

## **Seeking Peace in South Sudan: The Contributions and Challenges of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)**

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### **Abstract**

*The objective of this article is to critically examine the role(s) that the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has played in the restoration of peace in South Sudan. Methodologically, the article employed a case study qualitative research design as its main focus is analyzing the contributions and challenges of IGAD in seeking peace in South Sudan. The study revealed that IGAD has played a prominent and leading role in the South Sudan mediation. Since its involvement in the mediation process, it has played its utmost efforts in the South Sudan peace process to end the armed conflict and created the basis for sustainable conflict resolution in non-violent ways. The Agreement on the resolution of the conflict signed by the parties in August 2015, without doubt, is a major contribution to the resolution of the conflict. The agreement outlined a comprehensive plan to end the fighting, frame a post-conflict transition, and to begin the tasks of reconciliation and reform despite competing interests of the parties and diverging views of external partners. Furthermore, IGAD was instrumental in the realization of the IGAD High-Level Revitalization Forum on 21 December 2017. More recently, IGAD has played a prominent role in the signing of the Khartoum Declaration Agreement on outstanding issues on governance and security arrangements among warring parties held on 5 August 2018 in Sudan. Another achievement of IGAD was its ability to manage regional tensions, among its members, which prevented an agreement on power-sharing and security arrangements in the country. Finally, the article concludes that IGAD has achieved success in assisting South Sudan to integrate into the regional peacebuilding architecture.*

**Keywords:** *Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Peacemaking, Civil War, IGAD*

### **Introduction**

South Sudan took decades of fighting for freedom and independence. According to Johnson (2016), the South Sudan struggle for freedom and independence lasted over 50 years. During the struggle over decades, South Sudanese were exploited, subjected to slavery, abuse and discrimination (Grang, 2015; Maru, 2016). Johnson further added that the journey to nationhood had been characterized not only by decades of liberation wars for independence but also for freedom-seeking from oppression and discrimination (Johnson, 2016). In a similar vein, Maru (2016) also explains that the independence of South Sudan was achieved after tremendous sacrifices of more than 2 million casualties, with an equal number of uprooted and displaced

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civilians. However, the roles of IGAD, IGAD Partners' Forum (IPF), 'Troika' (the US, UK, and Norway), African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) have proved to be driving forces towards the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 which opened the door for the referendum of South Sudan (Healy, 2011; Wassara, 2015).

Six years later, in 2011, the referendum led to the independence of South Sudan. Johnson in his book entitled '*Waging Peace in Sudan: The Inside Story of the Negotiations that Ended Africa's Longest Civil War*,' clearly stated the CPA ended the 50 years-long civil war. He, however, argued that the CPA did not grant the Southerner's independence but guaranteed self-determination (*Ibid.*). The referendum was held between 9 and 15 January 2011 as provided by the CPA and 98.83 percent of the South Sudanese voted in favor of secession and independence (Grang, 2015; Minde & Omeje, 2015). Following independence in 2011, a new hope was vitalized in all South Sudanese to enjoy the fruits of freedom and consequently relative peace was achieved (Johnson, 2016). The honeymoon for the newest state was, however, short-lived and thus no later than two years, the political disputes between President Salva Kiir and his former Vice President Riek-Machar plunged the country into full-scale civil war (Hutton, 2014; Maru, 2016; Wassara, 2015). More precisely, the nightmare started in mid-December 2013 which shattered the dreams of millions of South Sudanese (Johnson, 2016).

There have been several and complex structural causes and proximate factors for the civil war in South Sudan. The structural causes and proximate causes include historical factors, power competition, and lack of democratic governance, repressive state measures, competition over natural resources, ethnicity and interference from regional neighboring countries. However, the objective of this article is not to discuss the causes and implications of the conflict but to examine the contributions and challenges of IGAD in the resolution of the South Sudan conflict.

