



## Significant Step Toward Peace in South Sudan

February 2020

The formation of a power-sharing government is a significant and positive step in the South Sudan peace process. Finally, after many false starts, the hopes of millions of South Sudanese for peace and stability are within reach.

The formation of a unity government, however, is just one challenge that has been resolved. Ensuring that the peace agreement is as inclusive as possible by bringing on board holdout groups will add value to a holistic peace. In this regard, more compromises are required to build confidence in the peace process and to resolve outstanding issues. When leaders are open to compromise, the possibilities for peace are immense; they can achieve tasks that seem impossible, such as resolving the issue of security arrangements.

However, South Sudan's politicians must not lose sight of what ignited this brutal war in the first place. Egregious corruption and competition for the spoils of state by political elites, combined with the deliberate weakening of accountability measures, were instrumental in plunging the country into a devastating, five-year civil war.

For this reason, mediators outlined clear steps in the peace agreement designed to counter corruption and prevent a return to war. For far too long, officials have looted public coffers of money meant for schools, hospitals, and roads and stashed it abroad. Chapter IV of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan calls for profound reform of the country's institutions of accountability. President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar will need to expedite and prioritize these urgent reforms to hold government officials accountable and ensure that the country's resources benefit the people. Both leaders will need to muster the political will necessary to break with the past and sever ties with elite profiteers bent on maintaining the status quo.

Friends of South Sudan have a role to play in ensuring the full implementation of the peace agreement. Years of conflict have bred deep distrust among South Sudan's politicians, heightening the potential for a return to war. The ability to hold South Sudan's politicians accountable throughout the process, rather than waiting until it is too late, is essential to the survival of the peace agreement. The US, Britain, Norway, and the European Union, which have spent billions on humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts in South Sudan, along with African governments that have led and supported the peace process from the beginning, must ensure that spoilers will pay a heavy price if they disrupt South Sudan's march to peace.

