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PRESS STATEMENT

IGAD mediators condemn violence in South Sudan's Unity State; call on opposition forces to immediately cease hostilities

29 October 2014, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: The IGAD Special Envoys for South Sudan strongly condemn the action of SPLM/A (In Opposition) forces to initiate conflict in the area of Bentiu, Unity State, South Sudan.

This unfortunate development comes despite the significant progress in the peace talks: in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, where the parties took major steps forward in resolving their outstanding differences; during the recent consultations in Addis Ababa, Khartoum, Nairobi and Juba with IGAD Heads of State and Government; the commitment by President Salva Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar to work together and share power in the transitional government; and the decision by the three competing factions in the intra-SPLM party dialogue in Arusha, Tanzania to accept collective responsibility for the conflict, as witnessed by President Kiir and Dr. Machar. Furthermore, the violence comes at the start of the current session of peace talks in Addis Ababa, and on the eve of the convening of the Assembly of the IGAD Heads of State and Government and, at their specific request, direct negotiations between President Kiir and Dr. Machar.

The ongoing fighting in and around Bentiu, Unity State demonstrates that the SPLM/A (In Opposition) has yet to abandon the option of war. The already dire humanitarian situation throughout South Sudan is further imperiled by this violence, and risks millions of lives and the international effort to address the humanitarian catastrophe induced by this war.

The IGAD Envoys call on the forces of the SPLM/A (In Opposition) to immediately cease hostilities, for government forces to demonstrate restraint and for all parties to give peace a chance.

The IGAD Envoys renew their call to the parties to adhere to their commitments, particularly the requirements of the CoH Agreement to end the recruitment and mobilization of forces, including that of child soldiers, the acquisition of arms and ammunition, and all possible military provocation.

Finally, the Envoys appeal to the IGAD Heads of State and Government, the United Nations, the African Union and the broader international community to prevail on the parties to immediately cease fighting, commit to a genuine process of peace and dialogue and abandon the option of war. ##

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