



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9507th meeting

Thursday, 14 December 2023, 10.15 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. De La Gasca/Mr. Montalvo Sosa. (Ecuador)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. França Danese
China	Mr. Dai Bing
France	Mr. Olmedo
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation.	Ms. Evstigneeva
Switzerland	Mrs. Chanda
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America.	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 31 of Security Council resolution 2677 (2023) (S/2023/784)

Letter dated 4 December 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/955)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 31 of Security Council resolution 2677 (2023) (S/2023/784)

Letter dated 4 December 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/955)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/784, which contains the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 31 of resolution 2677 (2023), and document S/2023/955, which contains a letter dated 4 December 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

At this meeting, the Council will hear briefings by Mr. Haysom and Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang, Permanent Representative of Gabon, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in South Sudan.

As we conclude the year, it is appropriate to take stock of the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, particularly as it relates to the milestone

of elections, currently scheduled for December 2024, a process that would see South Sudan's transitional period brought to a close. With only 11 months remaining, the pace of the overall implementation towards that objective has been uneven. The transitional security arrangements, which have been agreed to by the parties, remain significantly behind schedule. That is concerning, because the necessary unified forces are critical in providing a secure environment to protect civilians before, during and after elections. While recent actions have been taken, there are distinct challenges to the full deployment of the unified forces, chief among them the distribution of salaries and equipment and their operationalization under a single unified command, especially the appointment of the middle ranks, agreement on which has yet to be achieved.

With regard to the permanent constitution-making process, it is now 15 months behind the timeline set out in the road map and the Revitalized Agreement. The adoption of an amended constitution was agreed to by the parties as a prerequisite for the finalization of the electoral legal framework and the subsequent holding of elections. Unfortunately, work on the amendment of the Constitution has not properly started, although the National Constitutional Review Commission has at last been established. I acknowledge the appointment of members of the National Elections Commission, the Political Parties Council and the National Constitutional Review Commission. However, except in the case of the Political Parties Council, complaints have been raised by the opposition as to whether the composition of those bodies is in line with the Revitalized Agreement concerning the gender quota and agreements on nominees, as between the parties. That has led to controversy and the stalling of the swearing-in of the members of those two Commissions. It is now critical that those bodies be operationalized and resourced with the necessary funding to begin undertaking their considerable responsibilities.

In July, the trilateral mechanism — that is the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) — presented a list of 10 questions to be answered by the parties, to create clarity on the elections, including on such issues as the level at which elections will be held, the participation of refugees and various mechanisms for the administration of the elections and the handling of complaints. The questions also highlighted the importance of agreeing on the

voter registration process, the census or any other acceptable source of population data. The questions have thus far not been dealt with by the parties, nor has an appropriate legal framework been set up to resolve those issues.

To facilitate movement towards common ground among the parties on the proper preparations for the elections, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has convened political party forums, engaged with faith-based leaders, civil society organizations, internally displaced persons, refugees and other stakeholders. We have stressed that those decisions should be made in conformity with the peace agreement and in a manner that discourages unilateral decisions, encourages consensus and embodies constructive proposals on how to conduct credible elections by December 2024 in the face of missed timelines, and we have stressed that those decisions can be made only by the South Sudanese themselves.

Comparative experiences suggest that elections are a likely trigger for relapses into violence in societies emerging from conflict unless adequate time, resources and confidence-building measures are invested in their preparation — notably, underscoring the need for agreement among the contending parties. South Sudan faces a similar risk and requires the same investment in order to avoid conflict. Member States have inquired of UNMISS as to whether the country can be considered capable of holding free, fair, credible and — especially — peaceful elections. We have stated clearly that as matters stand now, the country is not yet in a position to hold credible elections, a view shared by almost all key stakeholders across the political spectrum. The consequential questions raised by that conclusion are about the conditions and institutions that must be in place for such an election to be possible, and when they will have to be in place in time for the elections to meet the December 2024 deadline.

The necessary conditions that must be met for the elections are identified in the Secretary-General's report before the Council (S/2023/784) and include the following. A new permanent constitutional framework must be in place; unified and properly trained and equipped forces must be deployed; an operational election security plan should be formulated; a clear electoral framework should be agreed on; election institutions and mechanisms should be in place; and voter registration modalities and electoral dispute resolution mechanisms should be agreed by consensus.

There must be an agreed code of conduct for political parties that establishes the parameters of acceptable political behaviour and enables a more open political and civic space than the one that currently exists in the country.

A critical mass of those prerequisites is essential to creating conditions for the conduct of elections that are not only free and fair but are also deemed credible and acceptable to the citizens of South Sudan. The process of agreeing on the conditions must build trust in the electoral institutions and acceptance of the outcomes by all participants. Based on consultations with electoral experts, it is our considered view that a critical mass of the prerequisites I have outlined must be in place by April 2024 if credible and peaceful elections are to be conducted by December 2024. We believe that with the necessary political will and a sense of urgency and compromise, South Sudan can indeed establish the conditions for elections in December 2024. In support of its electoral efforts, and as part of a first phase of preparations, UNMISS is itself actively engaged in promoting an enabling environment for elections by repurposing its staff within its existing resources. That involves providing capacity-building support to establish trusted electoral management bodies and a political environment encompassing the necessary political and civic space for a genuinely competitive process.

Scaling up United Nations electoral assistance under phase two would involve concrete logistical and similar support for the conduct of the actual elections, and it remains contingent on the progress achieved on the prerequisites by April 2024. That scaling up will therefore also be subject to the support of Member States and the consequent availability of necessary resources. While that does not preclude the possibility that South Sudan can opt to proceed with elections without those conditions in place, it does, however, serve as a yardstick for the international community's support for an election that would be a nation-building event rather than a divisive exercise.

UNMISS recognizes that creating the conditions for peaceful elections requires the support of the international community. As far as we are concerned, it demands that UNMISS act in partnership with Member States, the African Union, IGAD, the European Union and the troika. In that regard, I have recently engaged with the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda and with the IGAD

secretariat and the AU Peace and Security Council, all of which have confirmed their appreciation of the importance of preventing a relapse into violence and ensuring the conduct of peaceful elections in South Sudan, The African Union Peace and Security Council has requested that the trilateral mechanism — of IGAD, the AU and UNMISS — jointly brief them on the constitution-making process and the status of election preparations in February 2024. I have similarly engaged with national stakeholders and can confirm that there is broad support for elections, but there is also apprehension and concern about the lack of professional preparations and consultations for them.

