed the peace Agreement as an opportunity to turn a corner and make the protection of children a priority as the country moves forward.

In conclusion, as the implementation of the Agreement is now heading in the right direction, upholding that momentum will be crucial. All parties must sustain their political will and make every effort to translate commitments into reality. That also holds true for the Security Council, which must remain closely and constructively engaged and continue to offer its united and active support to regional efforts.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Representative Pramila Patten for their information on the progress of the settlement in South Sudan. We took note of the briefing

by Ambassador Wronecka, Permanent Representative of Poland and Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, about that subsidiary body's activity for the second half of 2018.

The Russian Federation considers the signing on 12 September of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan to be very significant. What is most important is that the South Sudanese parties showed a willingness to compromise and a desire to settle their differences. We would again like to pay tribute to the coordinated mediation efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which initiated and ensured the resulting productive negotiations in Khartoum between June and August, as well as the signing of documents that were crucial to the peace process. We greatly appreciate the ongoing personal contribution by President Omer Al-Bashir of the Sudan to the peace Agreement. We note that the regional actors involved have continued to maintain their united approach to the settlement in South Sudan, which is essential to the future progress of the peace process.

We welcome the desire of the Agreement's guarantors to assist in its implementation by providing national contingents from the Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti and Somalia to the Regional Protection Force. We see that as an example of the realization in practice of the principle of African solutions to African problems, as well as an opportunity for effective cooperation between the United Nations, its Security Council and regional organizations. We are aware of the recent contacts that have taken place between the Chiefs of Staff of the IGAD countries on issues related to the implementation of the Agreement, and we are ready to consider substantive proposals from IGAD regarding the Regional Protection Force.

We welcome the considerable progress that we are beginning to see in implementing the Agreement, including in that regard the formation and launch of the operations of the structures and mechanisms provided for in the Agreement. We consider it important that there has been a considerable drop in the level of violence and the numbers of human rights violations since the Agreement was signed. We have noted the intention of opposition leader Riek Machar to return to Juba at the beginning of 2019 at the latest.

We join the Secretary-General in his call to the South Sudanese parties to finalize their agreements on cantonment, the reintegration of former combatants and other security-related issues. In our view, it is only the full and comprehensive implementation of the commitments that have been made that can help to increase the trust between the parties and prevent them from repeating the mistakes that occurred during the settlement process in South Sudan in the past.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

I thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his very informative briefing on the evolving situation in South Sudan and the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). I also thank Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ambassador Joanna Wronecka, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, for their informative briefings. Those briefings compel Côte d'Ivoire to comment on various political, security, humanitarian and human rights issues, as well as on the implementation of the sanctions regime in South Sudan.

With regard to the political situation, my country welcomes the clear willingness of the South Sudanese parties to implement the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, the sole frame of reference for a political solution to the crisis that has afflicted this country for five years. The appointment by the South Sudanese parties of their representatives to the various mechanisms and institutions of the pre-transition phase, as well as the launch of the work of those mechanisms, is a clear demonstration of their determination to contribute positively to the implementation of the peace Agreement.

It is now a matter of urgency to ensure that the parties to the conflict take advantage of the pre-transitional phase to establish the conditions for a successful transition leading to the speedy holding of elections. In that regard, my country, like the Secretary-General, calls on the parties to make a firm commitment to drafting a revised version of the transitional security arrangements and establishing a transitional Government of national unity. Besides that, in our firm belief in the important role that women play in peace processes, my delegation also encourages

South Sudanese leaders to ensure the meaningful representation of women in the institutions responsible for implementing the Revitalized Agreement.

On the security front, we welcome the ceasefire that is being maintained in some parts of the country, as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1103) so rightly emphasizes. We also welcome in that regard the confidence-building measures introduced by the Government of South Sudan and the opposition groups following the signing of the Agreement. My delegation urges both parties to work to consolidate that peaceful and virtuous attitude so that peace and stability can be restored to the regions still affected by armed clashes and intercommunal violence. In that context, Côte d'Ivoire believes that the process of national dialogue, the unification of the South Sudanese army and the implementation of terms relating to security arrangements will make a major contribution to the gradual improvement of the situation throughout the country. My delegation also welcomes the multifaceted engagement of the member countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in resolving the conflict in South Sudan. We urge the leadership of IGAD and the United Nations to rapidly deploy the UNMISS Regional Protection Force to ensure the protection of civilian populations.

