

Opening Statement
by
His Excellency Festus G. Mogae,
Chairperson
of the
Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC),
at the inaugural meeting of JMEC held in Juba on
27 November 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies,

Distinguished representatives,

Ladies and gentlemen:

We meet here today with a solemn responsibility: to ensure that South Sudan, Africa's youngest country, embarks on a journey to durable peace and prosperity, for all its people. The potential of this country, and its people, is undoubtedly great. It is a tragedy that the calamity of war, which befell this country for so many decades, sadly returned in 2013. We have, just minutes ago, observed a moment of silence for those who, in death, had their potential taken away by this conflict, prematurely and unnecessarily. Let us ensure that no more families, and no more communities, suffer the pain of these victims.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you know very well, in August this year the Parties: the Government, the SPLM/A (In Opposition) and the Former Detainees, signed the Agreement to Resolve the Conflict in South Sudan. Part of that Agreement was to establish a meaningful and effective monitoring and oversight mechanism, to be known as the Joint Monitoring and

Evaluation Commission (JMEC), which the IGAD Heads of State have appointed me to chair. I thank them for their trust and confidence, and for the authority invested in the Commission.

JMEC will succeed if we make it a practical and collaborative institution, and if we work together and are honest with each other. Our role here is not to replace that of other institutions provided for in the Agreement. It is, instead, to encourage and accelerate progress, to facilitate dialogue and overcome difficulties in implementation, and, if necessary, to take action to ensure the Agreement is fulfilled. There is a need for a paradigm shift, from war to peace, from destruction to reconstruction. The end of the war has already been declared numerous times: let us now make it a reality.

One of the most important strengths of JMEC is its composition. Represented in this institution are not only the parties to the Agreement but a broad spectrum of South Sudanese society, both from within politics and outside of it. South Sudan is highly diverse: instead of thinking of this diversity as a weakness, we should consider it a virtue. Differences of opinion are not bad things; they make the quality and depth of our politics better. Let us work towards an institution that

is both tolerant of different views but effective in its execution, and let it be a model for South Sudan as a whole.

It is a mark of the seriousness with which this Agreement is being taken that we have such important participation from the region, the continent, and beyond. Seated here are both the countries from the region that mediated the Agreement as well as the best and oldest friends and partners of South Sudan from the international community. I believe I can speak for all of us when I say that we are all here to make the Agreement work, in letter and in spirit. If we work in good faith it is completely within our reach to do so.

While the seat of our commission is in Juba, let us always keep in mind that most South Sudanese do not live in Juba, and have never been to the capital. Let us ensure that we take JMEC to the people, in both our messages and our meetings. In time, I hope that we can both visit the states and ensure that the views of people from outside of Juba are also reflected here.

JMEC is a new institution, and it will need your support – moral, political and financial – to move forward. I thank the United States, the European Union, Norway, the Netherlands and the People’s Republic of

China for having already responded to our specific request to fund both secretariat positions within JMEC and provide the logistical support for our institution to operate. I am confident that you will continue your efforts to further enhance the capacity of JMEC and hope others will also be able to assist in the near future.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Agreement is by no means perfect, and I have noted the concerns of some about a number of the provisions therein. But no Agreement can address every concern of every party. No Agreement is a solution to all problems. The most important question is whether there exists the determination to implement what was agreed. I believe that there is, and that we should capitalize on the opportunity the agreement provides to ensure a peaceful South Sudan, where justice, equality and fairness prevail. There is no question that the Agreement is ambitious; that is itself a challenge, but it is the sort of challenge we should embrace, and not one that we should resist.

JMEC, of course, is not the only institution created by the Agreement. The security institutions created by the Agreement, including the

Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM), the Joint Military Ceasefire Commission (JMCC), the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) and the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), are critical. We will hear from the chair of CTSAMM or his representatives later, but there is clearly a great deal of work to be done throughout the field. We do not have chairpersons or representatives of these other institutions yet, but it is my hope that by our next meeting we will see most of these institutions represented and reporting to this commission, JMEC.

