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**LAUNCH OF THE 2017 SOUTH SUDAN  
HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN (HRP)**

**Opening Remarks by**

**Mr. Eugene Owusu**

**Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General  
and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator  
Republic of South Sudan**

**21 February 2017  
Juba, South Sudan**

*Check Against Delivery*

- **Excellency the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Mr. Hussein Mar,**
- **Excellency Ministers,**
- **The Chair of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Prof. Lokulenge Lole**
- **Excellencies Ambassadors,**
- **Colleagues from the UN System,**
- **Colleagues from the NGO community,**
- **Members of the Press,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team, I would like to welcome all of you to the launch of the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for South Sudan.

As Humanitarian Coordinator, I am extremely proud and delighted that the Humanitarian Country Team has worked so strongly together with the Government to produce this fit for purpose Response Plan that addresses life-saving needs and persistent vulnerabilities in communities across South Sudan.

I wish to extend my profound appreciation to all my colleagues in the humanitarian community who worked tirelessly in finalising this Plan.

Special tribute also goes to the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and his team, and the leadership of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission for the outstanding support that they

provided, as we navigated through the political and endorsement processes, and for your leadership in helping us frame a principled response anchored in partnership across all sectors.

To my colleagues at OCHA, the Inter Cluster Working Group and the entire Humanitarian Country Team, there is no better army of humanity than what we have got in you, here in South Sudan.

For our national colleagues, who are the true and silent heroes of our humanitarian response, year in and year out, I wish to use this opportunity to thank you immensely for your commitment, dedication, your selflessness, and above all your courage.

For our international colleagues, you have traded the comfort of your family and the certainty of safety in your home country to come help the little girl who has been displaced, and who's only shot in life depends on your sacrifice and generosity. You have not only saved lives, you have brought hope.

As your Humanitarian Coordinator, I couldn't ask for a better group of people. Thank you and thank you so much.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The launch of this Plan comes at a critical time. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan is widening and deepening.

There are more needs now, in more locations than have ever been the case. Some 3 million people – nearly one in every four people in South Sudan - have been forced to flee their homes since the conflict began. As of this month, rather sadly, South Sudan has the unenviable reputation as the top refugee producing country in Africa, and the third in the world.

And only yesterday when we launched the Integrated Phase Food Security Classification Report, the evidence presented was that some 4.9 million people – more than 40 per cent of the population are in need of urgent food, agriculture and nutrition assistance.

Ominously, this figure is expected to increase to 5.5 million people during the peak of the lean season. Most worrying is the fact that because of this man-made crisis, the Report highlights that some 100,000 people in the central part of the former Unity state are facing famine.

The Report also stated that a further 1 million people are classified as being on the brink of famine – a situation which requires most urgent response action.

### **Excellencies,**

The world and the donor community have stood side-by-side with the people of South Sudan, giving generously to help alleviate their suffering.

Humanitarian partners have worked tirelessly, in some circumstances losing their lives, to reach people in need, delivering life-saving assistance and protection. In 2016 humanitarian partners provided protection and assistance to more than 5.1 million people, including in some of the most remote, hard-to-reach locations.

Food aid was delivered to more than 4.1 million people; more than 637,000 children were treated for acute malnutrition; and 1.1 million people received non-food items and/or emergency shelter.

Despite this strong support, the challenge remains daunting.

Hunger and malnutrition are widespread and we are now facing severe food insecurity in parts of the country that were previously stable, including in areas such as Yei in the Greater Equatoria, a region once known as the bread basket of South Sudan. Malnutrition has likewise skyrocketed.

Whilst the humanitarian crisis in the country is man-made, the launch of the Plan is not an annual ritual to paint a pessimistic picture of South Sudan as a basket case. This Plan is about solidarity and the demonstration of the highest duty of care for the millions of people who require urgent life-saving assistance.

As I stated at the launch of the 2016 HRP, the Humanitarian Response Plan is not a panacea to all the humanitarian challenges in South Sudan. Rather, it is a plan that aims to serve those in most dire need in the country.

As with its predecessor, the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan has been produced, as strictly prioritized, robust, realistic and responsive to the most urgent and life-saving needs to the most vulnerable populations in the country.

In recognition of the fact that the situation in South Sudan, at its core, is a protection crisis, we have mainstreamed protection across all elements of the response including through promoting gender-and

conflict sensitive programming and accountability to affected populations.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

The scale and scope of the humanitarian situation presents an unprecedented challenge for the humanitarian community.