The country's dire economic situation and the resulting competition over diminishing resources at the subnational level, the influx of returnees from the Sudan, climate shocks and a fragile political environment suggest that elections in South Sudan would take place in an atmosphere of elevated tensions. If those risks are not mitigated, the threat to civilians remains real. UNMISS remains committed to the protection of civilians and prioritizes it as a key mandated task. The Mission is implementing proactive measures aimed at mitigating the risks of pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral violence, with a focus on maintaining a robust presence in potential hotspots through existing and new temporary operating bases and team sites, fortifying rapidly deployable reserves of peacekeepers, extensive patrolling and building on its political and civil engagement at the community and national levels.

The humanitarian situation in the country has reached alarming proportions, with two thirds of the population now food-insecure. Competing global priorities have had a negative effect on international humanitarian assistance. That requires South Sudanese leaders to invest more resources in humanitarian efforts in order to alleviate their people's suffering. As of 12 December, 434,000 people had crossed into South Sudan since the start of the conflict in the Sudan in mid-April, which means that the humanitarian caseload in South Sudan is only growing. South Sudan remains a dangerous place for our humanitarian partners to operate in and one where many have made the ultimate sacrifice. I call on the Government of South Sudan to enable safe and unfettered humanitarian access throughout the country and to hold to account perpetrators responsible for attacks on humanitarians and for looting humanitarian aid destined for the

most vulnerable. It is now time for the Government of South Sudan to take decisive action to address those challenges and put in place conditions that not only lead to peaceful and credible elections but deliver genuine peace dividends and stability after a vote.

Finally, we anticipate that 2024 will be a difficult and challenging year for UNMISS and for South Sudan, its people and the region. UNMISS reiterates that it will discharge its mandate to the best of its ability.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Haysom for the information he has provided.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Biang.

Mr. Biang (*spoke in French*): In my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), concerning South Sudan, I have the honour to inform the members of the Security Council of developments since my previous briefing to the Council, on 13 December 2022 (see S/PV.9219). In my statement I will provide a brief overview of developments in the Committee since the beginning of 2023, including my visit at the end of October to South Sudan as Chair of the Committee, accompanied by a delegation.

With regard to the appointment of the Panel of Experts, following the consensus reached on the list proposing the experts to serve on the Panel, pursuant to resolution 2683 (2023), the Secretary-General appointed the five experts on 21 July.

To date in 2023, the Committee has met on eight occasions in the format of informal consultations.

On 17 February, the Committee heard a briefing by the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts at a meeting that was open to all Member States, concerning the Panel's interim report submitted pursuant to paragraph 18 of resolution 2633 (2022), contained in document S/2022/884.

On 31 March, the Committee heard a briefing by the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts on the Panel's final report submitted pursuant to paragraph 18 of resolution 2633 (2022) and discussed the recommendations contained therein.

On 30 May, the Committee heard a briefing by the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts at a meeting that was open to all Member States, concerning the Panel's final report submitted pursuant to paragraph

18 of resolution 2633 (2022), contained in document S/2023/294.

On 7 September, the Committee heard a briefing by the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts on the Panel's work plan for the mandate to be renewed pursuant to resolution 2683 (2023).

On 10 October, the Committee heard a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

On 17 October, the Committee heard a briefing by a representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, on behalf of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution 2664 (2022).

On 17 November, the Committee heard a briefing by the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts on the Panel's interim report submitted pursuant to paragraph 19 of resolution 2683 (2023) and discussed the recommendations contained therein.

On 28 November, the Committee discussed the Chair's report of his visit to South Sudan, conducted from 21 to 28 October. In addition, on 20 October, Committee members met in informal consultations at the Permanent Mission of Gabon, where delegations received briefings from the Secretariat ahead of the Chair's visit to South Sudan.

With regard to the Chair's visit to South Sudan from 21 to 28 October, I, in my capacity as Chair of the Committee, and the delegation met with relevant stakeholders in the country, including His Excellency President Salva Kiir, First Vice-President Riek Machar, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, members of the Council of Ministers, the Deputy Speaker and several parliamentarians of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, the United Nations country team, members of the diplomatic corps based in Juba and civil society representatives, including women's groups, youth groups and religious leaders. The discussion focused primarily on the arms embargo and the implementation of the key benchmarks, set out by resolution 2577 (2021), as well as on progress in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, specifically chapter II on transitional security arrangements. The overall security and humanitarian

situation, including issues related to preparations for elections, currently scheduled for December 2024, was also discussed.

Since the beginning of 2023, the Committee has received four exemptions requests concerning the travel ban and assets freeze measures, three of which were granted.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Committee, South Sudan and countries of the region for their active engagement in the work of the Committee and participation in Committee meetings this year. I encourage Member States to continue to strengthen their cooperation with the Panel of Experts and the Committee. I would also like to thank the Secretariat, in particular the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, for its invaluable assistance in the daily work of the Committee. I wish every success to the incoming Chair of the Committee.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Biang for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I want to start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom for his briefing today and for his leadership and participation at the United Nations peacekeeping ministerial meeting last week in Accra, where we met. I also want to thank Ambassador Biang for his briefing as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan and welcome the participation of the delegation of South Sudan in this meeting.

I am saddened that so little has changed since the last time we gathered for this purpose. The United States wholeheartedly agrees that the root cause for delays in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, since its signing five years ago, is the lack of political will. I should not have to remind the transitional Government of its obligations to the people of South Sudan. They expect and deserve a peaceful, prosperous and democratic future.

As the Special Representative just highlighted, the same issues identified six months ago remain unresolved. Basic questions around who will vote, how they will vote and for which levels of Government they

will vote are all still unanswered. When the transitional Government has done so little to prepare for elections, providing additional funding for these elections sends absolutely the wrong message. Assessed contributions should not be going to an electoral process, which, without urgent action by the transitional Government, will not be free, fair or credible. Future funding must be coupled with a renewed push on the South Sudan peace process and improved humanitarian access.

In addition, I want to take a moment to talk about how the transitional Government is spending its own oil money or, more accurately, how the transitional Government is not spending its own oil money. The transitional Government has the resources to fund electoral institutions, the necessary unified forces, social services such as health care and a greater share of humanitarian assistance to its own people. It can also afford to pay for its own employees, both civilian and military, in a timely manner. The South Sudanese people have a fundamental right to know how their country's oil money is being spent and to benefit from how their country's oil money is being spent. And so, the transitional Government must start using public revenue transparently for appropriate public purposes.

