



PRESS RELEASE

Statement from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General David Shearer Celebrating South Sudan Independence Day

Juba, 9 July 2020: Today, we join with the people of South Sudan in celebrating the historic moment that their country became the world's newest nation.

On the 9th of July 2011, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan as the outcome of a 2005 agreement that ended Africa's longest-running civil war. It was a proud moment for the people who fought so hard for the right to determine their own future.

On the 9th anniversary, we should take the opportunity to remember the immense suffering caused by war but also to recognize the positive impact that the peace agreement has had on communities across the country.

Hundreds, even thousands, of people are alive today because of the significant reduction in political violence. Displaced families are returning home to plant crops and rebuild their lives. Humanitarian agencies are reaching more communities in need.

In recent months, we have witnessed a stalling of the peace process and, worryingly, an escalation in conflict between armed groups in places such as Jonglei, Unity and Central Equatoria which has caused many civilian deaths, widespread displacement and the looting and destruction of homes.

These events remind us of the critical importance and ongoing need for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to continue its work to protect civilians and build durable peace.

We mark this special day at an unprecedented time of global crisis as COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc among peoples and economies across the world, including South Sudan.

Now, more than ever, we need the government and people of South Sudan to come together in unity and peace to respond to this new threat to this young country. The United Nations will stand strong alongside the communities that we are here to serve with a firm commitment to supporting the national-led COVID-19 response and continuing our lifesaving and lifechanging work.

South Sudan earned its right to sovereignty on this day – nine years ago – after a long and bloody struggle. It took a huge step forward with the signing of the peace agreement and ceasefire in 2018.

However, there is still much work that needs to be done to end the outbreaks of violence and to ensure that we have a truly unified government that makes collaborative decisions in the best interests of its citizens.

It is only then that South Sudan will truly enjoy the peace and prosperity it deserves.