Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan condemns killing of aid workers in Jonglei and calls for a stop to the recurring acts of violence

(Juba, 20 May 2020) The Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan, Alain Noudéhou, has strongly condemned the killing of three aid workers in Jonglei, in northeastern South Sudan, and called for an end to recurring acts of violence which are disrupting life-saving assistance and COVID-19 response in many parts of the country.

On 16 May, a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) staff member and two staff members of another humanitarian organization were killed, after intense fighting erupted in and around Pieri town, Jonglei. Hundreds of people were reportedly killed and wounded, many more were forced to flee the area, and several aid workers are still unaccounted for.

“I condemn in the strongest possible terms the killing of three aid workers in Pieri and call for those responsible to be brought swiftly to justice. The Government, all parties and communities must step up efforts to protect humanitarians who are taking great risks to their safety in order to provide much needed assistance to the most vulnerable people in South Sudan,” said Mr. Noudéhou.

Intercommunal violence has broken out several times in the past months in Jonglei, an area that has experienced years of food insecurity and was severely affected by flooding last year. Intercommunal violence is having serious consequences on civilians and aid workers in many parts of the country.

In addition to intercommunal violence in several locations, armed conflict has persisted in Central and Eastern Equatorias over the past months, displacing thousands of people and adding to the over 7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance throughout the country. Most of the affected people are women and children. This conflict has also disrupted the surveillance of desert locusts, another threat to an already fragile situation.

Intercommunal clashes and armed conflict are hampering humanitarian efforts to pre-position food, medicine and other aid supplies in the final weeks before the rains become heavier and cut off road access to vulnerable communities.

“The violence must therefore stop and humanitarians must be able to reach affected communities freely and without fear,” the Humanitarian Coordinator said.