In addition, we remain concerned about the high level of violence, criminality and human rights abuses in South Sudan. Last week, we designated Gordon Koang Biel, Gatluak Nyang Hoth and Joseph Mantiel Wajang as responsible for systematic rape and other human rights violations perpetrated against women and girls during armed attacks in Leer County, Unity state. These armed groups use sexual slavery, including rape and gang rape of abducted women and girls, as an incentive and reward for combatants. This is unimaginably cruel. We call on President Kiir to fulfil his pledge to hold those who committed these unthinkable acts accountable.

To that end, we are grateful for the efforts of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to fulfil its protection of civilians mandate and, in particular, safeguard the more than 40,000 people in the Malakal protection of civilians site, noting the issues raised in the external assessment by Mr. Tamrat Samuel. We welcome UNMISS's zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse and conduct issues, and we look forward to updates on the results of investigations following the September 2022 Al Jazeera report on sexual abuse by aid workers at the United Nations-run protection-of-civilians site

in Malakal. In addition to those efforts, UNMISS's engagement on the peace process — both internally and externally — is bolstering that process, facilitating dialogue, educating on governance and electoral issues and fostering respect for the rule of law. Finally, we welcome the cooperation between UNMISS and South Sudan on women and peace and security issues, including this year's national stakeholders' conference on sexual and gender-based violence.

In conclusion, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General made clear, the transitional Government faces a number of choices — whether to achieve the commitments in the 2018 peace agreement that are necessary if it is to hold free, fair and peaceful elections in 12 months; whether to use its abundant public revenue appropriately, as it is not acceptable that two thirds of the Sudanese people are food-insecure; and whether to hold the perpetrators of human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence, accountable. Today we once again call on the transitional Government to make the right choices. Twelve years after achieving its independence and celebrating its hard-earned fight for sovereignty, it is way past time for the transitional Government to make the right choices. It is time.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Special Representative Haysom and Ambassador Biang of Gabon, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of the representative of South Sudan at today's meeting.

South Sudan has recently made a series of important strides in its implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, the enactment of electoral laws and the reorganization of State institutions, and it is planning to hold general elections in December of next year that will be critical to national development and stability. We call on all the parties in South Sudan to put the interests of the country and its people first and to resolve their differences through dialogue and consultations so as to create conditions conducive to the holding of general elections. China supports the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), together with the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, in continuing to provide support for the political process in South Sudan.

Against a backdrop of the more complex and serious developments in South Sudan, the international community should fully understand and respect the country's national conditions and status quo. It will be important for the international community to have patience with the political process in the country while respecting its sovereignty and ownership and avoiding any externally imposed solutions.

China supports South Sudan's efforts to maintain national stability and promote community reconciliation and welcomes the deployment for the first time of the country's unified forces. Meanwhile, the security situation in Jonglei, Warrap, Central Equatoria and Western Equatoria states remains fragile, with frequent violence and communal clashes. In his recent report on UNMISS (S/2023/784), Secretary-General Guterres emphasized that UNMISS should support South Sudan in assuming primary responsibility for the protection of civilians and should prioritize support aimed at strengthening its security capabilities. The Security Council should work to improve the mandate of UNMISS to focus on that priority task. Meanwhile, the arms embargo imposed by the Council has had a long-standing negative impact on South Sudan's security capacity-building. We should respond to the calls from South Sudan and other African countries asking that the Council lift the sanctions as soon as possible.

South Sudan's humanitarian, poverty reduction and development challenges are daunting. In a country with a population of more than 11 million people, 9.4 million are in need of humanitarian assistance and 5 million have become internally displaced or refugees. The crisis has been exacerbated by returnees from the Sudan and other countries. The international community, especially traditional donors, must step up its assistance to prevent the situation from deteriorating. More support should be provided in such areas as livelihoods, education, health and industrial and agricultural development so as to help South Sudan embark on a path of independent development. It should be noted here that the development and management of South Sudan's petroleum resources are the country's internal affair and one in which other countries should not interfere.

China has actively participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations in South Sudan over the years. The thirteenth contingent of Chinese peacekeeping engineers and medical teams deployed in South Sudan recently completed their tasks successfully, receiving

high recognition from the United Nations and the host country for their professionalism and discipline, and the next contingent of Chinese peacekeepers has already arrived in the Mission's area of operations. China stands ready to work with the international community to continue contributing to the peaceful development of South Sudan.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Haysom and Ambassador Biang for their updates, and I welcome the presence of the representative of South Sudan at this meeting.

As we have just heard, South Sudan is due to hold elections in just 12 months, yet few of the basic building blocks for a credible process are in place. The United Kingdom welcomed the legislature's passing of the National Elections Act and the reconstitution of the National Elections Commission and the Political Parties Council. However, those laws have to be implemented and the institutions they create have to be well resourced. That requires genuine political will. There are fundamental and urgent questions that South Sudan must address, including about how the South Sudanese people will cast their votes and how many levels of Government they will be voting for. For the elections to be free and fair, we urge the South Sudanese authorities to ensure the opening of the necessary political and civic space so that political parties, civil society and voters can freely express their views without fear of reprisals. The South Sudanese population should feel safe during and after elections. We call on South Sudan to finalize the deployment of a single, unified national army and to ensure that its personnel are adequately paid and provided for.

As we have heard, the fighting in the Sudan is having a severe impact on South Sudan. More than 434,000 people have now arrived since the conflict broke out. The United Kingdom recognizes the South Sudanese Government's provision of transportation to refugees and the important work of the United Nations system and humanitarian partners in their response to the crisis. We repeat our call on the Government to create a more enabling environment for humanitarian action and to ensure the safety of aid workers.

In conclusion, we call on the Government of South Sudan to demonstrate its willingness to put aside individual ambitions and differences. Without that, a credible, safe, and inclusive process next year will not be possible.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Special Representative Haysom for his briefing and welcome the representative of South Sudan to the Chamber. I also thank Ambassador Biang, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

Malta takes note of the recent political developments in South Sudan, including the adoption of the National Elections Act, as well as the reconstitution of the National Constitutional Review Commission, the National Elections Commission and the Political Parties Council. We regret, however, that only the Political Parties Council met the 35 per cent quota for women members. Furthermore, an acceleration in the pace of the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is clearly needed. Political leaders must demonstrate tangible progress in completing the critical pending tasks without any further delay.

