



# **Experience sharing workshop on Infrastructure for Peace**

## **Opening Remarks**

**by**

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Honourable Choul Rambang, Chairperson of the South  
Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission

Brig. Gen Sara Thomas Rwanbalim Head of the AU LOSS

Excellencies

Senior Government Officials

Distinguished Resource Persons

Representatives of Civil Society

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honored to have the opportunity to be setting the tone  
at this landmark event. I commend all the individuals,  
institutions and organisations working for peace in this  
country.

At a time when pessimism seems to have replaced hope,  
this occasion serves as a reminder of the South Sudanese  
dream: a dream that has shaped and influenced the history

of the people of this beautiful and young country; a dream that reminds humanity of the desires and aspiration of the millions of South Sudanese who died in the pursuit of nationhood. We, the United Nations, believe in this dream and have always shared the ‘audacity of hope’ of the people of South Sudan.

In South Sudan today, building an infrastructure for peace is about hope, and the future we want for this country. If ever there was a time that the people of South Sudan needed durable peace, that time is now. The on-going plight of South Sudan is a dent on the new African narrative, and the untold suffering of its people a scar on the conscience of the international community.

## ***Excellences***

Through my engagement with the wonderful people of this country, it is clear to me that the peace that they seek is not just the silencing of guns and cessation of hostilities, nor is it the total absence of differences.

The peace that the people of South Sudan seeks go beyond cessation of hostilities. The peace that the people of South Sudan want and need, includes the freedom to live in dignity, freedom from fear, freedom from want and the right to pursue happiness. It is the peace that ensures that a young girl growing up in Raja, Ezo, Juba, Budi, Akobo, and Fashoda will secure her desires of going to school, have a decent chance at life and never waiver in her strong believe that, if she can, she will.

I firmly believe that that the peace that the people of South Sudan seek, is stability that is accompanied by economic

growth and prosperity, improved service delivery and access to education, health and economic opportunities for all the peoples of South Sudan. A peace where South Sudan becomes the destination of choice not just for foreign investments, but for South Sudanese in the diaspora to return and find opportunities for business and employment in this new nation. A peace that paves the way for the peoples of South Sudan to fully take advantage of the rich mineral resources for the country's development; a peace that ensures that the rich beautiful soils that you have is taken advantage of to transform South Sudan to become the bread basket of this sub-region and beyond.

### ***Distinguished Guests***

If establishing an infrastructure for peace is about hedging the future of this country and the dreams of its people, then we must invest in a peace that is durable, transformative, all-embracing and inclusive. But of utmost importance, we must invest in a peace infrastructure that is fit for purpose.

Allows me to share some perspectives, based on my experience, on the type and kind of peace infrastructure that I see as fit for purpose in this country:

**First, the infrastructure for peace must be an institutional expression of a peace and development vision:** The infrastructure for peace cannot be just a mosaic of security structures and apparatus. It must be an operational framework to secure and achieve a vision. The experiences of Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho and other countries demonstrate that the infrastructure for peace is

a network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills held by government, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation, that prevent conflict, and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in society.

**Second, the infrastructure for peace must be anchored on robust institutions/structures and processes** – the peace South Sudanese aspire towards, demands the establishment of robust and independent processes and structures that promote and protect wider national conversations, listens to alternative views and that ensures that national development is about shared authority and collective responsibility.

**Third, a culture of tolerance is the bedrock for a successful peace infrastructure:** Moving from

intransigence and confrontation to accommodation and tolerance is instrumental in creating the right atmosphere for addressing some of the structural challenges facing South Sudan. The experiences of South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda and Namibia teach us that accommodating and celebrating diversity, and empowering communities is certainly one of the pathways to secure sustainable peace.

If we respect each other's rights to be different and think differently from ourselves; if we view our diversity as a strength – irrespective of where we come from, the ethnicities we represent, the gods we worship, the languages we speak, the traditions we hold, the history we have, and the ideas and opinions we hold – then we can draw on the best of our humanity and the best of our skills and build together a bright, prosperous and peaceful future.



**Fourth, a successful peace infrastructure must provide a platform for constructive and consistent dialogue.** The peace infrastructure is not a magic solution, rather it is a mechanism that provides opportunities (political and institutional) for collective reflection and engagement to develop appropriate responses to threats to peace. A National Peace Council, for instance, could provide an opportunity for intra-group and inter-group conversations about South Sudan's current realities, examine the hurt that people have experienced, assess what is blocking society from moving forward, but most importantly stimulate conversations about the South Sudan we all want to see.

**Fifth, a successful infrastructure for peace requires individual transformation:** Durable peace is not the responsibility of the political leadership alone, it is

everybody's business. Let us be the change that we like to see in South Sudan. If the desired change is more tolerance and acceptance of the other, then let everybody be the model of tolerance and acceptance.

Saying this, I know some of us may be wondering what one person can do. Let me tell you what one person can do. Gandhi delivered independence for the people of India; Mandela brought racial acceptance to the nation of South Africa; your very own founding Father, Dr. John Garang, started a movement that led to the birth of this nation. That is the power of one! That is the power of what one person can do!

**Sixth, leadership is needed to develop and take the peace infrastructure to another level:** The leadership qualities required to underpin a successful infrastructure of peace is much more than positional leadership. The

leadership required is not about power; it is about empowering people; inspiring confidence and trust in others; it is about self-sacrifice; it is about influencing through inspiration; and it is about listening and building consensus.

**Seventh, effective partnership for a successful peace infrastructure must not be grounded in prescribing ready-made solutions.** Whilst establishing a peace infrastructure reflects a justifiable need for developing indigenous conflict prevention and management capacities, it must be stressed that it is not an excuse for international disengagement or desertion. There is a role for development partners. But development partners must acknowledge that sometimes their efforts may exacerbate existing conflicts. Development partners must coordinate, harmonise and ensure that their support is sensitive to the priorities and intricacies of local dynamics and do not

inadvertently exacerbate or contribute to underlying tensions and hostilities.

### ***Excellences, Distinguished Guests***

This is it!

The time for decisive and collective action is now. We can no longer waver in our commitment to the people of South Sudan, in a period of pain and anguish. The conflict is wrecking lives, destroying the social fabric within and among communities, imposing economic burdens on South Sudan and its neighbours, and undermining prospects for eliminating poverty for millions in the sub-region.

The Center for Peace and Development here at the University of Juba estimates that if the current conflict continues for another 1 to 5 years, this will cost South Sudan between US\$22.3 billion and US\$28 billion. In contrast, with peace and the envisaged reductions in military spending, the savings that would result would allow South Sudan to meet the internationally recommended target of allocating 20 per cent of spending to education. These estimates are a clear indication that the conflict is development in reverse. I don't know about you but when I read these estimates, there is no better alternative to the pursuit of durable peace.

As you will learn from the Ghana experience, you are embarking on a long but rewarding journey. For Ghana, the journey took a decade but today, the Ghana Peace Council is a model not only for Africa but for many parts of

the world. Kenya, which in 2007 was engulfed in violent conflict over disputed election results has turned the corner. It is my conviction that South Sudan will, too!

We, the United Nations in South Sudan, pledge to accompany you on this journey by drawing on our African and global experiences to provide capacity building support where possible. However we are mindful that the people of South Sudan need to drive and own this process.

Let me conclude by thanking all of you once again for this opportunity, and to commend the organisers for this most timely initiative. I cherish the hope, and indeed I am confident that someday all of us will look back on this day and be proud of the contribution we have made and the seeds that we are sowing today.

I wish you very fruitful deliberations over the next two days.

I thank you