



Statement on the Situation in South Sudan

April 25, 2016

We, the undersigned organizations, continue to be alarmed by the drastic humanitarian situation in South Sudan, with the Famine Early Warning Systems Network reporting increasing death rates and a deepening humanitarian catastrophe. While the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity may be an important step, its first actions must be to end the fighting that continues and to provide immediate unimpeded humanitarian access throughout the country to alleviate the suffering of the South Sudanese people. Progress on these issues should be a key test of the new government in determining whether the international community should provide financial support in the coming months.

The United Nations estimates that grain shortages in South Sudan are up over 50 percent from last year's already low level and that 5.8 million South Sudanese, fully half the population, are severely food insecure. Tens of thousands have died and over 2.3 million South Sudanese have been forced to flee their homes. Since the August agreement was signed, more than 100,000 have fled to neighboring countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan. Against this backdrop of continuing suffering, the U.N. has documented 60 or more incidents of impeded humanitarian access in each of February and March 2016, including the killing of six aid workers, robberies and impeded access to key areas. According to the UN, fully 72 percent of the March incidents involved violence against humanitarian workers or assets. With the dry season coming to an end next month, the need to open routes to transport humanitarian supplies to the conflict zones in the north and other places where urgent assistance is needed has never been greater. Moreover, the international community must not wait for even more evidence before responding to the latest UN appeal. The evidence we do have shows that people are suffering intolerably now and these people will continue to suffer while further reviews are taken.

For their part, the parties to the conflict and the Transitional Government of National Unity should ensure immediate authorization for humanitarian agencies to move throughout the country, including:

- Removal of checkpoints,
- Pre-clearance all barge traffic by UN and humanitarian actors,
- Ending the practice of imposing illegal payments and arbitrary request for material support,
- Allowing civilians to move unimpeded to areas where they can access humanitarian assistance,
- Ceasing restrictions on international and local staff from carrying out humanitarian activities,
- Imposing a zero tolerance policy for those who impede humanitarian access, including by relieving and bringing to justice in accordance with international humanitarian law any

military commander in the chain of command or national or local official who fail to ensure the safe passage of humanitarian assistance. and

- Coordinating between humanitarian actors, members of government, and civil society actors to ensure conflict sensitivity, thereby avoiding exacerbating tensions surrounding distribution and access to resources.

In addition, all commanders throughout the chain of command should immediately enforce the ceasefire and permit ceasefire monitors freedom of movement to accurately report progress. Any commander who fails to do so should be relieved of command and prosecuted if they fail to do so. Ending the violence that is driving this humanitarian crisis is essential to a long-term, sustainable solution.

Once the Transitional Government of National Unity is in place, we expect the Transitional Government to work with the international community and invest more of its own resources into such services as providing emergency food and health assistance to the South Sudanese who so desperately need it.

The August 2015 peace agreement, which was supposed to end the violence and this mounting suffering, is failing the South Sudanese people, with little convincing evidence to date that the parties intend to fully implement the agreement. International diplomatic efforts alone, which have centered on the agreement, have neither achieved an end to the violence nor secured the humanitarian access needed to relieve the suffering of the South Sudanese.

The failure of the Transitional Government to take serious and sustained actions to end the violence and ensure unimpeded humanitarian access as outlined in this statement should spur the United States, the United Nations and the broader international community to immediately take action to pressure the parties to fulfill these basic responsibilities of any legitimate government..

President Obama's leadership in Addis last year was crucial in pushing the warring parties to sign the August 2015 agreement. With only eight months remaining in the Obama Administration, the President must act immediately and firmly so as not to leave legacy of failed efforts and a humanitarian catastrophe for the next president.

Signed:

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of the Sudans**

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