One other institution is the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC), whose work is of critical urgency if the new transitional government of national unity is to be established in the near future. A Chairperson and the 2nd representative of IGAD have already been appointed to the NCAC, and the committee has to begin its work expeditiously; I hope that this work will accelerate in the near future. And then there is the Economic and Financial Management Authority (EFMA), the Special Reconstruction Fund, and crucially, the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing. All of these institutions will need support, and I trust that our friends in the international community will also be there, as they have been in the

past, to support them, in partnership with the Transitional Government of National Unity.

I have no illusions about the challenges in front of us. And I hope the Parties also have no illusions about the perils of continuing the conflict and non-implementation of the Agreement. Overcoming civil war is never easy, as you know from the long history of war that plagued first *Southern* Sudan and now *South* Sudan. But by the same token, you are not the only country that has experienced civil war. In your own region, Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda have all experienced conflict, and exited from them. Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Sierra Leone, have all experienced conflicts, and left them behind. I urge you to look, as one example, at Rwanda, where the people have come together, overcome their profound differences and terrible historical legacy. The country has made great strides, in spite of the fact that it is not blessed with natural resources. There is no reason that you cannot do it, too, as all of these other countries have done.

There is no easy way out of conflict, but it must occur. Every war must end. I know, that this is not easy. You are not alone in this task. By profession, I am not a military man. I ask you now to join me as generals in a new war: a war against poverty, disease and ignorance.

You can achieve much better rewards for fighting this type of war, where lives are saved rather than taken, where prosperity is achieved rather than destroyed, where hope is brought rather than despair.

Some of these processes described in the Agreement have implications far beyond the period of the Agreement. In that sense, the Agreement is only the start. JMEC is only the beginning. As we embark on the implementation of the Agreement, we must see this as a new chapter in the process of state development, rather than an end of a peace process.

My message to the people of South Sudan, and my message to all of you as well, is that even though there will be inevitable difficulties, you must choose the path of peace and adhere and uphold all the provisions of the Agreement, and to the spirit of what the Agreement creates. You must begin to forgive each other and start the process of reconciliation, even if you cannot forget what has happened. You, the leaders of the people, should make every effort for the other side, whomever it is, to have more confidence in your sincerity and commitment. Confidence builds confidence. Progress begets progress.

This meeting is the first time since the Agreement was signed that JMEC has been convened. This is an important milestone. I have spent the last month consulting with the IGAD Heads of State. All of them have assured me of their cooperation and support in the full implementation of the Agreement and in backing this mechanism. At some point, they will be here in Juba for their Heads of State Summit. But in the meantime, JMEC exists, we have a mandate, and urgent business on many fronts that we must begin to address, even if regrettably, some of the seats around the table are still vacant. The Heads of State are expecting to hear from us, and I hope we will have progress to report soon.

The people of South Sudan are expecting to hear from both JMEC and from their leaders, and every further delay is a disappointment to those people. The desire for peace is evident – yesterday, as you know, I was in Bor, and just as in Juba, people want peace and are determined to work for it, and expect their leaders to work for it too.

Let us share responsibility for the continuation of the peace and not bear blame for a failure to implement the Agreement. This is the choice you have, and for me, it is clear what the choice should be: implementation, and implementation quickly, to make up for the time

that has been lost and to deliver on the potential many have identified and of which I spoke at the beginning of my statement. Potential is meaningless if it is not acted on. We in Botswana have a saying—a horse's grass is what is in its mouth, and not what surrounds it. We must grow the grass as well as eat it. Let us not waste that potential, that promise, any longer.

I say again to the people of South Sudan that they should not lose hope even if progress has been slow; that they should believe in peace and a new political dispensation. It is my hope that all those displaced and affected will soon be able to return home, and that the humanitarian and economic crisis that may consume the country can still be averted. But this needs concerted action, and it needs focus on the many tasks ahead.

In that spirit, let me conclude here and ask that in your statements, we focus on the way forward.

I thank you all.