IGAD is the regional organization of the Horn of Africa mandated, among others, to maintain and improve peace and security in the region. It has eight member countries: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda. With the objective to improve the peace and security of the region, tasked with prevention, management, and resolution of violent conflicts, IGAD has been involved in the restoration of peace in South Sudan since the inception of the civil war in December 2013. Although IGAD has led the South Sudanese peace process from the onset, its success and achievement are subject to critiques and debates. Thus, this article

discusses the contributions, limitations, and challenges of IGAD in its efforts to restore peace in South Sudan lasting from December 2013 to August 2018. More precisely, the article tries to address three important questions. What efforts have been made by IGAD to restore peace in South Sudan? How far was the IGAD's success in restoring peace in the country? And, what limitations and challenges have IGAD faced?

### **Methodology**

This article is carried out under the philosophical orientation of constructivism. Constructivism as a paradigm has enabled the researcher to comprehend the multiple and competing perspectives of different authors about the peace process in South Sudan. The article employed a qualitative research approach. This approach was helpful to explore multiple forms of understandings and perspectives of authors about the IGAD peace process in South Sudan from the contexts and realities of the nature and impact of the conflict. In its research design, this article employed a qualitative case study design as its main emphasis is only IGAD as a sub-organization responsible for making peace in the Horn of Africa. In so doing, this study relied on a desk review of the existing empirical literature. Secondary sources of data such as articles, books, book chapters, and research outputs, regional and international organizations' policy documents such as that of the AU, UN and other regulatory bodies were extensively used for this study.

### **IGAD's Contribution to the Resolution of the South Sudan Conflict**

Since the beginning of the conflict, IGAD took the lead to respond to the atrocities and to mediate the conflict (Grang, 2015; ICG, 2015). IGAD's instrumental role in the conclusion of the CPA in 2005 has also continued by offering good offices for dialogue and peace mediations during the conflict (Maru, 2016; Ngunia, 2014). Moreover, IGAD's leading role is essentially in line with the idea promoted by the AU, *i.e.* 'African solutions to African problems' and that local conflict should be dealt with by regional mechanisms (Motsamai, 2017). Similarly, Kubah (2015) argues IGAD's intervention in the conflict demonstrated a commitment of African leaders in taking primary responsibility to solve the continent's peace and security challenges.

In response to the atrocities of December 15, 2013, IGAD sent a Ministerial Delegation<sup>1</sup> led by the former Ethiopian Foreign Minister and now the General Director of World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Tedros Adhanom to Juba on 19 December 2013 (Maru, 2016). Since then, IGAD attempted preventive diplomacy measures to contain the violence and called the government and political oppositions to support political dialogue (Grang, 2015). This shows IGAD's swift involvement to resolve the conflict, thereby, giving a sense of hope and commitment among the regional leaders (ICG, 2015).

Consequently, IGAD's Ministerial Delegation was able to get the commitment of President Kiir and the leader of rebels, the former Vice-President, Riek Machar to sit for political dialogue (Maru, 2016). Moreover, from 17 to 19 December, IGAD Council of Ministers along with the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, and the UN Special envoy to the AU, Haile Menkerios, undertook a two-day fact-finding mission to Juba to assess the situation and to urge president Kiir and other parties to consider announcing an immediate cessation of hostilities and commencing peace negotiations (Motsamai, 2017). Although IGAD has received credits for taking the lead, it was also blamed for failing to intervene at crucial stages of the conflict build-up by disregarding early warning reports that were provided by the Conflict Early Warning Mechanism (CEWARN) and Mediation Support Unit (MSU), which indicated that the crisis was already looming in South Sudan since the beginning of 2013 (Grang, 2015).

In addition to the Ministerial delegation, on December 20, Special Forces of the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF) were deployed to Juba at the request of the government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) though this was subjected to critics from the rebel groups and neighboring countries like Sudan. Uganda claimed that its military intervention was to assist the evacuation of Ugandan citizens from South Sudan and to protect vital installation which was commended by IGAD on 27 December 2013 (Grang, 2015; ICG, 2015). Moreover, recognizing the crisis, under the leadership of IGAD in collaboration with AU, Uganda deployed regional stabilization and protection forces of 2000 troops named UNMISS, which was authorized by the

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<sup>1</sup>A delegation consisting of IGAD member state foreign ministers – operating under the IGAD 'council of ministers' mechanism – as well as the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and the UN Special Envoy to the AU went to Juba on 19 December 2013. 'Communiqué of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary Session of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the Situation in South Sudan', Nairobi, 27 December, 2013.

