

## The Need for Sustainable Peace and Its Urgency

**H.E. Hon. Aya Benjamin Libo Warille**

**Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare of South Sudan, South Sudan**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greetings from South Sudan. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be speaking at this year's International Women's Peace Conference. We gather here to share what we have, ranging from the ideas roaming around in our minds, to our real world experiences; all towards our visions of a more peaceful world.

As South Sudanese, we have first-hand experience of wars. We know the consequences of conflict. It has broken families, communities, and the initial bustling hope we had as a nation. People are displaced and subjected to violations that have serious effects on their mental health. This can affect the performance of the population if not well addressed; it manifests in every aspect of life and may contribute to cycles of conflict.

I have an experience of losing my husband, disappearing without a trace. I have not buried him and am living with that heavy burden. I am aware that I am not alone, but nobody deserves such a life.

I deal a lot with issues of widows and orphans who are left to take care of themselves because their mothers are not able to do so. The situation will only bring back conflicts if that many children are not going to school.

Despite this we as a people are not defined by that same violence. We as a people and especially our women have been and will continue to be beacons of hope to South Sudan.

Today, we got thousands of South Sudanese and Sudanese fleeing from the war in Khartoum, mainly women and children. Sudan has been a place for South Sudanese who fled the war and now they are forcefully returning home. We call upon Khartoum to resort to dialogue to resolve the conflict. We are only adding more pain and suffering to our people.

The peace we all want is not just the lack or absence of war, we do not define something as the lack of something, we define peace by the presence of justice and equality of opportunity for all. As women, I believe and so do you, (I would hope), have the power to rebuild what war has demolished. We tend to wounds, we nurture our children, and we sow the seeds of reconciliation within our borders.

With women being given more opportunities we have shown that we can bring fresh perspectives on situations and new ideas for solutions, we are not passive victims, but are active agents of change.

We know through experience that sustainable peace has to be built from the ground up, we know we need to have safe spaces for our people to have dialogue, advocate for education and protection for all within our communities, giving our children a safe and optimal environment to begin building a better future for themselves and the country. Especially our women.

As South Sudanese women, we know that the journey to peace is not an easy one, we will have challenges that will not be easy to overcome, but a nation like ours has resilient people, we have ideas that will not be stopped by adversity, and we will emerge victorious.

And as we gather with women from all over the globe, let us forge connections and share stories so that we can build a peaceful and prosperous world.

Thank you.

