



PRESS RELEASE

Statement by Under-Secretary-General for UN Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, to the UN Security Council on the situation in South Sudan

[Near Verbatim]

11 November 2025

Mr. President,

I thank you for the opportunity to brief you and the Council on the situation in South Sudan which demands not only our attention, but our collective action as well. This briefing is additionally informed by my visit to the country from 15-17 October. Let me also associate myself fully with the statement just pronounced by the Executive Director of UN Women, my friend and colleague Sima Bahous. And I thank her for the excellent cooperation between UN Women and UN Peacekeeping.

Over the past three months, the developments in South Sudan continued to move in a negative and possibly dangerous direction. Ceasefire violations are on the increase, including widespread aerial bombardments and clashes between the signatories of the Peace Agreement. With the unilateral removal of opposition appointees in the Transitional Government of National Unity in violation of the Peace Agreement, First Vice-President Machar and opposition leaders allied to him remain detained and on trial, and the effects of the conflict in Sudan continue to spill over the border, inflaming local tensions and placing strain on already scarce resources of the government and the international actors in the country.

As a result of all this, the trust deficit between key role players has widened as the peace process seems to be unraveling.

Mr. President,

Despite these challenges and a breaking point becoming visible, the Revitalized Peace Agreement remains the only viable framework for long term peace and stability in South Sudan.

The principle of inclusivity that underpinned the Agreement in general and the power sharing arrangement in particular appear to have been sacrificed in the wave of repeated unilateral decisions. In this context, the emergence of breakaway factions could raise questions about the viability of the peace process as well as the peaceful nature, before, during and after, future elections conducted under these circumstances.

The detention and ongoing trial of senior SPLM/A-IO leaders, including First Vice President Machar, has further polarized the political environment. While I will not comment on the legal merits of the case, I must stress that adherence to due process, and fairness and transparency of the trial is

critically important if public confidence is to be maintained and the trial does not serve as a trigger for violence.

Institutions designed to foster partnerships are under-resourced and faltering. In the absence of dialogue, mistrust is hardening, and any remaining space for compromise is fast diminishing. As a result, the implementation of the transitional security arrangements remains stalled and little progress has been observed in the constitution-making process.

The transitional period of the Peace Agreement is expected to conclude after elections in December 2026. Much has been stated about the intent to hold these long-awaited elections, but there is little to show in terms of concrete steps undertaken. With time running out for credible planning, key electoral decisions must be made now, not later. However, this requires genuine political negotiations and compromise. In this regard, we call for the resumption of the government-led Joint Task Force with the UN, AU, IGAD and Troika to support the prioritization and resourcing of the constitution-making and electoral processes.

I concur fully with the call of the African Union Peace and Security Council for IGAD, as guarantor of the peace process, and neighboring states to re-energize efforts to ensure implementation and accountability for commitments made in the peace agreement. As credible and peaceful elections within the timelines of the Peace Agreement in December 2026 appear increasingly improbable, fresh political commitment and dialogue between the leaders of South Sudan are therefore essential. Political commitment and dialogue between the leaders of South Sudan are absolutely critical for the country to move forward, including on key political processes contemplated by the Peace Agreement.

Mr. President,

The humanitarian situation remains catastrophic. More than 7.5 million people face acute food insecurity; 28,000 are at risk of famine. Flooding has displaced over a million. Over 1.2 million returnees and refugees from Sudan have crossed into a country already struggling to feed its own.

Human suffering during this volatile situation continues to mount. Conflict-related sexual violence, arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial killings persist, with limited accountability. I urge all parties to immediately cease hostilities and recommit to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

Despite insecurity and rising bureaucratic impediments, humanitarian partners bravely continue to deliver assistance, often at great personal risk. I call on the Government to lift access restrictions, guarantee the safety of aid workers and hold to account all those involved in attacks on humanitarian workers.

Mr. President,

These political and security upheavals coincide with a financial crisis for the United Nations and peacekeeping, in particular.

UNMISS, like other missions, faces difficult challenges to meet ambitious mandates with diminishing means.

Since its inception in 2011, UNMISS has operated through two civil wars in 2013 and 2016 and saved hundreds of thousands of lives under its protection of civilians' mandate; maintained six Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites hosting up to 250,000 IDPs for over seven years; and implemented its other mandated activities outlined in the remaining three pillars of the mandate. As things stand, the Mission continues to maintain a Protection of Civilians site in Malakal and provides security support to humanitarian actors managing the IDP camps that were redesignated from being PoC sites.

The facts on the ground prove that the presence of the Mission in South Sudan was and remains essential to maintain peace and stability, to the extent possible, till the end of the transition period. While the current liquidity crisis will greatly impact the ability of the Mission to protect civilians and deliver on the rest of its mandate, UNMISS continues to be a critical actor in South Sudan to protect civilians and support all efforts aimed at maintaining peace and stability in the country, again to the extent possible, and in a region that is massively affected by conflict.

In this context, the contingency plan, applied across all UN peacekeeping operations to address liquidity challenges, is now being implemented in UNMISS. This plan entails the closure of certain field offices and bases, the repatriation of uniformed personnel, which has already begun, and reductions of national and international staff.

During my recent visit to Juba, I informed the Government of South Sudan, including President Salva Kiir, of these measures, emphasizing the financial imperatives driving this exercise. I stressed that, despite the impact of the planned downsizing and office and base closures, UNMISS remains fully committed to prioritizing protection, facilitating humanitarian assistance, and fulfilling its mandated tasks, ensuring that the gains achieved since the deployment of the Mission are not undermined, while continuing to support the Government in fulfilling its responsibility to protect its citizens.

While I received assurances from President Kiir and several ministers that the host government recognizes the difficult circumstances facing UNMISS and would support the Mission in implementing its plan, only days later the Mission received a formal document from the Government outlining a series of conditions that are not only impractical but pose a serious threat to the viability of the contingency plan, and potentially to the Mission itself. Unless there is a greater understanding and flexibility from the Government, the Mission's ability to fulfill its mandate will be severely compromised, and frankly, the future of that Mission is totally at stake.

We remain committed to working closely with the Government to ensure the swift implementation of this exercise, which is primarily intended to allow us to continue executing our mandate for the benefit of peace, stability, for the people of South Sudan. In this regard, we call for the support of the Government which remains key for progress ahead. However, let me reiterate, the Status of Forces Agreement must be respected, and the safety of UN personnel and assets must be guaranteed. We also count on the continued support of the Council in this regard.

Mr. President,

To conclude, implementation of the Revitalized Agreement remains South Sudan's only path to stability and lasting peace. But time is running dangerously short and there is an urgent need to bring the peace process back on track. We hope this Council will send a clear message in this regard. The parties must take a citizen-centric approach, reinvigorate their commitment to political inclusion and cease unilateral actions. Furthermore, we, as regional actors and the international community, must remain united and engaged.

At a time of global uncertainty, developments next door in Sudan, particularly in Darfur, serve as a reminder that peacekeeping is an investment in international peace and security, as the region simply cannot afford another conflict causing more suffering to the people of South Sudan who have suffered far too much and for far too long.

Thank you.