UN Security Council under Resolution 2155/2014 (Maru, 2016). UNMISS was mandated to peace enforcement with 12,500 troops and more 1323 police under the former Ethiopian UNISFA Force Commander (UN Secretary-General Report, 2018).

Following the IGAD's Ministerial Delegation and the deployment of the UNMISS and Ugandan forces, on 26 December 2013, the former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, who chaired IGAD, visited Juba with Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta, to meet president Kiir, members of his cabinet and some detained leaders of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – in-Opposition (SPLM-IO). After the meeting, IGAD called an emergency summit on 27 December 2013 at the Head of States and Government (HoS) level (Motsamai, 2017). At the same time, the IGAD summit issued the establishment of the office of IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan in Nairobi for mediation purposes. After certain disagreements on the choices of envoy and focus of the mediation, the 23<sup>rd</sup> extra-ordinary session of IGAD summit appointed three special envoys from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan (IGAD communiqué of 23<sup>rd</sup> extra-ordinary summit, 2013). Thus, the IGAD special envoy was appointed to lead the mediation process composed of Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin of Ethiopia, who chaired the envoy, General Lazaro Sumbeiywo of Kenya and General Mohammed Ahmed Mustaf El Dabi of Sudan (Motsamai, 2017).

The mandate of the special envoy was to mediate and urge the parties to move towards a speedy and peaceful resolution of the conflict through constructive dialogue. It was also mandated to review the status of detained SPLM leaders and engage the warring parties to reach an all-inclusive and fair peace agreement. However, the tensions in the oil-rich country had pitted neighbors and IGAD members against each other (Maru, 2016). For example, some analysts have argued Uganda and Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Kenya and Egypt supported different sides in the conflict and competition was reflected in the internal processes of constituting the IGAD envoy team (Mesfin, 2015). Further, the scope of the mediation was another source of conflict within IGAD members (Motsamai, 2017).

In the mediation perspectives, since the outbreak of the conflict, IGAD as the regional body of the Horn called for many peace talks and several cessations of hostilities agreements mainly were signed between 23 January and 25 August 2014. However, repeated violations of peace agreements by both parties slowed down the peace process (Sudan Tribune, 2015a). On 23

January 2014, the signing of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) and The Status of Detainees by the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) and SPLM/A-In Opposition (IO) in Addis Ababa in which IGAD was instrumental that marked as the first significant step in finding a lasting peaceful political solution to the crisis (IGAD communique of 23<sup>rd</sup> extra-ordinary summit, 2014a; ICG, 2015). Further, the IGAD communiqué of the 24<sup>th</sup> extra-ordinary session held on 31 January 2014 in Addis Ababa urged both parties to respect and fully implement the agreement (IGAD communiqué of 24<sup>th</sup> extra-ordinary summit, 2014b). As a result, both parties agreed to cease all military actions aimed at each other and any other action that may undermine the peace process and the coming to effect of this agreement (IGAD Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, 2014a). Moreover, part of the agreement, both parties agreed on the protection of civilians and humanitarian accesses (ICG, 2015).

However, in a period of less than a month, in February 2014, IGAD expressed serious concerns over reports of continued fighting in different parts of the country and it urged the parties to adhere to the CoH. Consequently, a press release from IGAD Special Envoy announced peace negotiations from 3 to 20 March 2014 to oversee the progress of implementation of the monitoring mechanism planned in the Agreement (IGAD press release, 2014). Following the press release, the IGAD Assembly of HoS held in its 25<sup>th</sup> extra-ordinary summit on 13 March, 2014 in Addis Ababa discussed the signing of the implementation modalities of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities by the government and the SPLM/A-IO, which was also a significant step in the implementation of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (IGAD communiqué of the 25<sup>th</sup> extra-ordinary summit, 2014c).

