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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
411th MEETING AT THE LEVEL OF
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

BANJUL, THE GAMBIA
30 DECEMBER 2013

**OPENING STATEMENT OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY,
AMBASSADOR SMAÏL CHERGUI**

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- **Chairperson of the Council,**
- **Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegation,**
- **Invited guests,**
- **Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to be here in Banjul for this meeting of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) devoted particularly to the evolving and worrying situation in the Republic of South Sudan. Allow me from the outset to convey the apologies of Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who would have wished to be here had it not been for other prior commitments.

I would like to express our sincere gratitude to our Gambian hosts for the warm welcome extended to all delegates. This is no surprise to us as The Gambia is renowned for its hospitality and the generosity of its people.

Let me also seize this opportunity to thank President Jammeh for taking the initiative to convene this meeting at Summit level. The timeliness of the meeting cannot be over-emphasized. As we gather here, South Sudan is being torn apart by violence; countless lives have been lost, dozens of thousands of civilians have been displaced, and egregious human right violations have been committed. Africa cannot but step in to help, for we are bound by the duties of pan-African solidarity with the sisterly people of South Sudan and our commitments under the AU Peace and Security Council Protocol.

The convening of this meeting is a further testimony to the commitment of President Jammeh to the promotion of peace on our continent and The Gambia's determination to discharge its responsibilities as Chair of the Council for this month. In this period of holidays, there is no better gift to the people of South Sudan than bringing Africa's collective influence and wisdom to bear on the unfolding developments in their country in order to bring their ordeal to an end.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The quest for peace continues to be at the heart of African Union's efforts, for without peace our vision of a prosperous, integrated and stable continent cannot materialize. Today's meeting is yet another milestone in this endeavour.

Undoubtedly, significant progress has been made in the course of the year 2013 in the area of peace and security. One can point to the positive and encouraging developments in Somalia, a country whose fortune has changed for the better, thanks to the commitment of the Somalis, their resilience and the steel resolve of African peacekeepers operating under

AMISOM. The situation has also positively evolved in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The combination of the work of the intervention brigade and greater cooperation among the countries of the region have made it possible to restore state authority in eastern DRC, while the mediation efforts of President Museveni have resulted in the signing of a peace document between the DRC Government and the M23. Thanks to the solidarity of ECOWAS, the AU and the larger international community, Mali has overcome the existential challenge that confronted it over two years ago. Democratic order has been restored and the country is now embarked upon the challenging path of reconciliation among all its people and post-conflict reconstruction. In Madagascar, we are pleased to note that the crisis that affected the country for the past few years is now nearing its end, as evidenced by the successful organization of presidential and legislative elections. In Guinea Bissau, the elections planned to be held in the coming months will mark the conclusion of the long process towards the restoration of constitutional order initiated with the support of ECOWAS.

However, many challenges still lie ahead. Suffice it to mention here that, besides South Sudan, there is continued prevalence of conflicts in some parts of the continent, such as the dispute over Western Sahara, the impasse in the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the prevailing situation in Central African Republic, which has assumed a new dimension marked by religious and inter-communal tension and clashes. A myriad of other challenges continue to face the continent, among which I would like to highlight the scourge of terrorism, the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of Governments and other related threats.

The African Union, both through the Peace and Security Council and the Commission, has continued to make sustained efforts to address these challenges. The actions being taken include conflict prevention, mediation, the deployment of peace support operations, and the furtherance of post-conflict reconstruction in countries where peace has been restored. At the same time, we have continued to build our capacity to deal with the peace and security challenges confronting us and sharpen our Peace and Security Architecture. Of particular importance is the decision adopted by the Summit, in May this year, to authorize the establishment of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC).

**Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen**

As I stated earlier, this Summit of the Peace and Security Council is being convened to discuss the situation in South Sudan. Let me stress the seriousness of the crisis. Urgent action is needed to stop the bloodshed and initiate inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders. If not urgently contained, the situation threatens to evolve into a destructive full blown civil war that would shatter the hopes and expectations that arose from South Sudan accession to independence, prolong the untold suffering visited upon the people of South Sudan for decades, and destabilize the entire region.

In pondering over the type of action that this Council should take, we should be cognizant of the efforts already being made by the region under the leadership of IGAD and Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn of Ethiopia, with the support of the African Union and the larger international community. Our aim should be to reinforce these efforts and to rally continental and international support to the steps already initiated, in order to bring the fighting to an end, halt the slide towards civil war and facilitate the early convening of the much-needed dialogue among the South Sudanese stakeholders.

I am confident that this Summit will mark a positive and decisive step in our collective efforts to address the crisis in South Sudan. We should build on the earlier pronouncements of Council and the Chairperson of the Commission on this matter, as they provide clear guidelines on the way forward.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

While this meeting is mainly devoted to the situation in South Sudan, we deemed it important, as Commission, to use this opportunity to raise concerns about the developments obtaining in the Central African Republic. The situation is tragic, and the suffering inflicted upon the civilian population is unbearable. I have just come from Bangui where I undertook a visit along with Ministers from the Republic of Chad and the Republic of Congo. We went there to express our support to the gallant African forces deployed in the CAR as part of MISCA and assist in highlighting the extraordinary, but yet untold, work they are doing on the ground to protect civilians and restore security, along with the French forces. We went there to impress upon the CAR stakeholders to exercise the responsibilities of leadership. We went there to express solidarity with the people of CAR.

As we gather here, it is important that Council, which mandated MISCA, reiterate its support to the Mission and, more importantly, leads by example through financial contributions of its members to the funding of the operation. Such contributions will go a long way to enhance Africa's leadership and ownership, and facilitate the mobilization of additional support from international partners.

I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you.

African Union Commission (AUC)

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PSC Outcomes

Communiqués

2013-12-30

Communiqué of the 411th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council Held on 30 December 2013, Banjul, The Gambia.

Peace and Security Council

African Union Commission

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