Malta encourages the implementation of transitional security arrangements, the operationalization of electoral institutions and the determination of the precise type of elections. Where the type of elections is concerned, we support addressing relevant issues. Those include an agreed political code of conduct, voter registration and the urgent drafting of a permanent constitution.

The visit to South Sudan of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security has informed us of the need for measures to make sure that women can participate safely in the election as candidates, voters and observers. Civic and voter education, and protection against harassment, should be given priority within the framework established to support civil society's role in the peace process. Those are important elements for ensuring the holding of elections within the timelines set out in the road map.

We remain gravely concerned about the incidents of conflict-related sexual violence. We echo the call by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten for preventive and restorative interventions, mental health support and rehabilitation for survivors.

Gross human rights violations and abuses and serious violations of international humanitarian law by armed groups in the Greater Upper Nile region are also deeply worrisome. Both parties recruited and used children as fighters. We condemn those acts and continue to advocate for human rights reporting

and analysis and for support to national authorities in conducting independent and transparent investigations.

On top of the spillover from the conflict in the Sudan and the increasing numbers of refugees and returnees crossing the border, South Sudan also faces severe climate-related risks. Climate-induced disasters will further fuel inter-communal violence, leading to more displacement and preventing returns.

Malta commends the remarkable work carried out by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), in particular in fulfilling its protection-of-civilians mandate and its continued dynamic posture. Its good offices, training, capacity-building and conciliatory measures are crucial in laying the foundations for sustainable peace. We also recall the significant logistics support that UNMISS provides, which facilitates the delivery of humanitarian assistance across the country.

In conclusion, Malta strongly believes in the pursuit of peace and security in South Sudan. We reiterate our call for the end of inter-communal violence, which disrupts that collective pursuit. We look forward to further efforts in maintaining that objective in order to ensure that the people of South Sudan can turn their hopes into reality.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom for his insightful briefing. Japan takes note of the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/784) on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which describes progress and challenges in South Sudan.

Japan would like to thank all UNMISS personnel for their service in protecting civilians and mitigating violence in a challenging environment. As a troop-contributing country, we are committed to our continued deployments to UNMISS. I would like to make the following three points towards ensuring a peaceful end of the transitional period.

First, while some positive steps have been made, Japan is concerned about the limited progress towards the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Only 11 months remain until the elections, which are a critical step towards the end of the transitional period. To hold free, fair and credible elections in this limited time frame, political leaders need to agree on and address key outstanding issues in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. In that connection, we

commend the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and UNMISS for working together to urge the Government to facilitate that.

Secondly, the security situation remains volatile and is further exacerbated by climate change, conflict in the Sudan, food insecurity, lack of basic services and socioeconomic and other factors. Furthermore, the formation and deployment of the necessary unified forces has been delayed, and the Government is not fully prepared to take responsibility for the security of its citizens. The protection of civilians by UNMISS therefore remains extremely important and needs to be further enhanced, and we would like UNMISS to address the recommendations identified in the report of the Secretary-General.

Thirdly, humanitarian needs are at an extremely high level. Providing humanitarian assistance in South Sudan is difficult owing to various challenges, such as fragile infrastructure and is, moreover, one of the most dangerous activities for humanitarian workers. Worse still, in 2024, resources are expected to decrease sharply. In the light of that, it is necessary for the Government to urgently create an enabling environment for humanitarian action. In addition, we encourage the Government to immediately achieve significant results in the termination process in order to draw the attention of the international community and obtain adequate resources.

Last but not least, I am grateful to His Excellency Mr. Biang for his dedication and excellent work as the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

In conclusion, Japan reiterates its strong commitment to the Government and people of South Sudan and their aspirations for peace and prosperity.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom and Mr. Michel Xavier Biang, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, for their briefings. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the representative of South Sudan.

We share the concern about the humanitarian situation in South Sudan. The country is experiencing serious consequences resulting from the conflict in the neighbouring Sudan, including an influx exceeding

hundreds of thousands refugees and South Sudanese returnees. That has significantly exacerbated the already complicated situation in the northern states and has become a serious challenge for the country in general. It is clear that South Sudan requires development assistance, including to revitalize the country's economy.

Meanwhile, the South Sudanese political process is moving forward steadily. We believe in the need for precise and timely implementation by the parties of all provisions of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, and we strongly condemn any violations of it, as well as acts of violence against civilians, including humanitarian staff working in South Sudan. We agree with the decision of parties to the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to extend the transitional period until February 2025. We believe it is important to adhere to the time frame set out in the road map.

We note the efforts being made by the leadership of South Sudan in the area of State-building, including in the establishment of state governments, the formation of a transitional Parliament, work on drafting a new constitution and in the establishment of the national human rights council. However, those processes must be accelerated, where possible, in order to observe the previously agreed time frame. That is, above all, in the interests of South Sudanese people themselves. At the same time, all of that will also require an increase in international support to Juba.

We note the overall improvement in the security situation in South Sudan. We support international steps to stabilize the situation. We call on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to prioritize the fulfilment of the main tasks under its mandate, first and foremost the political and security tasks, including preventing inter-communal violence.

We believe that the Mission should have all the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate. We commend the mediation efforts of the African Union and the member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, as well as the international steps to stabilize the situation in South Sudan. We also appreciate the support provided by UNMISS in the implementation of specific provisions of the peace agreement. We look forward to the continued work in partnership with the Community of Sant'Egidio, which has enabled a number of armed groups to return to the

path of dialogue. We call on all groups that have not signed the peace agreement to join the peace process.

We continue to consider as a priority the focused work of the South Sudanese authorities in forming the necessary unified forces as a guarantee of further peaceful progress in the political process. In that connection, we view the deployment on 15 November of a contingent of the necessary unified forces in Upper Nile state as a positive development. However, we believe that the sanctions regime on South Sudan is complicating both their deployment and the strengthening of State security structures. We are categorically opposed to the use of Council sanctions to put pressure on that country or interfere in its internal affairs, not to mention when those sanctions are supplemented by illegal unilateral restrictive measures.

We realize that to a great extent the coming year will be decisive for South Sudan, whose leadership has scheduled national general elections for December 2024. The job of the international community — and United Nations agencies in particular — is to fully support the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity's efforts to ensure the success of the elections. At the same time, we call for that assistance to come without any preconditions and to avoid imposing on Juba approaches or models that do not work for it and that ignore the specificities of the country and the will of the South Sudanese people. We also would like to emphasize that the successful holding of elections, the completion of the transition period and the stabilization of the country are, first and foremost, the responsibility of the South Sudanese themselves. We are confident that they can develop ways of organizing the political process and determining the fate of their country that suit them.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3).