With all the peace talks and several cessations of hostilities signed on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, yet IGAD as an institution struggled to overcome the warring parties' unwillingness to implement the agreements (ICG, 2015). More specifically, contentious aspects of the 23 January 2014 CoH and the nature of a regional force were left unaddressed (Maru, 2016). Furthermore, the continued and deliberate violations of agreements including the 23 January 2014, 6 May 2014 and 9 May 2014 worried IGAD so much (ICG, 2015). At the same time, the IGAD Special Envoys received reports from the IGAD's MVM on heavy fighting in Bentiu on 30 August 2014 (IGAD press release, 2014d). The press release further noted the Special Envoys reiterate the Re-Dedication

of and Implementation Modalities for the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed on 25 August 2014 in Addis Ababa (*Ibid.*).

In October 2014, IGAD called multi-stakeholder peace negotiations in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. This was considered substantial progress in determining the arrangements necessary for the formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) in South Sudan (UN Secretary-General Report, 2018). According to the reports of the IGAD Special Envoy, this session of talks has made substantial progress than any other (IGAD press release, 2014e). The negotiating parties have demonstrated a great deal of political will and seriousness to close gaps on critical issues under discussion. Among the issues that the participating stakeholders discussed were the system of governance, function (mandate) of the TGoNU, structures of the TGoNU, size of the cabinet, seats, structure, and size of the legislature, pre-transitional and transitional period, decision-making mechanism in the TGoNU and dispute resolution mechanism concerning the agreement, and duties and responsibilities of the executive (*Ibid.*). Although several agreements have been made, few remaining issues were critical that required the parties at the level of the agreements (Grang, 2015; Jok, 2015).

On the other hand, the warring parties still demonstrated a level of inflexibility and repeatedly boycotted many peace talks over many issues including the October 2014 IGAD summit held in Bahir Dar (Rolandsen, *et al.*, 2015). According to Wilson (2014), the situation in South Sudan is a non-dialogue environment in which the use of force as a means to address grievances. In a similar vein, the ICG (2015) report indicated that the war was becoming increasingly intractable accompanied by considerable fracturing and divisions within the warring parties, spreading conflict, economic deterioration, and increasing regional tensions.

Throughout the peace processes, IGAD has shown its commitment to resolve the South Sudan conflict. The number of IGAD summits is an indication of its commitment. However, due to the complex issues and actors, IGAD was incapable of putting unified pressure on the conflicting parties who were unable to reach agreements (ICG, 2015). As Jok (2015) pointed out, the various peace processes have ended in disagreements and have collapsed several times since the parties missed several crucial deadlines that IGAD and the international community had imposed on them including the 23 January and 25 August 2014, and 6 March 2015 agreements. This is partly because IGAD faced regional and institutional challenges that were manifested during the

original IGAD mediations (ICG, 2015). In this regard, Booth (2016) argues the viability and merits of IGAD-led peace processes depend on the circumstances of the region, *i.e.* the relationships between the states in question, and the presence or absence of regional hegemony. Despite pressures and threat of sanctions from IGAD members and suspension of aid from the global community, IGAD-led peace processes that have been ongoing since January 2014 have not been able to persuade the warring parties to reach any compromise (Jok, 2015).

Despite the above challenges, IGAD continued its utmost efforts to bring belligerent parties to stop hostilities and return to the negotiation table than aiming at imposing sanctions and other punitive actions against the parties hindering the peace processes (Maru, 2016). After fifteen months of unsuccessful IGAD mediations and following the suspension of the 6 March 2014 agreement, the special envoy and IGAD HoS have been convinced that the involvement of other international actors in the peace efforts could contribute to a peaceful settlement of the conflict (ICG, 2015). In a related manner, Booth (2016) also assured that mediation from outside the immediate region, with no direct interests at stake, remained as the alternative and could bring a greater number of partners around the table in support of the IGAD mediators. In so doing, IGAD leaders and partners proposed the expansion of the peace process through the IGAD-Plus formula, considered as a new configuration, was announced in March 2015 (UN Secretary-General Report, 2015). The IGAD-Plus entails the expansion of the mediation team to incorporate key regional and international stakeholders to collectively exert the necessary pressure on the conflicting parties and offer incentives so that an inclusive and comprehensive peace agreement can finally be reached (Grang, 2015). The IGAD-Plus is composed of IGAD members states (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda), the AU (High-level *ad hoc* Committee for South Sudan, *i.e.* Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa), UN, EU, Troika States (United States, United Kingdom, and Norway), China and the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF)<sup>2</sup> (Booth, 2016; Grand, 2015; ICG, 2015).

