

## **Statement South Sudan Special Session on behalf of the co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect**

**14 December 2016**

Mr. President,

I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of the co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (Rwanda and The Netherlands).

We are deeply concerned about the situation in South Sudan and the heightened risk of mass atrocity crimes. Since late October, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan have all voiced their concern regarding the rising incidents of hate speech, including by government officials, and the systematic targeting, killings and forced displacement of the civilian population, including sexual violence against women and girls.

As the UN Special Representative for the Prevention of Genocide said, many of the warning signals of impending genocide are already there – an existing conflict, resort to polarized ethnic identities, dehumanization, a culture of denial, displacement based on ethnicity and in some places indications of systematic violations and planning. With the stalling of the implementation of the Peace Agreement, the current humanitarian crisis, a stagnating economy and the proliferation of arms, all of the ingredients exist for a dangerous escalation of violence, warning in his own words that, “what began as a political conflict has transformed into what could become an outright ethnic war.”

As the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan and the Special Adviser have stated, there is still time to prevent escalation of violence towards genocide in South Sudan. In that regard, the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms have a critical preventative role to play and we welcome the convening of this special session.

The Transitional Government of National Unity bears the primary responsibility to protect its population from mass atrocities. In this regard we welcome the cooperation of the Government with the Human Rights Commission and other United Nations mechanisms and its consent to the deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

We call on the Human Rights Council:

- To strongly condemn ethnically-fueled violence and hate speech and to continue to insist on preventing further incitement to discrimination, hostility, and hatred that could lead to more violence.
- To strongly condemn the unprecedented levels of sexual violence in South Sudan and ensure prompt investigation and accountability for all those responsible.
- To call on the political leadership of South Sudan to immediately condemn and take steps to prevent any act of discrimination, hostility, and hatred that could constitute incitement to violence.
- To stress the importance of an inclusive political process, the urgent need to engage in both community and national level dialogue and the establishment of the Commission for Truth, Healing and Reconciliation by the Government foreseen in the peace agreement.
- To call for the immediate establishment of the hybrid court as set out in the peace agreement to ensure justice and accountability.

While stressing that the Government of South Sudan has the primary responsibility to protect its population, other States, regional organisations and the international community can assist its protection efforts. In that regard, there is an urgent need for strengthened cooperation with the African Union, IGAD and UNMISS in order to move this process forward.

Finally we call on the Government of South Sudan to continue and fully cooperate with these processes, grant unfettered humanitarian access and to facilitate the deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

Thank you.