At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2023/784) and to welcome the insightful briefing on the situation in South Sudan by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom. We also thank Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, for his report to the Council, and welcome the participation of the representative of South Sudan in this meeting. The A3's

statement today will focus on the security, humanitarian and political situations in South Sudan.

Regarding the security situation, the A3 is gravely concerned about the continuing insecurity in parts of South Sudan and condemns the recent attacks and violence by armed elements in Upper Nile state, as well as the hostilities in Leer county in Unity state between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the main armed group, the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition. We call on the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism to work quickly to investigate those violations and make the necessary accountability recommendations. The A3 is also very distressed by the violence in Warrap state that claimed 75 lives in November and early this month in the southern Abyei Administrative Area, where 10 lives were lost.

We call on the forces and armed groups involved to cease their hostilities immediately and to refrain from harming civilians, including internally displaced persons. The Agreement on Temporary Arrangements of 20 June 2011 called for the full demilitarization of the Abyei Area, and we reiterate that such acts of violence in the Area violate its demilitarized status. We call for the swift and full implementation of the demilitarized status without further delay. We implore all South Sudanese actors to remain committed to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, and we also call on the non-signatory parties to demonstrate their commitment to the peace and stability of South Sudan by refraining from actions that impede its implementation. We reiterate our call on the parties to urgently resume talks under the facilitation of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan continues to be a major concern for the A3. According to the 2023 South Sudan humanitarian response plan of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, about 9.4 million people, almost 76 per cent of the country's population, required humanitarian assistance in 2023, including 2.2 million women and 4.9 million children. The shortage of funding for relief efforts, which has forced humanitarian agencies to prioritize the many needs to be met and in some cases to suspend some programmes, is exacerbating conditions on the ground. As of 19 November, South Sudan's 2023 humanitarian response plan, which requires some \$2.05 billion, was only 48.2 per cent funded. In that regard, the A3 reiterates its appeal for the international

donor community to honour its pledges and increase development assistance for the country. Significant international support is still required for the reforms that are badly needed to help diversify the country's economy, promote agriculture and food security and enhance infrastructure development. We also encourage South Sudan to deepen its engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mindful of the adverse impact of the conflict in the Sudan on the humanitarian situation, as well as the intercommunal violence in Jonglei and Warrap and some parts of Upper Nile state, we demand that the parties halt their hostilities and allow humanitarian agencies to deliver much-needed assistance. We condemn the deliberate acts of violence perpetrated against humanitarian workers in South Sudan and are deeply concerned about the high incidence of such attacks, which has led to the deaths of 28 aid workers and injuries to 44 others in 2023 alone. We are also concerned about the looting of humanitarian assets. The A3 calls for the perpetrators of those attacks to be held accountable, as it is unacceptable that humanitarian workers who make sacrifices to serve humankind under challenging circumstances should be subject to deliberate attacks. Such heinous acts are violations of international humanitarian law, and the necessary deterrence must be established through the delivery of full accountability and justice.

With regard to the political situation in South Sudan, and while acknowledging that the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement has been slow, the A3 joins the African Union Mission in South Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in welcoming President Salva Kiir Mayardit's proclamation on 3 November of decrees on the commencement of processes for reconstituting South Sudan's National Constitutional Review Commission, National Elections Commission and Political Parties Council. We call on the parties to the Revitalized Agreement to engage in immediate dialogue to resolve the remaining outstanding issues, and on the Government of South Sudan to disburse the necessary resources to ensure the institutional readiness of the reconstituted entities. In that vein, it is gratifying that on 12 December the parties to the Revitalized Agreement announced that they had achieved tentative agreements on several critical aspects surrounding the conduct of the elections scheduled for December 2024

and had jointly signed a communiqué that urged the Transitional Government to urgently provide ample and adequate funding for the elections.

However, we want to highlight South Sudan's continuing need for international financial support to enable it to fully implement the Revitalized Agreement's mechanism, owing to the damage done to its economy by prolonged floods resulting from climate change, as well as other intervening factors. We would also like to take this opportunity to commend Mr. Haysom for his series of diplomatic engagements with the countries of the African Union Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan, which was appointed to deal with the situation in South Sudan. We share his vision that such initiatives can encourage regional support and international partnerships for South Sudan ahead of its first post-independence elections.

The A3 welcomes the deployment to Malakal of 750 troops from the first phase of the necessary unified forces to beef up security in the Tonja area of Upper Nile state. We look forward to seeing the remaining forces deployed to Jonglei, Warrap and Bahr El Ghazal, among other areas. We want to once again draw attention to the challenges presented by the implementation of the remaining benchmarks of the peace agreement and call on the Government of South Sudan and all political leaders to keep the overall interests of the people of their young country at the heart of their discussions and decisions, especially considering that only a few more months remain for the transition. We encourage the further efforts of the African Union, IGAD and the United Nations, as well as other bilateral and multilateral partners, including China, the troika countries and the IGAD Partners Forum, to continue to extend the necessary assistance and support for the activities of the oversight mechanisms. We urge the parties to make progress on the aspects of implementation that are lagging.

Finally, we would like to join the Secretary-General in conveying our deep appreciation to the troop- and police-contributing countries, to Special Representative Haysom and to the uniformed and civilian personnel of UNMISS for continuing to work tirelessly towards the peace and stability of South Sudan.

As we support their efforts, we also help to ensure the future contributions of South Sudan to a stable regional and international order and their role in global peace, security and sustainable development.

Mrs. Chanda (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ambassador Biang, Permanent Representative of Gabon, for their briefings. I welcome the *Chargée d'affaires* of South Sudan to the meeting. In a year's time, we hope to see the first elections in South Sudan. We are entering the final year of the transition with significant delays, despite some progress. There is an urgent need for political leaders to demonstrate greater political will and transparency. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/784), a majority of the population would like to see elections without further delay.

I would like to reiterate three priorities in that regard.

