

**EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR VALERIE AMOS
PRESS BRIEFING ON SOUTH SUDAN
2 February 2012**

Checked against delivery

This is my first visit to South Sudan since the historic independence celebration just over six months ago.

I have just returned from Jonglei State, where I was able to see the situation on the ground in Walgak and Pibor. I was pleased to meet Governor Kuol Manyang, local officials, aid workers, and some of the more than 140,000 people who have been affected by the cycle of violence and retaliation. It is a terrible situation – people have lost loved ones, their possessions, and their livelihoods.

I am pleased that we were able to launch a large-scale emergency operation to help the people caught up in the violence in Jonglei State. We are working to meet basic life-saving needs – food, water, medicine, household items. Many of the areas we need to reach are very remote and can only be reached by air, making this operation hugely expensive compared to assistance delivered by road. Unfortunately we do not have a choice if we want to reach these areas quickly. We therefore need to see increased supplies and more aid workers on the ground.

These attacks are part of a much wider problem of inter-communal violence that has taken place in Jonglei for a long time.

I am extremely concerned that humanitarian premises were specifically targeted, and we lost critical supplies, which slowed our relief operation. I urge all parties to respect humanitarian premises and personnel, so that we can help the people of Jonglei.

More broadly, I would like to emphasize my concern about South Sudan as a whole. The situation in the country is extremely precarious, and the risk of a dangerous decline is very real. Food insecurity has already increased, and 2012 will witness an earlier, and a longer, season of hunger. If oil production is shut down, many people will feel the effects; humanitarian needs will inevitably increase, and the combined efforts of the Government, the aid community and the donors will not be enough. The scope of this crisis cannot be ignored.

For 2012, we are asking the international community for just over US\$760 million dollars: three-quarters of a billion dollars for humanitarian needs in South Sudan. But we can only do so much. Government leadership is vital.

We appreciate the leadership of the Government and the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in the highly complex returns process. I would like to underscore to all concerned that all returns must be voluntary, and conducted in safety and dignity.

As one of the most under-developed countries in the world, South Sudan faces enormous challenges. We have seen achievements by the Government: the establishment of working ministries, including the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs in 2010; a legislative assembly; multi-party polls; governors' offices and assemblies in every state.

Since my last visit here in 2010, signs of change in South Sudan are already visible, and I can see it here in Juba. But perhaps the most significant change is in the hearts of the people, proud of their hard-won nation, the newest independent country in the world. The world must not let them down.