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TO: The Chairman, IGAD Council of Ministers

The Chairman, JMEC

FROM: The Chairman, CTSAMM

DATE: 15 January 2018

**SUBJECT: CTSAMM REPORT 2018/02 – CHILD SOLDIERS**

Your Excellencies,

Prior to the signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access (21 December 2017), CTSAMM prepared this report on Child Soldiers following a long investigation and with the cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders.

We are publishing the report now in order to highlight the continuing and very important issue of Child Soldiers as the ACOH is being implemented.

Major General Ibrahim Abduljellil

Chairman

**Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism**

## **CTSAMM REPORT 2018/02**

### **CHILD SOLDIERS**

#### **Executive Summary**

The employment and use of Child Soldiers is proscribed by the old ARCSS, the IHL and reiterated in the new ACOH Article 3.2.f. CTSAMM has been monitoring reports of Child Soldiers in a number of locations in South Sudan for some months. The presence of Child Soldiers has been verified in Western Bahr el Ghazal, Jonglei and Central Equatoria States.

There is evidence that in some cases the parties are making efforts to return Child Soldiers to their families, however the presence of Child Soldiers and frequent reports of recruitment provide sufficient grounds to find that Parties to the conflict remain in violation of all agreements in this respect.

The signing of and implementation of the ACOH provides an opportunity to emphasise this issue, and call on the Parties to take positive steps to stop all employment and recruitment of Child Soldiers.

## CHILD SOLDIERS

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Background:

- The presence of Child Soldiers in South Sudan is a long running problem. In 2012 a joint SPLA / UN action plan for halting the use of children by the SPLA was launched.
- In the course of their routine monitoring activities, CTSAMM MVTs come across anecdotal evidence that parties have been recruiting and making use of Child Soldiers. These reports have been followed up by targeted patrols and investigations to establish the facts. As a result MVTs Yei, Pibor and Wau have primary evidence of the presence of Child Soldiers in three states, and other MVTs have come across enough anecdotal evidence to suggest the recruitment and employment of Child Soldiers goes on throughout the country.

1.2 Aim: The aim of this short report is to highlight the continued use of child soldiers by the Parties in South Sudan, and to ask all parties what measures they are taking to combat and eradicate this practice.

#### 1.3 Methodology:

- Reports of the use of Child Soldiers have been received from Community Liaison Officers and a wide range of other sources within MVT areas of operation. HQ CTSAMM tasked all MVTs to conduct follow up investigations in order to gain primary evidence.
- CTSAMM staff experienced in child soldier issues liaised closely with relevant international organisations.

### 2.0 Findings

2.1 Pibor: In July 2017 CTSAMM received reports of Child Soldiers within the ranks of SPLA-IO (TD) forces in the area of Pibor. On 11 July 2017 International Observers from MVT Pibor met an SPLA-IO (TD) senior

commander who had been authorised by his chain of command to discuss the issue and to compile lists of Child Soldiers. He informed the MVT of the presence of 300 Child Soldiers in SPLA-IO (TD) forces. The Child Soldiers were reported to come from Gumuluk, Pibor Town. It is reported that the Child Soldiers were enticed into the SPLA-IO (RM) with promises of food for their families following the fighting following on from the start of the conflict in December 2013. The faction of the SPLA-IO (RM) involved in the control and administration of the Child Soldiers changed allegiance to SPLA-IO (TD) in April 2017.

- 2.2 Following disclosure of the presence of Child Soldiers UNMISS agencies have been verifying the numbers and names of Child Soldiers and MVT Pibor has witnessed these events. The MVT received a list of 480 Child Soldiers amounting on 11 July 2017 and received 2 more lists in August 2017. The total number declared in the Pibor area stands at 590. A verification exercise to match names to the lists is ongoing. UNMISS Child protection agencies and the SPLA are working to finalise the verification.
- 2.3 Masna. On 30 Sep MVT Wau received an allegation that there were Child Soldiers amongst the SPLA-IO (TD) forces assembling at Masna following their change of allegiance from SPLA-IO (RM). MVT Wau made multiple requests to visit the site through SPLA-IO (TD) liaison officers but it was not until 23 Nov 2017 that a patrol was conducted. The patrol met with senior commanders at the site who confirmed that there were Child Soldiers within their ranks. The Child Soldiers were referred to as the “Red Army” and were reported to be based at WADEHELO. The patrol met some soldiers at Masna who appeared to be children but have not yet visited Wadehelo.
- 2.4 Yei Area. From 10-17 August MVT Yei conducted a patrol to Yei, Goli, Kaya and Lasu. On 15 August while en route to Lasu the MVT and UNMISS convoy was stopped at a checkpoint at Kergulu village 6 km from Yei. The checkpoint was manned by poorly disciplined and poorly trained Mathiang Anoor personnel. Following conversations with the checkpoint personnel it was confirmed by International Observers that the soldiers were from Twic,

Aweil and Warrap and amongst those manning the checkpoint there were children as young as 13 years old.

2.5 Unconfirmed Reports. In addition to the verified cases above there continue to be widespread reports of ongoing recruitment of Child Soldiers in Western Equatoria, Unity and Upper Nile states. UNMISS is conducting verification exercises the results of which should be available in January 2018.

### **3.0 Assessment:**

3.1 It is assessed that SPLA, SPLA-IO (TD) and SPLA-IO (RM) have recruited and used Child Soldiers in the current conflict. In Masna and Pibor the presence of Child Soldiers was admitted by SPLA-IO (TD) and it is likely that their recruitment was conducted by SPLA-IO (RM). In the Yei area the deployment of the Mathiang Anoor with Child Soldiers is the responsibility of the SPLA and has been verified by International Observers.

3.2 It is assessed that the recruitment and use of Child Soldiers in South Sudan is underreported.

3.3 In recruiting and employing Child Soldiers the SPLA, SPLA-IO (TD) and SPLA-IO (RM) are in clear violation of international and national law and all agreements pertaining to the current conflict.

### **4.0 Observations and Recommendations:**

4.1 It is recognized that in the case of the Child Soldiers in Pibor the SPLA-IO (TD) are co-operating with international organizations working on Child Protection in South Sudan to return the children to families and to remove them from the military forces.

4.2 It is very disappointing that parties continue to commit such violations especially since SPLA and SPLA-IO recommitted to the joint SPLA/UN action plan following the outbreak of hostilities in December 2013. On 24 June 2014 the SPLA reaffirmed their commitment to the action plan and on 27 Dec 2015 the SPLA-IO followed on and also reaffirmed their commitment.

4.3 It is recommended that:

- With the signing and implementation of the ACOH all Parties reaffirm their commitment to eradicate the recruitment and employment of Child Soldiers, and inform CTSAMM of this and their plans for dealing with the issue.
- All parties identify and declare Child Soldiers in the ranks of their military forces so the appropriate actions can be taken to demobilise and return them to their families.