First, there is an urgent need for progress on the implementation of key political milestones. We welcome the 10 measures identified by the trilateral joint task force to make the electoral process more credible. We also welcome that in recent days the parties reached a common understanding on some of those issues. We particularly welcome the commitment to a free civic and political space and to women's meaningful involvement in the transition process, with a minimum representation of 35 per cent. During their visit to Juba and Wau over the past few days, the members of the Informal Group of Experts on women and peace and security, co-chaired by Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates, received reports of intimidation of politically active women. That is not conducive to the organization of elections.

Secondly, it is critical to establish a safe and secure environment. That is an essential condition for the success of the transition and the holding of free and fair elections. We remain deeply concerned about the continuing violence at the subnational level. The recent attacks in Unity have shown, once again, that civilians are the most affected by that violence. By issuing a press statement (SC/15523) on the attacks in Warrap and the Abyei Administrative Area this week, the Council has sent a pre-emptive signal in that regard. Despite the delays, we welcome the recent deployment of the necessary unified forces in Upper Nile. The full implementation of the transitional security arrangements is essential. We welcome the support of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in that regard and encourage the Mission to take into account the recommendations of the independent assessment of the protection-of-civilians mandate.

Thirdly, it is essential to alleviate the grave humanitarian situation. We are deeply concerned about the growing humanitarian and protection needs. According to the United Nations Famine Prevention and Response Coordinator, who visited South Sudan last week, nearly 60 per cent of the South Sudanese population is suffering from hunger. With the continuing violence at the subnational level, the negative impacts of climate change and the consequences of the ongoing conflict in the Sudan, the situation is likely to get worse. That will have an impact on how the population can participate in the final months of the transition. To alleviate the suffering, Switzerland increased its humanitarian aid by more than \$17 million in recent months.

However, we continue to be deeply concerned that South Sudan remains one of the most dangerous countries for humanitarian workers. Attacks on humanitarian personnel and assets must cease immediately, and safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access must be guaranteed.

Time is running out. We echo the concerns expressed by the Special Representative about the risks to the transition if the necessary decisions are not taken and implemented as a matter of urgency. Switzerland reiterates its full support of UNMISS and its continued commitment within the Council to support the Government and the people of South Sudan.

Mr. Olmedo (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative for his briefing. I welcome the participation of the representative of South Sudan.

I would like to focus on three points.

First, I would like to touch upon the elections. We are concerned about the delay in election preparations. We have also always recognized any progress made in the electoral process. In that connection, we welcome President Kiir Mayardit's decree setting up the anticipated electoral institutions. But there are still major efforts to be made in the coming months on the elections, as well as on the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The Secretary-General, in consultation with the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), has defined the priority measures to be taken between now and April. We encourage the authorities to implement them, including by allocating the necessary resources.

Everything has been done to support South Sudan in the run-up to the elections. A team dedicated to electoral assistance has been set up within the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). But that assistance is useful only if it is backed up by political will. We also encourage the African Union and IGAD to continue their partnership with the United Nations in South Sudan as the country's decisive elections approach.

Secondly, we encourage the South Sudanese authorities to continue their cooperation with UNMISS. We welcome the guidelines presented by the Secretary-General to strengthen the effectiveness of UNMISS in protecting civilians and building the country's capacity, in particular with regard to the police and the judiciary. The Mission's exit strategy depends on the authorities' ability to exercise their prerogatives.

We call on the South Sudanese authorities to commit to this partnership by gradually taking over from UNMISS in terms of protecting civilians and stepping up the fight against impunity for those responsible for violence against the population, sexual violence or attacks on humanitarian workers. The perpetrators of those abuses must be condemned and punished.

Thirdly, France is concerned about the impact of the conflict in the Sudan on the stability of Southern Sudan. We welcome the taking in of refugees by South Sudan, with the support of the United Nations. France has supported the Organization's efforts to respond to the repercussions of the Sudanese crisis in neighbouring countries. France and the European Union stand in solidarity with the countries of the region. In 2023, the European Union is providing €108 million in support for South Sudan. More specifically, its humanitarian aid will reach €81 million in 2023. France, for its part, has earmarked €55.2 million for the humanitarian response to the Sudanese crisis, including more than €7 million allocated for projects in South Sudan.

We welcome the efforts made by IGAD at its most recent summit in Djibouti, on 9 December. We call on both parties to honour the commitments made on that occasion to observe a ceasefire and initiate dialogue, in the interests of the Sudanese people and the stability of the region.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): I thank Special Representative Nicholas Haysom and Ambassador Michel Biang for their comprehensive briefings. I welcome the South Sudanese delegation to this meeting.

Brazil remains concerned that the conflict in the Sudan continues to affect the situation in South Sudan. The considerable influx of refugees and returnees has created an additional strain on already scarce resources, particularly in Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei and Central Equatoria.

Reduced commodity supplies due to the hostilities in the Sudan have raised market prices almost everywhere in South Sudan. As co-focal points, with Switzerland, for Council's resolution 2417 (2018), we thank the United Nations Famine Prevention and Response Coordinator for recently raising awareness on the extremely concerning food insecurity situation in South Sudan, and we hope that the collaboration between her Office and the Security Council can be intensified.

We hope the latest efforts towards ending the conflict in the Sudan also bear fruit for the people of South Sudan. We welcome the outcomes of the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held last Saturday in Djibouti. We commend the bloc's leadership and the African Union for also securing a ceasefire between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, which should contribute to alleviating the dire situation in the entire region.

We regret that the implementation of South Sudan's road map remains slow. We worry about the lack of agreement on several issues that directly affect the organization of elections in December 2024. We echo the concerns shared by the Secretary-General, the African Union Peace and Security Council, the African Union High-Level Ad Hoc Committee on South Sudan and IGAD. Institutional and legislative gaps in the election preparations increase the risk of a relapse into violence in parts of South Sudan. We call on the parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to decide which conditions are necessary for holding free, fair and credible elections. We also urge the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan to streamline the measures endorsed by the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD as steps for credible, peaceful and inclusive elections. We call on the stakeholders to build on the momentum generated by the adoption of the National Elections Act and the appointment of the members to the Political Parties Council, the National Constitutional Review

Commission and the National Elections Commission to pave the way forward.

I will take this last meeting on the situation in South Sudan during Brazil's current Security Council term as an opportunity to thank Special Representative Haysom, the UNMISS leadership and personnel and the troop- and police-contributing countries for their tireless work. We also echo the Secretary-General's call on the international community not to divert its engagement away from South Sudan. A stable conclusion to the transitional period will bolster many hard-fought gains for South Sudanese society, such as the lower levels of violence and the greater participation of women in politics and reconciliation processes. South Sudan's commitment to peacebuilding, coupled with the continuous support of the international community, will be critical to achieving lasting peace and stability in the country.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom for his comprehensive briefing and Ambassador Biang, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), concerning South Sudan, for his briefing. We welcome the representative of South Sudan to this meeting.