Côte d'Ivoire remains concerned about the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, where there are large numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees, food insecurity issues and health risks related to the outbreak of the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The situation is aggravated by continuing deliberate efforts to obstruct humanitarian assistance throughout the country. Despite repeated appeals from the international community, humanitarian workers continue to be victims of violence, assault and detention in the exercise of their duties, among other things. Côte d'Ivoire firmly condemns all acts of violence against humanitarian workers and the looting of their equipment and once again calls on the South Sudanese parties to create a safe environment that is conducive to the provision of humanitarian assistance and the safe and dignified return of displaced persons to their areas of origin. We commend the invaluable support of the World Health Organization to the Government of South Sudan in strengthening its national capacities for Ebola preparedness and response.

Regarding the human rights situation, we are pleased with the significant drop in human rights

violations and acts of violence by the parties to the conflict since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement. However, we strongly condemn the continuing sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls and the recruitment and use of child soldiers by parties to the conflict. We urge the South Sudanese leaders to implement the principle of accountability in order to bring the perpetrators of such acts before the appropriate courts. We therefore call for the Hybrid Court for South Sudan to be established as soon as possible, in accordance with the terms of the Revitalized Agreement.

With regard to the sanctions regime in South Sudan, we would like to commend Ambassador Joanna Wronecka's remarkable work and reiterate our support to her as she carries out her duties, and we encourage the Government of South Sudan, the countries of the region, the Sanctions Committee and the Panel of Experts to collaborate further in order to support the ongoing peace efforts.

In conclusion, my delegation commends the work done by UNMISS in extremely difficult circumstances and reaffirms that only a genuine commitment on the part of the South Sudanese authorities and continued support from the United Nations, the African Union and the international community can bring this crisis to a definitive end.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your leadership of the Council for the month of December. I also want to thank Mr. Lacroix and Ms. Patten for their briefings today.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General and to welcome his report (S/2018/1103). The period it covers has indeed been marked by several momentous and historic events in South Sudan. Prominent among them were the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and the peace celebration in Juba, which was attended by the leaders of the opposition parties, and the meetings of the various pre-implementation committees in Juba, Addis Ababa and Khartoum. In that regard, I would

like to remind the Council that we are still in the pre-implementation phase, and the peace process has not yet been implemented.

The implementation is admittedly behind schedule, but not because the parties are not committed to what they have signed. The delays are due to technical challenges. It is because of those challenges that our delegation agrees with the Secretary-General that what is needed now in South Sudan for the signed peace Agreement to be implemented on time is political will, and specifically international political will in support of the Agreement. We know that the technical challenges can be overcome with the political will of the international community. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the region, led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union, for their steadfast determination to see to it that South Sudan is peaceful and that the refugees are returned to their homes and communities as soon as it is logistically possible.

As we look forward to the full implementation of Peace Agreement in the next few months, the Government is taking reports of sexual attacks on women in the country seriously. The recent report of a sexual attack on 150 women is disturbing, and the culprits must not be allowed to get away with this criminality. Accordingly, the investigating team formed by the

Government, which is led by the Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, Ms. Awut Deng Acuil, has just returned to Juba from Bentiu and will soon make the team's findings public. Quick condemnation may be good public relations for some, but investigating and getting to the facts and bringing the rule of law to bear upon the alleged criminals is more prudent. I believe that in some countries it is called due process. Sanctions alone have never brought peace to any conflict in the world.

In conclusion, allow me to bid farewell to the non-permanent members that are finishing their terms at the end of this year. My delegation will miss their wise advice and the opportunities for close working relations they have extended to us. In particular, we want to wish Ethiopia, Bolivia and Kazakhstan success in their future endeavours in the international arena. In the same vein, we look forward to welcoming the new members, especially the Republic of South Africa, upon the start of their tenure early next year.

(spoke in Arabic)

Lastly, I would like to congratulate Kuwait and all Arabic-speaking countries on the occasion of World Arabic Language Day.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.