**Remarks at the South Sudan 4th Independence Anniversary Celebrations**

*Held At La Royale*

*819-821 High Road, Tottenham,*

*London N17 8ER*

By

**Ambassador Sabit Abbe Alley**

London

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* Hon. Stephen Dhieu, Minister of Petroleum, Mining and Industry
* Fellow South Sudanese citizens resident in the United Kingdom,
* Distinguished invited guests,
* Ladies and gentlemen
1. It is with great pleasure and honour that I welcome you to the celebrations marking the 4th Independence Anniversary of our country. As you will recall, South Sudan became independent on July 9, 2011 following the successful conduct of a referendum in which 98.2% of our people voted for secession from Sudan. On behalf of my colleagues in the Embassy and on my own behalf, I want to sincerely thank you for responding to our invitation to join us on this auspicious occasion.
2. As we mark and celebrate this important and historic day I would like us to remember and pay tribute to our compatriots who paid the ultimate price for our freedom. In our long struggle for independence we lost over three million lives; leave alone the destruction that was wrecked on our land, property and infrastructure. Also, on this day we should remember and appreciate our gallant men and women who were wounded and disabled in the war. This day belongs to these heroes and heroines just as much as it belongs to those of us who are fortunate to still be alive.
3. This day also affords us the opportunity to reflect and take stock of whatever achievements and shortcomings we have made since we attained statehood and what needs to be done in the years ahead. However, as I have stated in previous occasions, four years are certainly too short a period to make a realistic and genuine assessment of our country’s achievements in the areas of socio-economic development and the provision of services to the citizens. As you all know, development is a process which requires time and patience. In the case of South Sudan this process has been interrupted and indeed made difficult due to numerous challenges we faced since July 9, 2011, most of which are all well known to you. This state of affairs has even been aggravated more by the unfortunate eruption of violence in the country following the events of December 15, 2013. The ongoing fighting in the country, especially in our three states of Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity, has not only caused great loss of lives and displacement of civilians but it has as a matter of consequence affected and impeded socio-economic development efforts as well as the provision of services to our people. Due to the conflict Government had to institute stern austerity measures and to prioritize and even scale down some programs and projects. This situation has been further compounded by the sharp drop in the prices of oil at the international market, which drop has greatly reduced the amount of revenue the country used to collect from the sale of this commodity.
4. In order to steadily proceed with socio-economic development efforts and the provision of basic services to the masses of our country Government has resolved that the attainment of peace, unity and reconciliation in the country is a priority. To this end, Government has made firm commitment to the realization of peace through political dialogue. And this explains why this year’s theme for the independence celebrations is dubbed: “**For a United and peaceful South Sudan**”. This theme has been chosen to epitomize the government’s resolve to unite and bring peace to the people of South Sudan. Although the peace process which is being spearheaded by Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has dragged on endlessly for nearly over a year, government remains confident and hopeful that durable and sustainable peace will return to the country. Peace and stability are critically important for sustainable development and the provision of much needed services to the masses of our country.
5. While on the question of peace, I want to implore you, the South Sudanese Diaspora, to play a role in the attainment of peace and reconciliation in the country. I have no doubt that, with the exposure, knowledge, experience and skills which you have gained in this country, you will make some constructive contribution to the peace discourse. I know that some of you as individuals or groups have made efforts in this regard by availing proposals to the government and negotiating teams in Addis Ababa. You efforts are appreciated and commended and I encourage you to stay engaged in the process until peace returns to the country. Our people are yearning and crying for peace and it is imperative that we deliver on this score. If you listened to President Salva Kiir’s address to the nation on Thursday and the speeches of others who spoke during the occasion, you must have noticed that the focus was primarily on the need to attain peace in the country.
6. I want you to know that you, the South Sudan Diaspora, is an important constituency. That is why an Office for the Diaspora has been created in the Presidency to cater for specific needs of the Diaspora and to ensure your participation in national matters. You might be interested to know that in the Embassy in London we also have a diplomat whose assignment is to take care of our Diaspora in the United Kingdom. Let me reiterate my appeal to you: given the knowledge and skills you have acquired here, you can make a difference by partaking in the peace process and ultimately in the building of our country. You have the opportunity to be counted and be an example to others.
7. Regarding relations between South Sudan and the United Kingdom I want to report to you that we continue to enjoy mutual friendly and cordial bilateral relations. In the last two years the two countries have exchanged a number of visits at both the ministerial and technical levels. Britain continues to give our country support in the areas of development and humanitarian assistance. The UK is also playing a pivotal role in the peace talks by providing financial and technical assistance. In the area of economic cooperation we have witnessed some decline in the number of UK citizens wanting to do business and investment in South Sudan, largely due to apprehensions about insecurity in parts of the country. However, we remain confident and hopeful that with the return of peace to the country we will see an increased number of investors and business people coming to South Sudan.

With these many words I would like to thank you for your attention and congratulate you on our Independence Day. Enjoy the celebration and may God bless South Sudan.