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PRESS STATEMENT

8 July 2015, Addis Ababa: The IGAD Special Envoys for South Sudan would like to wish the people of South Sudan a happy anniversary on the 4th Independence Day of their beloved country, the Republic of South Sudan.

This day, 9th July, means a lot for the people of South Sudan since it is the day that their country was born and joined the community of nations. For every nation, independence anniversary is a time to celebrate freedom, take stock of the present, and project the hope and aspiration of the people for the future.

Unfortunately, for the people of the Republic of South Sudan, they are forced to celebrate their independence anniversary amidst a protracted conflict that dashed the gains of the country's independence for the last 18 months. This senseless war, has shattered their recovering economy, resulted in the loss of thousands of innocent lives, displaced over a million and left many more at the risk of war-induced hunger. Staggering accounts of atrocities from the conflict areas indicate that the war in South Sudan has reached a new level, whose intensity is threatening to tear the new nation apart and careen it on a trajectory to further destruction and misery.

We—the brothers and sisters, neighbors, and friends of the people of South Sudan—have never lost sight of the grief and despair of the people of South Sudan. Yet, even when we are committed to help end the carnage and close the chapter of their suffering in South Sudan, we remain alarmed about the continuation of the killings of more innocent civilians because the warring Parties failed to adhere to their several commitments.

On this day of their independence, we urge the leaders of South Sudan to evaluate the past 18 months and demonstrate leadership by making the difficult choices necessary to return the country to peace. Peace is NOT out of their reach and the people deserve better on this momentous day. We, on behalf of the IGAD-Plus Mediation, therefore, strongly urge the leaders to take the peaceful route over violence, and demonstrate to the people of South Sudan and the world, that they are not only heroes of liberation, but also heroes to lead the people of South Sudan to peace and harmony, rather than division, mayhem and devastation. The leaders stay in power for any day should only give them a meaning if they can lead the people of South Sudan towards lasting peace, good governance and prosperity.

As we are about to finalize a negotiated peace deal, the people of South Sudan and the entire world are expecting the political leaders of South Sudan to make the right choices; silence the guns and expeditiously sign the Peace Agreement. Continued defiance, disregard for the appeal of the people of South Sudan, the region and the entire world shall no more be left without consequences: everyone's patience is running out.

At this critical juncture, we, the Special Envoys of IGAD, also call upon the region, members of the IGAD-Plus Mediation, and the international community to stand in unison towards the conclusion of peace negotiations and also embark on assisting South Sudan in post-conflict recovery, rehabilitation and development. ## End

For further information, please contact:

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