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<sup>2</sup>The IPF is largely comprised of IGAD's donor partners and has three-levels of membership: the ministerial, ambassadorial and technical. The IPF is currently co-chaired by the Italian government and is comprised of the following members: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, U.S., European Commission (EC), and International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank.

However, prior to the IGAD-Plus mediation, the roles of IGAD partners have been critical for they have been regularly engaged in supporting the IGAD mediation in ultimately unofficial ways, for example, through financing the peace talks (Booth, 2016). Although regional and international partners were involved in the mediation process through the IGAD-Plus, IGAD was still at the core of the mediation. IGAD-Plus with the wider international community support was expected to reach an agreement by 17 August on the original IGAD ‘synopsis document,’ which outlined the basics of power-sharing ratio and transitional governance and security arrangements (ICG, 2015). Meanwhile, under the framework of the Agreement on the Reunification of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement called ‘the Arusha Agreement’ held on 29 May in Nairobi, Kenya attended by the co-guarantors, namely the Tanzanian and South African ruling parties, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and the African National Congress (ANC), facilitated a dialogue between the three SPLM factions (the Government, SPLM/A-IO and the former detainees) to address leadership and political issues in the party (Motsamai, 2017; UN Secretary-General report, 2015). The government objected to some provisions of the summary related to executive power-sharing and transitional security arrangements (Booth, 2016). Similarly, the SPLM-IO renewed its demands for compensation and reparations, federalism and proportionate power-sharing in all 10 conflicting states of South Sudan (UN Secretary-General Report, 2015).

For further discussions, the IGAD–Plus special envoys held a meeting from 21 to 23 July 2015 in Addis Ababa to review the compromise peace agreement on ‘the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan’ proposed by IGAD. The draft agreement includes, *inter alia*, provisions on the framework of a Transitional Government of National Unity, permanent ceasefire and transitional security arrangements, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction, resource, economic and financial management, transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing; the permanent constitution; and the joint monitoring and evaluation committee (UN Secretary-General report, 2015). To this effect, the government, SPLM-IO and the former detainees resumed discussions and negotiations on the compromise peace agreement in Addis Ababa on 6 August 2015. According to the UN Secretary-General Report (2015), the main areas of disagreement between the parties pertained to three key issues namely: (a) the power-sharing arrangements between the president and the first vice-president, (b) the distribution of positions in the conflict-affected states of Jonglei, Unity and the Upper Nile States; and (c) security arrangements, in particular the process for the integration of the opposition forces into SPLA and

the question of the demilitarization of Juba. Following lengthy consultations between the parties, IGAD imposed an unsubstantiated peace agreement called ‘Compromise Peace Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan’ that was finally signed on 26 August 2015 in Addis Ababa (Sudan Tribune, 2015b).

Although the IGAD–Plus led mediation was successful to reach the August 2015 peace agreement, implementation became another critical challenge. One of the key structures established in terms of the peace agreement was the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) chaired by the former president of Botswana, Festus Mogae to monitor its implementation (Motsamai, 2017). The JMEC’s mandate was to strengthen IGAD’s mediation to maintain close contact with the South Sudanese parties and interact with the IGAD leaders (*Ibid.*). However, its work was complicated by a near-collapse of the peace deal in July 2016 (UN Secretary-General Report, 2018). The parties expressed little commitment towards the implementation of the agreement and some of the warring parties resisted it. The worst is that there were continued fighting in some parts of the country including Juba (Booth, 2016). Since then, violations and frequent attacks against civilians continued and the suffering of the South Sudanese populations seems unlikely to end (UN Secretary-General Report, 2018).

IGAD’s leadership and commitment to the people of South Sudan continued and has remained active. Despite the difficulties ahead, IGAD continued to strive to bring the warring parties to the table for dialogue. In its thirty-first extraordinary summit held in Addis Ababa on 12 June 2017, the IGAD Assembly of HoS decided the August 2015 peace agreement should be urgently revitalized (IGAD communiqué of the 31<sup>st</sup> extraordinary summit, 2017a). In so doing, a High-Level Revitalization Forum on the peace agreement was convened on 18 December 2017 (UN Secretary-General Report, 2018). The IGAD Revitalization Forum highlighted a review of the implementation and oversight mechanism for a revised 2015 peace agreement as well as resource mobilization for its implementation. Following the successful Revitalization Forum, the parties in the conflict signed the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access on 21 December 2017 (IGAD Revitalization Forum, 2017b).

