

UNITED NATIONS

PRESS RELEASE

Statement to the Security Council

**by Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on his
visit to South Sudan**

New York, 17 November 2016

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to brief the Security Council on my visit to South Sudan last week.

I decided to go to South Sudan due to growing concern at recent developments there, including reports of violence targeting multiple ethnic groups. This violence is taking place against the background of the breakdown in the political process and a stalling in the implementation of the peace agreement.

The aim of my visit was to carry out an assessment of the situation from the perspective of my mandate in order to better understand the landscape of ethnically-fuelled violence – including hate speech and incitement to violence – and the risk that this violence could lead to further atrocity crimes, including genocide.

In the course of the week I met with United Nations colleagues, senior government officials, civil society groups, religious leaders, community members and diplomatic representatives in Juba. I visited a “protection of civilians” site in Juba and travelled to Yei town in Yei River State to meet with members of the community and government. Yei, which until recently had been spared the violence seen in other areas, has now been identified as a conflict “hot spot” with escalating violence against multiple tribal groups in Yei and in the Central Equatorial State, of which Yei River State is a part. The perpetrators of this violence are varied and reportedly include the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), the SPLA in Opposition, unidentified armed groups, militia, armed groups and bandits.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank SRSG Løj for the excellent support provided by UNMISS for my visit and express my appreciation to the Transitional Government of National Unity for facilitating the visit and for its cooperation while I was there.

That being said, as I reported last week, I was dismayed that what I saw and heard in South Sudan confirmed my concerns that there is a strong risk of violence escalating along ethnic lines, with the potential for genocide. I do not say that lightly. As the Secretary-General highlighted in his report, there are a myriad of underlying risk factors, which in my assessment provide an environment ripe for the commission of mass atrocities.

First, in addition to the loss of life and trauma, the violence has an ever-increasing economic cost, both domestically and internationally. It is causing a drain on much-needed resources for development and humanitarian assistance. The Government is reportedly half of the national budget on security. There will be neither growth nor development in South Sudan if it

members,

I must emphasize that genocide is a process. It does not happen overnight. And because it is a process and one that takes time to prepare, it can be prevented. The political leadership of South Sudan

- The Security Council should continue to stress the importance of an inclusive political process accompanied by a cessation of hostilities. If some sectors of the population continue to feel excluded from participation, there is little incentive for them to pursue peace.
- Until the formal peace process is reinstated, there is much that can be done in terms of facilitating dialogue. What surfaced over and over in my discussions last week was the presence of long-standing anger, combined with misconceptions and preconceived notions. These need to be addressed if there is to be a chance of peace. All the actors with whom I met stressed that there was an urgent need to engage in both community and national level dialogue and I was encouraged by their eagerness to engage in such processes. Community and religious leaders, provincial level authorities, and UNMISS colleagues shared experiences of efforts to promote communication. These efforts should be supported by the international community. Once there is greater stability and redoubling of efforts for dialogue, I urge the establishment of the commission truth, healing and reconciliation by the Government foreseen in the peace agreement.
- Beyond reconciliation, justice and accountability were common themes in my discussions with the people of South Sudan. Even as the conflict becomes more complex, the effects of the December 2013 outbreak of violence and subsequent violence linger, and human rights violations committed during the last few years have not been adequately documented or accounted for. I welcome the commitment of the signatories of the peace agreement to establish a hybrid court to prosecute cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as other serious crimes under international law.
- I hope that the Council's discussions with national authorities and with the African Union