

LAUNCH OF THE 2016 SOUTH SUDAN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN

**Opening Remarks by Mr. Eugene Owusu,
Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General
and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator**

Juba, 19 January 2016

Hon. Prof. Lokulenge Lole,
Hon. Gatwech Peter Kulang,
Excellencies Ambassadors,
Colleagues from the UN System,
Colleagues from the NGO community,
Members of the Press,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team, I would like to welcome all of you all to the launch of the South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016.

Today, I am proud that the Humanitarian Country Team has been part of this joint-up effort to come up with a comprehensive plan to address life-saving needs, as well as deal with persistent vulnerabilities in communities.

Congratulations to my OCHA colleagues and the leadership of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) for their leadership in helping us chart a response not dictated by sectors and opportunities for handouts but fundamentally shaped around the myriad of key humanitarian challenges we face in the country—from nutrition to natural disasters to displacement. This truly represents a step forward.

I wish to extend my appreciation to all who are active and engaged in the humanitarian sector and who have contributed to the development of the plan. And I would like to use this opportunity to commend the people of South Sudan for their contribution and indomitable spirit and resilience in the face of overwhelming challenges.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The launch of this plan comes at a time of great optimism. The improving political and security context we operate in calls for hope and a greater resolve to stay the course. It is hard not be sceptical considering the magnitude of challenge and it is easy to lose heart but there is also cause for hope. The content and orientation of the plan is testament that change is possible and we do have a responsibility.

The world and the donor community have stood side-by-side with the people of South Sudan, giving generously to help alleviate their suffering, and humanitarian partners have worked tirelessly to reach people in need, delivering life-saving assistance and protection to more than 4.4 million people in South Sudan in 2015, including in some of the most remote locations. Food aid was delivered to more than one million people. Nearly 140,000 children were treated for malnutrition and about 440,000 benefitted from Education in Emergencies programmes. More than 240,000 children under age 5 received measles vaccinations.

Despite this strong support, our job is not done; the challenge remains daunting.

For example, we estimate that some 6.1 million people across South Sudan are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance or protection. More than 2.3 million people – one in every five people in South Sudan - have been forced to flee their homes since the conflict began, including 1.69 million internally displaced people and about 640,000 refugees in neighbouring countries. Some 200,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) have sought refuge in UN Protection of Civilians sites. Thousands of homes have been ruined during the fighting and many people have been displaced multiple times, running from location to location with nothing but the clothes on their backs. The outcome is a cycle of crisis that millions cannot escape, resulting in great hardship, great costs, and the loss of hard-won livelihoods.

Hunger and malnutrition are widespread and now present in locations that were previously considered stable. About 3.9 million people – nearly one in every three people in South Sudan – were severely food insecure as at September 2015, including some 30,000 people facing catastrophic food insecurity. According to official statistics, more than 680,000 children under the age of five are estimated to be acutely malnourished, including 230,000 who are severely malnourished.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The plan we are launching today is not a silver bullet to solve all the humanitarian challenges in this country. Rather we see it as a strategic framework and a planning tool to customise and calibrate the support of the humanitarian community to maximise our intervention taking into consideration emerging opportunities.

The evolving environment we operate in calls for a plan that is transformative and bold. If we continue to do business as usual, we might help some people, sometime, but will not be building a community and investing in the future. The survival of this country, our hopes for a just and peaceful South Sudan in which we work together to achieve shared goals, depends on us finding the courage to do business differently and jointly for our shared aspirations.

This is not a business-as-usual plan. Conventional approaches of “relief now, development later” will not work in response to the challenges in South Sudan.

The plan that you have before you today is robust, strictly prioritized and focused on responding to the most urgent and life-saving needs in South Sudan, while helping to ensure that communities are protected, capable and prepared to cope with significant threats. Within this plan we want to ensure more aid reach more people who need it the most.

The Plan places protection at its centre and reflects our commitment to ensure that we respond appropriately to the unique needs of the different groups affected by this crisis, including internally displaced people, host communities, refugees, children, the elderly, women and men. It also contains innovative measures to enable humanitarian partners to continue their operations, despite the immense difficulties they are facing.