Although the new Agreement came into effect on 24 December 2017, it has been breached repeatedly by the parties in various parts of the country (UN Secretary-General Report, 2018). This was an indication of the fact that the agreement did not translate into a real commitment on

the part of the warring factions. According to the AU PSC (2018) report, a few hours after representatives of the ruling party and opposition groups signed the ceasefire agreement, there were already reports of violations. Similarly, the UN Secretary-General (2018) reported fighting incidents have already continued. The General-Secretary report further added the continuing military actions and widespread violence have resulted in escalating a humanitarian crisis in which more than 5 million people were suffering from severe food insecurity and 4 million South Sudanese have been displaced (*Ibid.*).

With no sign of hopelessness, IGAD continued its tireless efforts to the political solutions of the South Sudan conflict. On 27 January 2018, IGAD released a strongly worded communiqué on its readiness to ‘take all necessary measures including targeted sanctions against individual violators and spoilers’ (AU PSC, 2018; IGAD communiqué of 60<sup>th</sup> extra-ordinary summit, 2018a). After long and complex IGAD peace mediation processes, on 27 June 2018, IGAD has achieved remarkable progress in the meeting between President Salva Kiir and Reik Machar held in Khartoum, Sudan which culminated in the signing of the Khartoum Declaration Agreement committing the South Sudanese parties to a permanent ceasefire (AU High-Level Ad Hoc Committee, 2018).

More recently, the IGAD Heads of State and Government convened an extra-ordinary Summit on 5 August 2018 in Khartoum, Sudan on the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. During the Summit, the IGAD Heads of State and Government were briefed by the former president of Sudan H.E. President Al Bashir who chaired the meeting on the progress made so far on the Khartoum Declaration Agreement as well as the outstanding issues on governance and security arrangements (IGAD communiqué of 61<sup>st</sup> extraordinary summit, 2018b). The IGAD leaders hailed the progress achieved on the issues referred by the IGAD Summit of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Extra-Ordinary Assembly of IGAD Heads of State and Government held on 21 June 2018 in Addis Ababa (*Ibid.*). Cognizant of the momentum created so far, IGAD leaders noticed that after the signing of the Agreement on Outstanding Issues on Governance and Security Arrangements on 5 August, President Omar Hassan Al Bashir shall continue facilitating the talks with the same spirit of inclusivity and commendable vigor until the Revitalized ARCSS is finally signed. In this regard, it was agreed that H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta supports the next phase by deploying a team of experts to support the finalization of the process.

## **Challenges of IGAD in the Resolution of South Sudan Conflict**

Since its involvement in the mediation process, IGAD has faced various challenges. Below are some of the key challenges of IGAD in seeking peace in South Sudan.

### ***Lack of Legitimacy***

Mediations need to have legitimacy among conflicting parties and other stakeholders. However, IGAD-led mediations in South Sudan suffered from a lack of legitimacy, trust, and credibility from various stakeholders of the conflict (Maru, 2016). In a similar vein, Ngunia (2014) also examined IGAD lacks credibility and impartiality in its mediation processes from various warring parties and other stakeholders since one of its members, Uganda is directly involved in the conflict. Ngunia further added that IGAD and its Secretariat display a lack of a genuine grasp of South Sudanese socio-cultural dynamics and representation of various actors (*Ibid.*). For example, IGAD's proposal on the power-sharing formula did not represent all ethnic groups (ICG, 2015; Jok, 2015). Such exclusive mediation processes never developed trust and understanding between the parties and thus led to the failure to commit to wide-ranging reconciliations of IGAD peace efforts (Maru, 2016). Although IGAD managed several peace talks since the beginning of the conflict, it has not yet well managed to overcome lack of trust among the government, SPLM-IO, and other various stakeholders, and thus the implementation of the agreements was far behind schedule (Jok, 2015; Ngunia, 2014).

