

Delegation: South Sudan

Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee

Topic: Ethnic Violence

The Republic of South Sudan continues to face the devastating and tragic effects of ethnic violence. The United Nations attempted to at first prevent and then end the violence between South Sudan's many ethnic groups. However, as the United Nations failed previous nations so too did it fail South Sudan. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, the Central African Republic, and now in South Sudan the United Nations has attempted to end ethnic violence only to be met with limited results. The unwillingness of United Nations peacekeeping forces to prevent violence by resisting militia groups with force of arms led to the death of hundreds of thousands in Rwanda and the former Yugoslav republics. Thus, it is apparent to South Sudan—as it should be apparent to all member states of the United Nations—that the United Nations must be committed to increasing its efforts to prevent ethnic conflict from breaking out in the first place as well as firmly cracking down on existing ethnic violence.

Sadly, South Sudan is no stranger to ethnic violence. In the past decade, tens of thousands of South Sudanese have died and millions have been displaced as a result of ethnic conflict within the country. While the United Nations played a pivotal role in ensuring the independence of South Sudan, United Nations peacekeepers were unable to prevent this violence. Additionally, support for South Sudanese independence from the United Nations and the international community was not followed up with meaningful aid for development and nation-building. This paved the way for the ethnic violence that followed. Furthermore, despite a large peacekeeping mission in South Sudan from the United Nations—the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)—comprising thousands of soldiers and other personnel, the United Nations was unable to effectively stop ethnic violence in our country. This makes evident to South Sudan that to prevent further ethnic conflict the United Nations must take strong and unified action to reform the way it seeks to both end existing ethnic violence and prevent future ethnic violence.

South Sudan believes that the United Nations must pursue reforms to both combat ethnic violence through peacekeeping and prevent ethnic violence through nation-building and development. Reforms in how the United Nations carries out peacekeeping operations are essential. The United Nations must modify the rules of engagement for peacekeepers to ensure that they can use force in order to protect civilians and sovereign governments. Failures of United Nations peacekeepers to use force directly lead to the Srebrenica massacre and the assassination of the Rwandan Prime Minister. As result, member states must be ready to accept higher casualties from their peacekeeping forces. This cost, however, is well worth the hundreds of thousands of lives that can be saved through greater intervention on behalf of the United Nations. The United Nations must also take action to prevent future incidents of ethnic violence while helping those countries which are affected—such as South Sudan—to recover. This importantly includes economic development in areas that face high ethnic tension. Much of South Sudan's ethnic conflict is tied to famine, lack of resources, and lack of development. Had the international community intervene economically first, it is possible that the violence would have been avoided. Furthermore, such economic development in regions devastated by poverty, famine, and climate change would help to eliminate existing causes and cases of ethnic violence. Finally, the United Nations must ensure that new nations have support from the international community in building stable coalition governments that integrate and protect all ethnic groups in the country. Had the international community further supported South Sudan with nation-building activities after its independence, it is likely that the ethnic violence here would have been avoided. The United Nations must continue to politically support new and emerging multi-ethnic states to ensure they are able to firmly establish themselves as safe and secure democracies. South Sudan like many other countries continues to face problems with ethnic violence. However, if the United Nations is willing to reform and recommit to its peacekeeping initiatives such violence can be eliminated now and prevented in the future. This will take considerable international commitment. However, South Sudan knows first hand the importance of ending such violence and the steps needed to do so.

*From UUMUN Staff*