

**Joint statement by IGAD, R-JMEC, Representatives of the African Diplomatic Community, Norway and UNMISS on the situation in Tambura**

*Juba, 19 September 2021:* A joint delegation of international partners to the peace process in South Sudan visited Tambura, Western Equatoria State on 16 September 2021, to encourage peaceful solutions to the conflict that has led to the killing and injuring of civilians, the displacement of over 80,000 people, destruction of private and public property, and the suspension of humanitarian operations.

The delegation concluded that unless urgent action is taken by the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity to end the fighting, there is an imminent risk that further escalation will endanger vulnerable populations, exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation, and threaten successful implementation of the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. From engagements with local stakeholders, it became clear that the root causes of the conflict can only be addressed through full implementation of the Agreement and, most urgently, the unification of forces and their deployment.

The delegation included representatives from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (R-JMEC), Ambassadors and diplomats from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Norway, Sudan, and Uganda, the acting Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

The delegation urges an immediate cessation of hostilities and welcomes the Presidency's decision to investigate recent events through a Joint Defence Board team, led by Lt. Gen. Wesley Welebe. It also looks forward to the Government's implementation of its recommendations, especially the removal of fighting forces from the area and the recall to Juba of leaders of the various factions.

The delegation calls on the national and state governments to take immediate steps towards the separation of forces and undertake dialogue and reconciliation initiatives between communities to de-escalate tensions. The delegation appeals for local authorities and community leaders to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers so that life-saving assistance can resume in earnest.

The protection of civilians and support to internally displaced people is first and foremost the responsibility of the Government. However, the delegation will continue to support the Government and people of South Sudan, including through capacity-building of rule of law institutions.

The delegation commends UNMISS for its efforts in protecting civilians, including through the establishment of a temporary base in Tambura with increased patrols to deter violence and facilitate the collection of food and water by the local population, complemented by its engagement with political and traditional leaders to promote dialogue and reconciliation.

The mission was carried out as part of ongoing efforts by UNMISS to strengthen cooperation and coordination with international partners to promote sustainable peace, security, and development in South Sudan.