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Opening Statement by the Chairperson of the IGAD Special Envoys for South Sudan

06 August 2015

Addis Ababa

Excellency Nhial Deng Nhial, Chief Negotiator of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan;

Excellency, General Taban Deng, Chief Negotiator of the SPLM/A (In Opposition);

Excellency, Deng Alor, Leader of the Delegation of the SPLM Leaders (Former Detainees)

Honorable leaders of the delegation of:

- **Eminent personalities**
- **Faith-Based Leaders**
- **CSOs and**
- **Women's bloc**

Your Excellencies, IGAD-PLUS Special Envoys and Representatives;

Distinguished delegates and invited guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

On behalf of the IGAD-PLUS Envoys and Representatives and that of my own, I would like to welcome you all to the fourth Phase of the negotiations, which will be taking place under the reinvigorated mediation format, IGAD-PLUS that was launched in Johannesburg, in June 2015 on the sidelines of the 25th Summit of the African Union.

The IGAD-led Mediation process has come a long way, as it has been going on for the last 19 months. We have now reached at a critical juncture, whereby participants of this phase will make decisions that may impact the destiny of the people of South Sudan and their youngest nation.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

The people of South Sudan have watched the last 19 months go by with a lot of apprehension. And this statement only applies to those who have witnessed appalling human suffering and are barely surviving. It is sad to mention the numbers involved, as some are really unimaginable for a young nation like South Sudan. Unfortunately am forced to mention those figures. The surviving population now constitutes 1.5 million IDPs, 612,000, refugees, 166,100 seeking shelter with the UN, and 4.6 million projected to remain in emergency or crisis level food insecurity. The recent blockade of humanitarian assistance has increased the suffering so much, which is against the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, and the rededications that the Parties committed themselves to.

Within this population, uncountable numbers have been war-wounded or maimed, with little or no access to basic medical assistance. Correspondingly uncountable numbers are widowers, widows and orphans. In the interim, we have not even been able to count the number of the dead, who by some estimates are in their tens of thousands. In short, the human toll of this conflict is despicable. This is not what the balance sheet for South Sudan is supposed to look like, after four years of independence. But it is the reality that we must now deal with, for which I am hankering for a better description.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,**

In February 2014, I noted in a similar speech that it is not our responsibility to bore our brothers and sisters from South Sudan on how to run their affairs. Undeniably, this is the prerogative of South Sudanese themselves. However, if we are to assist our sisterly nation and its suffering people, as solidarity and partnership demands us to do, a

certain amount of honest talk, including admission of our shortcomings, is in order.

Toward the end of July 2015, we the IGAD-PLUS, shared with you a Proposed Compromise Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. As I noted then, the proposal drew on the extensive negotiations that you have had ever since we began meeting here in Addis Ababa, in January 2014. Drawing on your own discussions, negotiations and suggestions, we attempted to capture the emerging ideas, concerns, and interests. We, the IGAD Envoys and the IGAD-PLUS representatives, believe that, if implemented wholeheartedly in a letter and spirit, the Compromise Agreement can take the stakeholders, and the entire people of South Sudan to a better future.

As we requested you to undertake further consultations with your respective leaderships and constituencies on the proposals, it is our hope that you have had enough time to consult, since the proposals are the very same issues that you have been discussing for the last 19 months. We all do believe that South Sudan is undergoing trying times by mere virtue of your presence here. I dare say, also, that we do agree on the contours of the solutions to those challenges except in the nuances.

Excellencies,

Making peace or war are both choices that we can make. But war, as I have noted above has horrid consequences while peace-making is equally immensely difficult. In our world, perfect solutions to a problem like that of the ongoing crisis in South Sudan are impossible to achieve. Compromise solutions are, however, reachable. The question that I would like to pose to you now is: Does the Proposed Compromise Agreement lead you towards solutions that you can live with, and to making peace rather than mobilize for war? I hope this time around, we are here to mobilize for peace unlike in the previous Phases and their subsequent

Sessions when we have come here to talk, only to go back and fight in the name of consultations.

It is our hope that all the stakeholders are determined to improve and strengthen this proposed Compromise Agreement. The Agreement is intended to help South Sudan close this ominous chapter of civil war and destruction and create a new dispensation in the country. This demands give and take, and hold the negotiations in good faith with a common objective of saving the country from further chaos and wanton destruction, but towards giving hope to its suffering people. We will agree that a positive step in that direction saves life. It is my hope that we will all work towards that objective, and respond positively to the yearning of the people of South Sudan.

Let me conclude by thanking the negotiating Parties and the other Stakeholders to the South Sudan Peace Process for honoring our invitation and for sending their representatives to the fourth Phase of the South Sudan peace negotiations. Let me also extend our gratitude to the members of the IGAD PLUS and all our partners and friends of South Sudan for their commitment and support, without which we will not be where we are today!

I thank you!!!