But the situation can be mitigated, and we can quite literally save tens of thousands of lives and help to restore hundreds of thousands of livelihoods if humanitarians are granted free, unhindered access to all populations and locations across South Sudan.

Indeed, as we move forward, we must remind ourselves that the Plan will remain an aspiration unless certain minimum conditions for success are met:

**First: Access is fundamental to humanitarian action. Free and unhindered access must be granted to all humanitarians in order to facilitate rapid delivery of humanitarian assistance to all people in need in South Sudan.**

While life threatening needs on the ground continue to escalate, denials of humanitarian access, particularly at contentious checkpoints and to particular areas including outside of Yei town in

Central Equatoria and outside of Wau town in Western Bahrl El Ghazal, continue to occur. It is imperative that bureaucratic impediments and interferences that hamper, obstruct or delay humanitarian operations are removed.

**Second: *The operating environment must be made conducive to the provision of rapid assistance by ensuring the safety and security of all aid workers.***

Humanitarians risk their lives every single day to provide assistance to those in need. However, each day, humanitarians on the front line of humanitarian action in South Sudan - most of whom are courageous South Sudanese aid

workers - continue to be subjected to threats, attacks and expulsions. Seventy-one aid workers have been killed since the beginning of this crisis in December 2013. This is unacceptable. Authorities must ensure the safety and security of all aid workers, putting a stop to the harassment, intimidation and violence against aid workers.

**Third: Funding is an absolute imperative if we are to successfully implement this plan that we are launching today and achieve the goals and targets within it.**

Thanks to the generosity of our donor partners, 85% of the total requirement for the 2016 HRP of USD1.3 billion was secured, making the South

Sudan coordinated response exemplary and amongst the best supported anywhere in the world. However, humanitarians go into 2017 aware that life threatening needs on the ground continue to escalate, along with corresponding financial requirements.

In 2017, humanitarian organisations in South Sudan will target 5.8 million people of the 7.5 million in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection and require \$1.6 billion in funding. This is the barest minimum needed to provide only the most life-saving assistance to those in most dire need.

In the face of increasing needs, humanitarian partners are truly in a race against time to scale-up action and funding is needed immediately to procure, preposition and deliver supplies during the window of opportunity provided by the dry season.

### **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Above all else, the story of humanitarian support and indeed the HRP is about the people of South Sudan. But how can South Sudan be at peace with itself when a mother can't perform even the most basic function of providing food to her family, because the husband has been killed and her livelihood destroyed?

How can we build peace when 1 in 3 South Sudanese are on the move? We do know that ultimately, the most viable pathway to addressing the humanitarian crisis lies in a political solution.

I therefore would like to use this opportunity to once again emphasize that the guns must be silenced to provide the long suffering people of this country the chance to rebuild their lives and live a life of dignity.

Behind the estimates, figures and budgets lies the incredible story of resilience, endurance and hope against all odds. From Malakai, Bentiu, Juba, Wau and Yei, I have heard stories and come across people who have endured what I thought was impossible.

People going for days without food, water and shelter; people being traumatised by seeing their love ones killed in front of them. Girls still coming to terms with the fact that the child they are carrying is the result of repeated rape by men three times her age. Despite this appalling narrative and experiences, they tell me their situation today is not their destiny.

And as I conclude, let me share with you a story that captures the scope and scale of this crisis, and the importance of our continued partnership to those affected by the conflict in South Sudan:

*A woman, Mary, who met with a humanitarian team that recently visited Leer told the aid team: "We are now heading into four years of conflict. We have been running all of the time. Our villages have been burnt. We have been chased from Leer toward Thonyor and into the swamps."*

It is people such as Mary who so desperately need our help. They remind us that, while the numbers are overwhelming, we must never forget the human face of this crisis, and we must never relent in our efforts to save every life before it is too late.

In fact, in these very trying times, to deny South Sudanese basic things like safety, food and water is indeed to deny them their humanity.

I wish to thank all of you for coming. I wish to once again thank the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, the RRC and the Government of South Sudan more broadly for the increasingly strong partnership that characterizes our humanitarian work.

Let us work hand in hand and contribute to creating a more permissive environment for humanitarian action in South Sudan. And most importantly, let our work towards an environment in which peace can take root.

I wish to use this opportunity to renew the commitment of the humanitarian community to South Sudanese that in your quest to alleviate the

suffering of our brothers and sisters in South Sudan, you have a partner.

This 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan is about unity, hope and mutual accountability for common results. I truly believe that when we all play our parts, we will indeed succeed in saving lives and in restoring livelihoods.

I thank you.