STATEMENT TO THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THIRD COMMITTEE

29 OCTOBER 2025

Delivered by Mr. Barney Afako

Madam Chair, excellencies, distinguished representatives and delegates.

On behalf of the Chairperson of our Commission, Ms. Yasmin Sooka, and my colleague Mr. Carlos Castresana, I am honoured to present to this Committee.

We are deeply disappointed to have to report that the political transition in South Sudan is falling apart, and the country is sliding back into deadly violence and new political fractures.

When we briefed the Human Rights Council in February, we described widespread gross human rights violations and a dramatic upsurge in armed violence. We described the entrenched impunity, predation, and corruption that we identified these as key drivers of human rights violations, political conflict and communal violence in South Sudan.

The results are profoundly destructive for the country and its people. For South Sudanese, women and girls, conflict brings extreme forms of sexual brutality, which compounds their already acute societal marginalisation.

Corruption in South Sudan is both pervasive and extreme. Since its independence 14 years ago, South Sudan has received over 25 billion dollars from oil. Yet, desperate citizens are asking themselves what happened to this money. In fact, most of it has been systematically diverted or mismanaged, as we describe in our report of 16 September 2025.

In such a wealthy country, visible and disturbing signs of poverty and neglect are everywhere, especially in the countryside, where basic services, hospitals, schools, and courtrooms are absent or in a woeful state. Roads are paid for but not delivered. Agriculture is neglected, even as acute hunger stalks South Sudan's children. Corruption is killing South Sudanese.

South Sudan's children are hungry and out of school. Instead of carrying textbooks, many are being forced to carry guns. Their future is being stolen from them even as they are violated.

Their leaders are not only predatory, but they are also extremely repressive. In 2024, despite widespread concerns, the government forced through legislation that retains extensive arrest powers for the National Security Service (the intelligence service). And those powers are being abused.

In an escalation of political intolerance, the government has arbitrarily detained, and put on trial, key opposition leaders and peace partners, in disregard of the transitional agreement in which citizens, the region and international community have invested so much hope.

Today, fierce clashes have broken out across several states in the country. We are seeing aerial bombardments in civilian areas. The Ceasefire renewed in 2017 is being ignored. While the Joint international Commission monitoring the peace agreement continues to urge restraint and support, its calls are falling on deaf ears.

Uganda has deployed its forces in South Sudan, to alongside the government. But the presence of foreign forces encourages political intransigence and complicates the situation. Uganda must therefore use its influence to ensure that the peace agreement—of which it is a guarantor—is implemented and not undermined.

South Sudan's leaders have consistently failed to invest in inclusive politics. In 2016, they attempted to reverse the 2015 Peace Agreement; more recently, they have undermined Kenya's Tumaini Initiative, which sought to bring other groups into the peace agreement. Since February, the Tumaini has not convened.

The consequence of this political mismanagement can be seen in increased violence, human rights violations and humanitarian crises. This year alone, over 370,000 civilians have been displaced by conflict – almost half have fled to neighbouring countries, which now host 2.5 million South Sudanese refugees. Another two million people are displaced internally, alongside nearly 600,000 refugees, mostly from Sudan.

And impunity drives these conflicts, corruption and political intolerance. Ten years ago, the African Union proposed—and South Sudanese endorsed—a Hybrid Court to deliver justice and restore dignity to victims of violations.

While the government has introduced legislation for the Truth Commission and Reparations Authority, the African Union is struggling to secure government cooperation for establishing the Hybrid Court. Yet this African court is essential for breaking cycles of violence, for upholding international law, and for the protection of citizens.

In line with the AU's Transitional Justice policy, therefore, we believe that for South Sudan to prosper, it needs transformative transitional justice that addresses the past while investing in a future built on solid foundations of the rule of law.

By now the country should have completed a permanent constitution, held national elections and commenced transitional justice processes. Instead, cynical leaders, who are averse to any form of accountability, are undermining the Revitalized Agreement, fomenting violence, fracturing the country, endangering a volatile region; devastating lives.

We therefore urge this Assembly to come to the aid of South Sudan: to insist on inclusive dialogue, and the restoration of a credible transition. This Assembly should support initiatives of the African Union, IGAD, and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, which seek to prevent South Sudan from tipping over the precipice.

The world must not allow intransigent leaders to destroy the youngest of our countries before our eyes. No. The very long suffering of the South Sudanese must be ended. And they are looking to this Assembly for clear support.

I thank you.