### ***Lack of Support from the International Community***

Although exclusive IGAD-led mediation was expanded to IGAD-Plus to attain more support and partnership from the international community, IGAD has failed to gain necessary backing from the wider international community (UN Secretary-Generall, 2018). In a similar fashion, Ngunia (2014) asserted that IGAD lacked key security infrastructure from the international community. Worst of all is that while the new robust initiative of the IGAD-Plus helped to dilute the rift within IGAD and eventually resulted in the August 2015 Agreement, the international community itself repeatedly engaged in competing interests and positions (Jok, 2015). Divergent positions of the Troika which were led by the US on the one hand and China and Russia, on the other hand, led to the UN Security Council fell short of imposing an arms embargo on the warring factions that presided over horrific attacks on civilians including forced cannibalism,

killings, mass rape and other atrocities (UN Secretary-General Report, 2018). The UN report further added that competing interests over South Sudanese oil was believed to be the driver behind this divergence between the global powers, particularly the US and China (*Ibid.*).

### ***Non-Inclusive Peace Processes***

Another major challenge of IGAD was the non-inclusive peace talks. In this regard, Booth (2016) stated that the notion of an inclusive multi-stakeholder process was a major point of contention among conflicting parties and external actors in the conflict. According to Maru (2016), IGAD has been criticized for the limited scope of the negotiations and exclusion of other key stakeholders whose participation could have been necessary to restore and build sustainable peace in the country. Similarly, ICG (2015) assured that IGAD-led mediation processes lacked public cooperation. Booth (2016) also found out the absence of openness and public discourse in South Sudan's transition led to a lack of the broad public participation it desperately needs. Further, both the IGAD mediation and the expanded IGAD-Plus peace processes were characterized by what a Canadian conflict analyst, John Young, calls a 'top-down approach of peacemaking' (Young, 2007, p. 7).

According to Booth (2016), the IGAD peace processes were simply reconciling two warring parties, mainly the government and SPLM-IO, *i.e.* too narrow and short-sighted to reset the country into a new and more viable path. Similarly, Maru (2016) examined from the perspective of the mediation process that the incumbent and rebel groups in the South Sudan crisis were not the only legitimate and *de jure* representatives of the South Sudanese people. Maru further added that recognizing dialogue between the two SPLM factions will not address the problem sustainably rather an inclusive dialogue among all forces in South Sudan can address major national questions (*Ibid.*). In this regard, the ICG (2015) assured that there were many factions of the SPLM-IO leaders who have no relationship to the SPLM and were not in the peace process mediated by IGAD. In a similar vein, Ngunia (2014) examined the phases of the peace processes and regarded it as 'inclusive only in name.' Ngunia further added that though the civil society, faith-based organizations, women group, and other political parties graced the consultative meetings, they were excluded from the processes of the negotiations, which were reserved for the three SPLM factions (*Ibid.*). Similarly, Tubiana (2014b) insisted that civilian stakeholders were

undermined during the negotiations, and also manipulated by the main warring parties where 80% of civilians were victims of the civil war.

### ***Regional Interests and Rivalries within the Region***

According to Grang (2015), every conflict involves the interests of external actors and has often-regional implications. Grang further noted that external actors in any given conflict situation do not only pose their interests but also make extra influence either towards the negotiation of parties or spoiling the conflicts (*Ibid.*). In this regard, Ngunia (2014) also argued that the biggest challenge that IGAD has faced in resolving the conflict in South Sudan was the external interference and interests from neighboring countries mainly Uganda and Sudan and to some extent Ethiopia and Kenya. In a similar way, Maru (2016) also assured that competing interests in the region and international supporters of the talks not only contributed to slow down the pace of the peace processes but also complicated the implementations of the peace agreements. ICG (2015), however, stated that one of the major factors which limited IGAD's mediation is regional rivalries and power struggles. Furthermore, according to Adama Dieng, the UN secretary general's special adviser for the prevention of genocide described that although IGAD members are the mediators in the South Sudanese crisis, large amounts of weapons and ammunition are flowing through Uganda and Kenya (AU PSC, 2018).

