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National Statement of the Republic of South Sudan

delivered by

Hon. Deng Deng Hoc Yai,

Minister of General Education and Instruction, Republic of South Sudan

at

**69th Session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High
Commission for Refugees**

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, 1st October 2018

Your Excellency, Ambassador Suraya Dalil, Chair of the Executive Committee,
Your Excellency, Mr Filippo Grandi, the High Commissioner, UNHCR,
Your Excellencies, the Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

The Republic of South Sudan takes this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam Chair, for chairing this 69th Session so competently. We also want to congratulate and express our gratitude and appreciation to the High Commissioner, Mr Filippo Grandi, for his continued commitment and support to the people of South Sudan and his excellent leadership, especially at this extremely difficult time for refugees, which you described vividly in your opening speech.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

We have good news for you. I am delighted to inform you that our President, H.E. Salva Kiir Mayardit, has signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan with the opposition groups in Addis Ababa since 12th September 2018. This is really good news for the people of South Sudan, for Africa and for the entire world. We are grateful to all the IGAD Heads of State and Government for their solid commitment to peace in the Republic of South Sudan. The Agreement is inspiring hope and creating an enabling environment for all of our citizens, who are currently refugees, to return home. Therefore, we want to urge the international community and friends of South Sudan to support the implementation of the Agreement in order to bring lasting and sustainable peace to our country.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

I am also delighted to announce that our President, H.E. Salva Kiir Mayardit, has signed the instruments of accession to the Convention and its Protocol without reservations since Friday 28th September 2018. Here are the copies of the signed pages. Therefore, I take this opportunity to invite the international community to join us in celebrating this wonderful news. In spite the fact that we have just acceded to the Convention, we started racing ahead and enacted The Refugees Act, 2012, and its Regulations, 2017. In fact, the Republic of South Sudan has been implementing an open door policy and has been hosting refugees since its independence in 2011. Today, the Republic of South Sudan is hosting almost 300,000 refugees and over 2,000 asylum-seekers that is despite our own internal challenges. In addition, we have been taking steps to empower refugees. For example, refugees enjoy complete freedom of movement; we provide them with ID cards, Convention Traveling Documents and Asylum certification. We are ensuring access to free nursery, primary and secondary education to all refugees. Moreover, we provide birth registration certificates to them. We are also committed to providing a safe and secure accommodation for refugees. For this reason, we encouraged the relocation of refugees from Yida Settlement to the safer Pamir Refugee Camp. We are encouraging self-reliance through donation of agricultural land to refugees for livelihood activities as well as granting refugees the right to seek employment. Our Nationality Act provides for integration of refugees into our society. All these proactive actions demonstrate our iron commitment to the Convention, to protect refugees and to serve the human race. However, we need the support of UNHCR and the international community to develop and implement the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in our country to sustain this positive trend.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen,

I am also happy to announce to you that the Republic of South Sudan has tabled the Kampala Convention in our Parliament, the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, for the final approval. We are confident our Parliament will grant the approval. In addition, we recently developed and completed the zero draft of our national legal framework for the protection of IDPs, written in the spirit of the Kampala Convention. So, my country is equally committed to ensure that a legal framework is in place for the protection and safety of IDPs, too.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The opportunity to host refugees comes with some challenges. Recently, we experienced an attack on the compounds of the UN and NGO partners in Maban County, where we are hosting 144,000 refugees. Youth from the local community destroyed assets. We are pleased that the Government responded quickly by forming a High-level Investigation Committee, headed by the Deputy Minister of Interior. In addition, the Government launched a criminal investigation headed by the Ministry of Justice to bring the culprits to justice. We are pleased to announce that the situation is now stable and a report has been written and is awaiting the presentation to our President.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

We are delighted that our South Sudanese surgeon, Dr Evan Atar, has been named the 2018 winner of the Nansen Refugee Award. At last, his incredible dedication and amazing resilience have won him recognition. Dr Atar embodies a truly generous South Sudanese spirit and hospitality. The Award to Dr Atar is a boost of morale for all those amazing individuals serving refugees all over the world. So, please join the celebration.

In conclusion, we would like to applaud the concerted efforts exerted by the leadership of UNHCR to support refugees in the world, including the Republic of South Sudan. In addition, our sincere gratitude and appreciation go to Uganda, Kenya, the Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo for hosting our citizens since 2013. Finally, we must protect and support refugees in the same way the biblical Moses, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and Prophet Mohammed were protected and supported when they were refugees. Refugees deserve our protection because refugees are fellow ordinary human beings who have gone through extraordinary circumstances. Refugees are us. There is only one human race and one Planet Earth. We must muster the courage to do the right things: to continue to protect refugees, to address the root causes of forced migration and to uphold the Convention through out the world. Let us do our best and pray that God will do the rest!

Thank you, Madam Chair.