South Sudan is at a critical moment, with its first national elections due to take place this time next year. The limited progress on the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and its road map raises concerns about the necessary preconditions to hold free, fair and credible elections.

Allow me to focus on three areas.

First, we welcome steps taken to advance the legal framework for elections, including the establishment of the National Elections Commission and the adoption of the National Elections Act. Despite those efforts, key provisions are still lacking, including a permanent constitution, the operationalization of electoral institutions and the type of elections South Sudan intends to hold. The shrinking of civil and political space is concerning, posing an obstacle to the democratic process. We echo the Secretary-General's call on South Sudan's leaders to agree on a way forward and overcome their differences. The Government must focus on implementing the priority measures outlined by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations Mission in

South Sudan (UNMISS) to enable the elections to take place as scheduled.

Secondly, the security and political tensions across the country raise concerns about a resurgence in violence during elections. It is critical that the Government finalize the transitional security arrangements, including the completion of the unification of forces and the deployment of the national police force. That will strengthen the protection of civilians and ensure safe elections. We condemn the restrictions placed on UNMISS affecting ground patrols and call on the Government to respect the status of forces agreement and allow the Mission to fully implement its mandate.

Thirdly, the humanitarian crisis is set to deteriorate in 2024. The influx of more than 440,000 returnees and refugees from the conflict in the Sudan has hindered an already-fragile economic and humanitarian situation. The Government must step up its efforts and provide durable and holistic solutions to the chronic humanitarian crisis that has been raging in South Sudan. The protection of civilians remains a concern, with incidents of sexual and gender-based violence continuing to be committed by security forces, armed groups and community-based militias. We take note of the UNMISS protection of civilians independent assessment and encourage the implementation of its recommendations. UNMISS has played a critical role in the protection of civilians, including providing physical protection to more than 40,000 internally displaced persons in Malakal and the Upper Nile state.

This is the last time that Albania will speak on South Sudan during its term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. The past two years have been marred by limited political will and commitment to advancing critical benchmarks and setting the country on the right path for its first elections. We urge South Sudan's leaders to unite and overcome political disagreement to facilitate democratic elections and deliver on the aspirations of the country's people.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing. We appreciate the efforts that he and his team are making to support peace in South Sudan, including his continued engagement with countries of the region in support of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. We also thank Ambassador

Biang for his briefing on the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), concerning South Sudan, and commend him on his tireless efforts as Chair of the Committee and his outstanding leadership during the recent visit by Council members to assess the progress made. I also welcome the participation of the representative of South Sudan in this meeting.

Our meeting today coincides with South Sudan entering the final phase of its transitional period, which requires strong partnership among various segments of society and at all national levels to achieve the desired progress and fulfil aspirations of the people of South Sudan. In that context, I would like to focus on three issues.

First, the United Arab Emirates expresses its concern about the continued deterioration of the security situation, the brunt of which is inflicted on innocent civilians. We reiterate the recent call by the Security Council in its press statement (SC/15523) to contain the violence and defuse tensions among the affected communities. We believe that restoring security and enhancing sustained stability in South Sudan require addressing the root causes of violence and establishing a culture of peace at the societal level, while working to strengthen the capacities of security institutions. We hope that the first batch of the necessary unified forces, which was deployed last month, will help to improve the security situation and end the cycle of violence among communities.

We underscore the important role played by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in protecting civilians by encouraging dialogue and facilitating reconciliation among communities. We believe that the independent assessment presented by the Secretary-General on UNMISS' implementation of its mandate related to the protection of civilians and the practical recommendations therein will enable the United Nations to bring about the greatest possible positive change on the ground. We also appreciate the special role played by UNMISS in addressing and preventing sexual violence.

Secondly, we hope that efforts will be redoubled during the upcoming period to accelerate the implementation of the road map for the Revitalized Agreement. We believe that recent gains reflected in the adoption of critical legislation to enable the elections and the constitution-making processes are reasons

for optimism. In that regard, we stress the important role played by the trilateral mechanism consisting of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and UNMISS, particularly in the election preparations and in meeting related deadlines.

As South Sudan enters into a new phase, the role of women in building and developing society remains extremely important and must be an integral part of the electoral process, as must capacity-building for women and girls by promoting their access to education and employment and putting in place measures to ensure their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation. As members of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security are concluding their field visit to South Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, as a co-Chair of the Group with Switzerland, sincerely thanks South Sudan and UNMISS for welcoming the delegation and for their efforts to facilitate the visit, which will promote the Council's efforts to support the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda on the ground.

Thirdly, while focusing on the complex security and political challenges, we must not lose sight of the difficult humanitarian conditions in South Sudan, which require a comprehensive response that takes into account all exacerbating factors, such as the continuation of violence, the influx of displaced persons and returnees whose basic needs are not met and attacks on humanitarian personnel.

In that context, we stress the need to focus on climate change as one of the most important challenges that greatly affects the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, specifically in terms of its repercussions on pastoral and agricultural communities. Therefore, we stress the importance of climate-related initiatives, such as the appointment of a climate, peace and security adviser in the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and the initiatives currently conducted by UNMISS on peace and climate security, in order to attain sustainable solutions to those issues in a manner that helps societies adapt to climate crisis.

In conclusion, I affirm the commitment of the United Arab Emirates to supporting all efforts to promote peace, stability and prosperity for the people of South Sudan.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now deliver a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ecuador.

I thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom for his briefing and welcome the presence of the representative of South Sudan at this meeting. I would also like to thank Ambassador Michel Biang of Gabon for his report on this matter.

My delegation's statement will focus on the humanitarian, security and political situations in South Sudan.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, we are concerned that, according to the South Sudan humanitarian response plan of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, three out of four South Sudanese — totalling 9.4 million people, most of them women and children — are in need of humanitarian assistance. That is in addition to the displacement of approximately 330,000 refugees from the Sudan and the more than 2 million internally displaced persons. Humanitarian agencies play a key role in alleviating this situation. However, their capacity for action has been affected by attacks against their workers and a lack of funding. We urge the Government of South Sudan to take measures to address the basic needs of its people and of those who have sought protection within its borders, in addition to ensuring the safety of humanitarian personnel.