Moreover, Healy (2011) asserted that IGAD peace initiatives are political, which were largely influenced and executed by one or more member states and external donors. Thus, it is not surprising that IGAD initiatives in South Sudan are also conceived and largely executed by one or more interested member states (Maru, 2016). Similarly, Grang (2015) argued at the regional level, what is worst is that there are tensions amongst IGAD members. These extended up to a confrontation with the use of proxy wars where member states support rebels of each side. More specifically, the historic enmity between Uganda and Sudan over their respective influence on regional security negatively impacted the IGAD mediation processes (ICG, 2015). This is because the presence of Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF) on South Sudan's soil angered Sudan as it considered as proxy tactics and alleged Uganda's support to its rebels (Maru, 2016). On the other hand, Uganda has been accusing Sudan of supporting insurgency within Uganda, mainly the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) in its territory of Darfur and Central African Republic (CAR) (Grang, 2015). According to Maru (2016), Uganda's unilateral military

intervention in South Sudan remained a critical challenge to IGAD as Uganda openly aligned itself supported President Kiir and played a negative role in emboldening the Government in Juba to defy peace efforts.

### ***Financial Constraints***

IGAD lacked the financial capacity for its peace process since the outbreak of the conflict (Ngunia, 2014). There is no doubt that the peace talks required organizational and logistic efforts that were beyond the financial capacity of IGAD. However, the IGAD secretariat successfully institutionalized donor support largely through the IGAD-Plus partners which include China, Troika, AU, EU, and members of the IGAD Partner's Forum (IPF) with different interests (ICG, 2015; Jok, 2015). According to Grang (2015), China's role in the advancement of peaceful resolution of the conflict commenced with IGAD's early mediation processes where it contributed financial support to the process arguing the parties to reach a quick solution. However, Grang further discussed that China's interest in South Sudan was coupled with its strategic relations and influence in the region (Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and South Sudan). It plays a vital role in engaging the parties bilaterally or collectively towards a nationally owned agreement (*Ibid.*). More specifically, IGAD received one million dollars from China for the mediation process at the beginning of 2014 and continues to engage high-level representation of its special envoy to South Sudan and Sudan (Jok, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

Since its expanded mandate in 1996, IGAD has been working to ensure regional security in the Horn of Africa. As a regional organization, IGAD has made the utmost efforts to improve the peace and security of the region. To this effect, the organization has been involved in many conflict resolution activities to address both intra- and inter-state conflicts in the region as in Somalia, Sudan and recently in South Sudan. Although IGAD claims it has achieved considerable successes in mediating the conflicts in Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan, it has been subjected to critics and debates.

Nevertheless, as discussed in the preceding sections, IGAD is a substantially relevant primary actor in the restoration of peace in South Sudan from the onset of the conflict in December 2013 to the end of the conflict in August 2018. More fundamentally, the IGAD-led peace processes in

South Sudan are important successes in the era of the organization's expanded mandate next to Sudan and Somalia. During the five years of the South Sudan conflict, IGAD took the lead to mediate the conflict and played a critical role and achieved remarkable success. It is the IGAD that led mediations since the beginning of the conflict in 2013 to the final resolution of the Khartoum Declaration Agreement on outstanding issues on governance and security arrangements among warring parties held on 5 August 2018 in Sudan. The Khartoum Declaration Agreement helped both parties to reach an agreement including the formation of the new unity government to rule for the next three years. The acceptance of the IGAD proposal on power-sharing in the transitional government's legislative and executive members by warring parties is another achievement although it is early to judge its implementation. The tireless engagement of IGAD in South Sudan is another recent bright success in the history of the organization.

Although IGAD has achieved considerable success in mediating the South Sudanese conflict, it has been challenged by the lack of a comprehensive regional security approach. The organization still restricts on old-fashioned interstate rules of respect for territorial sovereignty and non-interference in each other's affairs. Such mechanisms significantly restrict the organization's mandate on regional security in the region mainly in addressing up-to-date contemporary peace and security threats and challenges in the region. IGAD is disturbed by conflicts among its member states. The relations among member states are characterized by mutual mistrust, shifting and building alliance and power play to other external global powers.

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