As we move forward, we must remind ourselves that the plan will remain an aspiration unless certain minimum conditions for success are met:

First: *Access is central to secure the success we aspire.* The operating environment has been complex, dangerous and difficult. Humanitarian partners have had to suspend operations and withdraw staff from locations when fighting erupted; offices, vehicles and vital facilities have been attacked and looted; and humanitarian staff have been threatened and killed. Since the conflict began in December 2013, 43 aid workers have unacceptably lost their lives. Humanitarians are prepared to accept a certain level of risk, but the parties to this unfortunate conflict must also fully respect the right of humanitarians to deliver impartial and independent assistance, including in the contested areas. This is an absolute imperative!

Second: *Funding is an absolute imperative if we are to successfully implement this plan that we launching today and achieve the goals and targets within it.* Humanitarian funding and response must remain robust in the light of the significant needs. Otherwise, South Sudan could become a forgotten emergency, as international attention moves on to other pressing crises. To undertake these critical activities, humanitarian partners are requesting US\$1.3 billion to assist 5.1 million of people. Those of you who have been here for some time will see that we are requesting less money to reach more people in 2016 compared to 2015. We are confident in our ability to reach this target through increasing efficiencies and maximising synergies in the humanitarian response. However, I cannot overstate this fact, this appeal must be fully funded.

Third: *It is partnerships which hold out the greatest hope of finding innovative solutions to the humanitarian challenges we face.* As we lament over the sad humanitarian situation, we must not forget to remind ourselves that overcoming the humanitarian challenge is a collective and differentiated responsibility that hinges on building wider ownership and partnership across all sectors. Indeed herein resides the importance of the Plan. **The Plan is about unity in hope and mutual accountability for common results.** We must build strong partnership with all relevant actors on a plan that ensures humanitarian assistance becomes less and less relevant as a consequence of stronger local capacity and greater national responsibilities. Moving forward, it is important that we ensure and maintain consistent and constructive dialogue that is not premised on apportioning blame but rather on seeking innovative and creative solutions.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenge we face is unprecedented. It is the sincere hope of the humanitarian community that 2016 will bring long-lasting peace to this young and potentially great nation

and replace the desperation and devastation we have seen in 2015 with hope for a brighter future. Whilst this hope is being built, humanitarians will continue to strive each day to ensure that the most desperate and vulnerable across South Sudan are reached with life-saving protection and assistance.

I would like to conclude by sharing with you the story of a courageous and resilient young woman named Nyaluak.

Nyaluak used to get up early each morning, wash her face and clean her compound before she woke her children. But when her village was attacked in 2015, her *tukul* was burned with all of her belongings and her eldest child and husband were killed. While fleeing the violence, she was raped. She and her youngest son managed to escape and now survive on only one meal a day – consisting of wild fruit. Nyaluak has only one dress left.

Like so many people across South Sudan, Nyaluak's asks are modest. She said she needs food for her son and would like a new dress, some sandals, underwear and a kanga. She wants to rebuild her home and restart her tea business. But there is also something less tangible, and yet equally important – the restoration of her dignity: “You don't wash your face when you are terrified, you don't need to feel clean, but I washed my face today to meet you,” Nyaluak recently told aid workers who met with her.

In 2016, humanitarian partners will work relentlessly to assist people like Nyaluak and her son across South Sudan. We count on your support and generosity in this endeavour. The urgency and importance of our work is evident in its impact. Together, we can quite literally save millions of lives and livelihoods.

The road will be bumpy and long, but the collective efforts that bring us here today, continue to give me confidence that, together, we can get there.

I wish to thank our development partners for the solid solidarity they have demonstrated to the people of South Sudan. In their period of pain and agony, you have reached out to their own outreached hands despite tough times back home. We sincerely appreciate and commend your support. And I wish to thank the RRC and the Government of South Sudan more broadly for the increasingly strong partnership that characterizes our humanitarian work.

As the Humanitarian Coordinator, in South Sudan, I wish to use this opportunity to renew my commitment to South Sudanese that in the quest to ensure a better life, you will not walk alone; in your mission to ensure hope for this country and its people, you have a partner. And I pledge to the humanitarian community that ensuring your security, access and the effective delivery of your humanitarian action will remain a top priority for me as long as I am the Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan.

I thank you.