On the security front, we are alarmed by the report by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of attacks on civilians in the Greater Upper Nile region, with hundreds of deaths, kidnappings, acts of sexual violence and the recruitment of children. Violence against civilians is unacceptable, and it is urgent that the Government of South Sudan and community leaders prioritize civilian safety and protection and take concrete actions to reduce rising intercommunal tensions. In that regard, and despite the delays, we welcome the deployment of the necessary unified forces in Upper Nile State and hope that they will fulfil their mandate to protect the civilian population.

In the political arena, we note the limited progress on the development of the legal framework for holding elections. Delay in achieving the goals set out in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan could lead to

further political instability and an upsurge in violence. We urge the Government to promote progress on national legislation related to the electoral process, and we reiterate that that process requires not only financial resources, but also political will. On the other hand, we welcome the appointment of women to certain high-level positions and the approval of legislation that incorporates provisions promoting their inclusion. For Ecuador, women's participation is key in electoral processes and the transition process towards peace. In addition, it is imperative to preserve civic space, promote dialogue and avoid restrictions on the freedom of opinion and expression.

In conclusion, we commend UNMISS on its work and deployment of troops throughout the country, and we recognize its commitment to support and safeguard peace dialogue processes in South Sudan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mrs. Adeng (South Sudan): Allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency for the month of December, and I assure you of our delegation's full support and cooperation. I also want to acknowledge Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Nicholas Haysom and Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), concerning South Sudan, for providing valuable insight into the situation.

On behalf of South Sudan, we express our gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this briefing and consultation regarding the Secretary-General's 90-day report (S/2023/784). We acknowledge the concerns raised by the report and wish to assure the Council of our full and unwavering commitment to the extended transitional period outlined in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

The recent presidential decrees initiated by President Salva Kiir Mayardit signify a crucial step in the reconstitution process. Those decrees address the key components of the road map, including the National Constitution Review Commission, the National Elections Commission and the Political Parties Council. We warmly welcome the joint statement by the African

Union Mission in South Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and UNMISS endorsing those important measures. On the same note, on 15 November, the South Sudanese Government deployed 750 necessary unified forces personnel to Upper Nile State, in another step towards a peaceful transition in line with the road map.

While we recognize the challenges highlighted in the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission's recent quarterly report, we are actively working to address critical pending issues. Specifically, we are focused on matters related to the permanent constitution and transitional security arrangements. South Sudan places great importance on engaging with the Security Council, and we seek collaborative discussions with, and the constructive support of, the international community as we navigate complex political, security, climate and humanitarian challenges. Our commitment to ensuring a peaceful and inclusive transition within our nation remains steadfast.

The Republic of South Sudan acknowledges the concern about conflict-related sexual violence, and we condemn those abhorrent acts and are committed to robust and immediate action to address and prevent further instances of such violence. In order to combat conflict-related sexual violence, we have undertaken comprehensive strategies, including strengthening our legal framework to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. Specialized courts and mechanisms have been established to handle cases with the gravity they deserve. We recognize the importance of providing support and rehabilitation to victims, and we are working to enhance medical, counselling and rehabilitation services for survivors. Our security sector is also undergoing reforms, with a focus on training forces to prevent and respond to sexual violence. Community engagement is pivotal in changing norms, and we are carrying out awareness-raising programmes to encourage reporting and reduce the stigma surrounding survivors.

International cooperation is sought, and we are collaborating with organizations and non-governmental organizations to access resources, expertise and support for our efforts. South Sudan is committed to addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting gender equality and creating sustainable peace so that all citizens can live free from fear and violence as we strive for a future marked by justice, liberty and prosperity.

The people of South Sudan are facing profound challenges due to the escalating impacts of climate change. Increasing temperatures, unpredictable rainfall patterns and more frequent extreme weather events pose a direct threat to food security, water resources and overall livelihoods. Urgent and concerted efforts are required to address these challenges, enhancing resilience and building sustainable solutions for the well-being of the population, in the face of a changing climate.

Climate change is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities in South Sudan, affecting not only the environment but also the health and economic stability of communities. Rising temperatures contribute to the spread of diseases, while shifts in precipitation patterns affect agricultural productivity. The resulting strain on resources heightens the risk of conflict and displacement.

International cooperation and support are crucial to help South Sudan adapt to these challenges. This includes investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable agricultural practices and providing assistance for communities to diversify their livelihoods.

The impact of the conflict in the Sudan on the humanitarian situation in South Sudan is indeed a pressing issue. We call for continued support and understanding as we manage the influx of refugees and returnees and navigate the evolving circumstances in border areas.

As we navigate the complexities of our transitional period, South Sudan welcomes a constructive dialogue with the Security Council. We are open to exploring options that facilitate cooperation, understanding and collective efforts to achieve lasting stability in our nation. We appreciate the international community's ongoing support and look forward to continued collaboration in addressing the multifaceted challenges facing South Sudan.

South Sudan emphasizes the importance of elections in 2024. Our nation is committed to fostering a democratic process that reflects the will of the people and promotes stability, inclusivity and progress. We invite international observers to ensure transparency and encourage all citizens to actively participate in shaping the future of our great nation through their votes. South Sudan remains dedicated to the principles

of democracy, peace and development as we embark on this crucial electoral journey.

South Sudan calls upon the international community to extend its support during this critical transition period. As we strive for stability, reconciliation and sustainable development, the Council's assistance is invaluable. We seek collaborative efforts in areas, such as capacity-building, humanitarian aid, development funding and fostering political dialogue, to ensure a smooth transition. Together, let us work towards a peaceful, prosperous South Sudan. We appreciate the solidarity and the assistance of our global partners in this transformative phase.

South Sudan appeals for the lifting of the arms embargo and the removal of individual targeted sanctions. As we navigate towards peace and stability, we believe those measures will facilitate the country's progress, enabling us to address challenges effectively. Lifting these restrictions will contribute to the development of a secure environment, fostering

national reconciliation and the well-being of our citizens. We seek understanding and support from the international community as we strive for a brighter future for South Sudan.

South Sudan seeks international support and invites the international community to provide expertise, resources and oversight to help guarantee the integrity of our country, peace, stability and democratic proceedings. Together, let us work towards fostering a climate, in which the voices of our citizens can be heard, and democratic values can be upheld and can flourish. The Council's collaboration is essential as we strive for a successful and credible electoral outcome in South Sudan.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.