

**Communique of the
Foreign Ministers of Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)**

21 December 2013
Juba, South Sudan.

A high level delegation consisting of the Foreign Ministers of IGAD Member States (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda), accompanied by the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, and Special Envoy of the UN to the African Union, today concluded an emergency three-day visit to Juba, South Sudan, during which they sought to secure an immediate de-escalation of tension in South Sudan and to facilitate a peaceful political dialogue among the protagonists in the current crisis.

As fellow Africans, as concerned and supportive neighbors, and as the custodians of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ushered in the birth of an independent Republic of South Sudan, the Foreign Ministers of IGAD Member States expressed grave concern at the unfortunate events that took place on the 15th of December and call upon all political leaders to exercise maximum restraints. And further extend their solidarity to the people of South Sudan at this hour of distress and tribulation, and affirm their determination to do all that is necessary to assist the leaders of South Sudan resolve the current crisis in a peaceful and expeditious manner, so that South Sudan can enjoy the fruits of its hard-won peace.

The IGAD Foreign Ministers express profound concern at the deteriorating situation in South Sudan. They appeal for an immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties and a return to peaceful political dialogue, in an inclusive and holistic manner. They are deeply concerned about threats to the lives of civilians and call on all parties to protect civilians and respect human rights.

The Foreign Ministers met with Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Republic of South Sudan, and discussed with him at length the dimensions of the crisis and the predicament of South Sudan. The President expressed deep concern at the escalating crisis and in particular at the way in which a political dispute had taken on an ethnic dimension and had become violent. He expressed his readiness to engage without preconditions in a dialogue with the former Vice President Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon and other political leaders in South Sudan who had dissented from their government's position.

President Kiir committed himself to the following specific actions as a result of the meeting:

1. Unconditional dialogue with those in opposition;
2. Cessation of hostilities;
3. The good offices of IGAD should be used to contact Dr. Riek Machar and the opposition, including Mme. Rebecca Nyandeng;
4. The armed forces of the GoRSS shall ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers;
5. The dispute shall remain exclusively at the political level and shall not become an ethnic or tribal conflict.

The delegation appreciated President Kiir's frankness and his readiness to take the road of dialogue. The Foreign Ministers met with Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior, widow of the late Dr. John Garang. She also appealed for restraint and stated her determination to deal with political differences through dialogue.

President Kiir made commitments to ensure their dignity and well-being permitted the IGAD delegation to meet with the ten high level detainees but unfortunately this was not possible in the time available. The Foreign Ministers will remain in touch with the detainees and will be available to at short notice to visit them.

The Foreign Ministers will also contact Riek Machar immediately and will explore the opportunities for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

The IGAD Foreign Ministers condemn unreservedly the killing of civilians and United Nations peacekeepers and extend their condolences to the families of those who died. They call on all armed groups to respect the laws of war, including the protected status of peacekeepers and humanitarians. The ministers further urge all parties to refrain from steps that will inflame the conflict along ethnic and sectarian lines.

The delegation is confident that an opportunity exists now for the tide of conflict to be turned. The leaders of South Sudan have the chance to return to peaceful political dialogue. The members of the delegation are assured that the will for peace is strong and that patriotic and principled leadership can bring South Sudan back from the brink of disaster. Today, the crisis in South Sudan can be resolved by political action.

The IGAD Foreign Ministers today return to their respective capitals. They will remain closely engaged with the situation in South Sudan as it unfolds and will be in daily contact with the leaders will be available return as needed. They express their commitment to facilitating political dialogue among South Sudanese, with the immediate aim of ending violence and threats of violence and ensuring the protection of civilians and the safe delivery of humanitarian supplies, and the longer term goal of ensuring that the issues of political agreement, societal reconciliation, constitution-making, and inclusive and holistic national dialogue, are all addressed in such a way that the nation of South Sudan can achieve peace, stability, democracy and development. IGAD greatly appreciates the support it enjoys from the AU and the UN and continues to urge their unflinching solidarity. IGAD stands ready to provide the concrete support including venue and the necessary facilities for the dialogue to commence within the period of ten days.