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Remarks at the

Launch of South Sudan's National Adaptation Programme of
Actions (NAPA) for Climate Change

Juba

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H.E. the First Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan

Honourable Ministers, Ambassadors, Diplomats,

Undersecretaries,

Representatives of the line ministries, academia, national and international organizations

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

It is indeed my great pleasure to be here on behalf of the United Nations at the launching of South Sudan's National Adaptation Programme of Actions (NAPA) for Climate Change document.

In recent years, climate change has emerged as one of the defining challenges of our times because it is affecting every country on every continent. Throughout the globe, people are experiencing the significant impacts of climate change, which

include changing weather patterns, rising sea levels, and more extreme weather events.

Climate change is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries dearly today and even more tomorrow. It has a direct bearing on food security, displacement of people, livelihoods, health, education and other social and economic aspects.

We need to understand that climate change is a global challenge that does not respect national borders, and all countries, whether rich or poor, are vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. To tackle this global challenge -- at the regional, national and local levels -- requires innovative and transformative solutions that need collective action and national, regional and global co-ordination. I am pleased to say that all countries, including South Sudan, have adopted the Paris Agreement at the COP21 in Paris signed in

December 2015, in which all countries agreed to work to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius. Combating climate change and its impacts, as you know, is one of the key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the international community, including South Sudan.

Your young country, lest it be forgotten, is also affected by this rise in temperature and its negative impact. Studies have shown that over the last three decades, average temperatures have increased by 0.4°C. What is striking and needs to be carefully monitored is the prediction that temperature may increase by 2^{1/2} times more than the global average.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the development perspective, climate change is a serious risk to further increases in poverty and could undo

decades of development efforts. The negative impacts of climate change are more severely felt by poor people particularly women, girls and children. The vast majority of people in South Sudan are living in poverty with up to 95% of the population dependent on natural resources and rain-fed agriculture. They have very limited capacity to cope with climate variability and extremes. The low level of rain fall recorded in South Sudan in recent years is a grim reminder of the threats faced by climate change events in the country.

We are already witnessing severe dry weather spells resulting in droughts in areas like Kapoeta and other parts of Eastern Equatoria causing food insecurity. Similarly, the intensity of floods has increased in recent years in parts of Jonglei, Unity and Northern Bahr el Ghazal which have resulted in the destruction of crops and cattle, as well as the displacement of thousands of people every year.

Food security is expected to deteriorate to extreme levels this year in northern South Sudan due to relatively longer dry spells being witnessed in the country on account of climate change. Of greatest concern are central and southern Unity and Northern Bahr el Ghazal. These areas have persistently been in crises of varying degrees (a mix of IPC Phase 3, 4 and 5) and households have experienced severe food insecurity. Therefore, creating climate resilient agriculture systems while building on traditional coping mechanisms as an adaptive measure will be key to ensuring food security and agriculture based livelihoods are maintained.

South Sudan's pastoralists and agro-pastoralists are confronted with the scarcity of water and pastures for their livestock; death of animals due to starvation and disease has become apparent. The resultant coping strategies employed by these herders is constant mobility with their animals in

search of water and pastures. They encroach on crop producing areas which results in confrontation with farmers.

Fishing is also very important to many households especially those along the Nile River, constituting the main source of their livelihood. The increased drought situation in the country has caused some perennial streams to become seasonal, and urban human activities through dumping of waste into streams and construction along river banks have contributed to the clogging of rivers and streams. Prices in the urban markets are becoming exorbitant and unaffordable to the majority of South Sudanese who cherish fish as a source of protein and other nutrients.

We all know that South Sudan is currently going through a difficult period and most of the UN's efforts are focused on finding peace and addressing the dire humanitarian crises. Some of you might be thinking: why are we worried about

climate change in this country at this juncture? Surely we have more important matters to worry about? While I would agree that stopping the fighting is paramount, without addressing the changing climate question now, we will only be storing up silent killers for future generations and quite perhaps for our own selves. I do not exaggerate this moral imperative for action without delay. As a first step the preparation of a National Action Plan on Climate Change in order to identify the urgent and immediate adoption needs of the country is a good start, which fulfils the country's obligation as a party to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Secondly, experience elsewhere in the world shows us that one cannot wait for peace to start the transition from humanitarian assistance to early recovery. This also helps people avoid the curse of chronic aid dependence. Thirdly, a broad and integrated approach to the development challenges facing the country is

needed. Accordingly I am heartened to hear discussion of a National Development Plan in the near future.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the UN Environment Programme and other members of the UN family in supporting the government to advance its sustainable development agenda.

I would like to further add that the United Nations Country Team in South Sudan through UNEP, UNDP and others is supporting the country not only in preparation of plans, policies and strategies to address different developmental and environmental challenges but are also planning to build the resilience of the communities in order to strengthen their ability to adapt to climate change shocks and pressure so that they are more food secure and less prone to displacement by natural disasters like floods and droughts.

Several concrete opportunities exist for South Sudan to start planning, preparing and implementing programmes that move the country towards creating more adaptive, resilient and sustainable development pathways. These can be achieved through a combination of national efforts buttressed by international support including in institutional capacity building and in rolling out adaptation measures such as on building climate resilient agriculture systems, while building on the traditional knowledge and wisdom of communities and their coping mechanisms, disseminating seasonal weather forecast data to vulnerable communities leading to adaptive actions and in helping communities to diversify their asset bases to build their resilience.

Many countries and communities are reaping the benefits of climate change adaptation practices in the agricultural sector. For instance, over 5 million hectares of degraded land in the Sahel have been restored through ‘farmer managed natural

regeneration' resulting in food security of millions of people and enhancing their resilience in the face of climate change across Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal. Similar success stories exist across the African continent. Specifically in two neighbouring countries of East Africa, a climate change adaptation programme is helping poor farmers to rebuild their resources and boost their food security in Ethiopia and in Uganda similar adaptation climate resilient agriculture programmes are being launched. It is good to know that we are not alone in this highly challenging endeavour.

I believe passionately that preparation of the NAPA document is one of the key enabling steps towards addressing climate change issues and sustainable development in South Sudan.

I would like to urge the Government of South Sudan to develop the legal framework for climate change adaptation and mitigation, followed by its implementation and monitoring because without systematic actions that begin today, adapting

to these climate change impacts in the future will be progressively more difficult and costly.

The UN stands fully committed in working shoulder to shoulder with the Government of the Republic of South Sudan in dealing with these emerging development challenges in an institutionalized, coherent and integrated manner and in supporting the country to build a sound business case for accessing international resources, providing cutting edge technical expertise and helping communities to adapt while drawing on the rich repository of experience in tackling climate change both regionally and globally.

Thank you very much.