



Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission
(JMEC)

Opening Statement

by

His Excellency Festus G. Mogae,

Chairperson

of the

Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC),

at the meeting of JMEC held in Juba on

12 January 2016

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies,

Distinguished representatives,

Ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning, and welcome to our first meeting in the new year of 2016, a year that I hope will be remembered for South Sudan as a year of peace and a year of transformation and reconciliation. Some dates, in any country's history, are particularly memorable – I am told that 1947, 1972, 1983, 2005 and of course independence in 2011 are some of those dates here in South Sudan – but if peace is truly entrenched in South Sudan in 2016, then that will be a year to remember as well.

At the present time in Botswana, and indeed much of Southern Africa, is experiencing a record heat wave. I don't suppose there are many Africans who come to South Sudan because they find it cooler, but I can honestly say that I am one of them! But in all seriousness, despite the reasonable temperatures, I understand that at present it is your dry season, and the rains are a few months away. I note this because of the opportunity the good climate of these months provides, to prepare for the humanitarian challenges that 2016 is anticipated to bring.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Very soon, I hope, the new transitional government of national unity will be formed. But the meaning of that new government will be quickly questioned if it does not rapidly address the humanitarian situation the country faces. I would observe that the humanitarian projections suggest things are going to get worse before they get better, because of the limited agricultural production this year and the consequent food deficit that implies.

It is my understanding, for example, that at present only a fraction of the emergency food that needs to be prepositioned, in both Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile, is being delivered, because of restrictions on aid convoys and due to insecurity. Instead of the 75,000 tons of food that needs to be moved in country by road before the dry season ends in the next three months, only 5,000 tons a month is being transported. The alternative, air transport, is 5 or 6 times more expensive and therefore prohibitively so. The implications are obvious. I would urge both the government and the SPLM/A (In Opposition) to take immediate action to direct all of their officials, in all departments, to ensure their complete and unconditional cooperation with the humanitarian agencies so that this deficiency can be remedied before it is too late. I am asking the humanitarian

agencies to keep me informed of any difficulties and challenges that occur in the coming weeks and months. Together we must address the situation; a failure to do so compromises the very significance of a new political dispensation.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am deeply pained to hear that so many children have not only been affected by the fighting, but have had their opportunity for education curtailed. I understand that almost one in every three schools in South Sudan is either destroyed, damaged, occupied or closed because of the conflict. I am staggered, and saddened by this figure, because I have seen from my own experience in government what the opportunity cost is, if we do not invest in education. Take it from me: education is, dollar for dollar, one of the best returns on investment any country can make. And as someone who only started school at the age of 11, I not only value education as a government priority but am humbled by the opportunity it provided to me to change my life. Not only is the present reality unacceptable, but it is also the gravest problem a country could have: to not be able to provide for the future of its youngest citizens. I hope that the incoming ministers for education are ready for the challenge that confronts them: this too must be addressed without delay.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

If I may borrow part of the gospel: the advice we are given in Matthew chapter 5, verse 25; is to “settle matters quickly with your adversary.”

I am very pleased that the Parties came to Agreement on the allocation of ministerial portfolios. It demonstrates practicality, reason, and respect for inclusivity. All of these qualities should continue to be shown in implementation of the process.

I am also pleased that this meeting sees, for the first time, reports from a number of institutions established as per the Agreement. These are initial reports, and I hope they can report meaningful progress. Working together implies a process of compromise and reconciliation, give and take, mutual tolerance, in small ways as well as in more significant adjustments. The actions of any Party must therefore be considered in that context; we must be practical, we must be reasonable, we must accommodate different views and when obstacles arise, we should not see them as opportunities to fail or stall the process but seek solutions through compromise and dialogue. This is true in all processes of peace, accountability and reform, and we owe it to the people of South Sudan to continue in this spirit.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting is also significant because it helps set the conditions for a launch of what is a critical and overdue process: the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). This process should be seen as an opportunity, and not a threat or something to be resisted. Transformation of the security sector, particularly in a country where there has been recent war, and where the defence expenditure is the largest part of the budget, is never easy. But if one returns to the theme of providing a better future for the next generation, as I noted earlier, it becomes clear that the defence review process is vital.

There are few soldiers who have gone to war who want their children to have the same experience. Sometimes this is impossible to avoid, but I ask those of you who once fought to ask whether any child in South Sudan should have that same future. Clearly, they should not. I welcome, what I understand is some recent progress in terms of the release of child soldiers. But this is a modest achievement, and we should aim for more than minimum conditions; therefore, I request that the Parties and other stakeholders present take the SDSR process seriously; ensure that their representatives are appropriately tasked and mandated; and that the SDSR process begins expeditiously to make up for lost time.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In just over two weeks time the African Union Summit will convene in Addis Ababa. I hope to give the Summit a positive report on the implementation of the Agreement, including the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity. It is my expectation and hope, therefore, that this meeting will have four main outcomes:

1. To hear from the Parties on their progress in establishing the Transitional Government of National Unity, and identify any opportunities to assist the Parties to accelerate this progress;
2. To hear from the JMCC, JOC, CTSAMM and NCAC on the progress in implementing their mandates as institutions;
3. That the SDSR Board convene its first meeting this week to begin the vital process of security sector transformation;
4. That action be taken by the Parties to ensure the humanitarian constraints I have mentioned earlier, are addressed, without delay.

Tomorrow, I will be travelling to Malakal to see the situation for myself, and spend the night there. On the following day I will visit Bentiu before continuing to Addis. When I return in February, after the AU Summit, I am keen to visit Greater Bahr el Ghazal – time does

not permit visits to that region on this trip. One of the things we have done is to translate the Agreement into Arabic, and to translate the preamble and summaries of the Agreement into Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk, to try and reach more people with the message of peace and hope. It is my hope that, in addition to the potential of the Agreement contained in its text, I can tell people in Malakal and Bentiu that our meeting today made progress, that all here are seized with the urgency the situation demands, and that this peace process is real. I thank you all for your cooperation in making this so.