

Salutations

- **Excellency, Dr. Riak Machar Teng**
The Vice President of GoSS and Guest of Honour
- **Excellencies First Ladies**
- **Excellencies Presidential Advisors, GoSS**
- **Colleague Ministers in the GoSS and States**
- **Chairpersons of Committees in the SSLA & Commissions**
- **Honourable Members of SSLA and State Legislative Assemblies**
- **UN Agencies**
- **International NGOs**
- **Indigenous NGOs**
- **Women Representatives from the States**
- **Civil Societies and Trade Unions**
- **Distinguish Guests**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare [MGC&SW], GoSS and on my own behalf I warmly welcome you all to Nyakuron Cultural Centre to participate in this important day. We thank God that we lived to witness the Day. Special welcome to our distinguished Guests, our elder Sisters, the first Ladies from our neighbouring Countries of Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, North and South Sudan. Today marks a milestone in Women's History together with our sisters in the ten States and worldwide we are celebrating hundred years of women's struggle for Gender Equality, to fight Women's marginalization, oppression and sub-ordination by men. Discrimination against women is as old as the humanity and is world wide. The degree varies from county to country depending on opportunities given to women to access education to enhance their understanding of socio-economic and political issues employment, health, education etc. Once women are equipped with knowledge they will understand their rights and demands.

Distinguished Guests, Hon. Members, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Up to 18th Century no woman in any country of the world had the right to vote. Thanks to British MP named John Stuart Mills who was gender sensitive.

Speech by: H.E Agnes K. Lasuba, Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, GoSS on the IWD, 2011

He stated women are human beings like men; therefore have the right to vote in Parliamentary elections. In 1893 New Zealand became the first country in the world where women exercised the right to vote equal to men.

In 1910 the leader of women's office for the Social Democratic Party of Germany named Clara Zetkin, during International Conference of women held in Copenhagen proposed that every year in every country women should have celebration on the same day not only for their achievements but also to press for their demands. The proposal was unanimously adopted. The women at the Copenhagen Conference spread the resolution, organized women celebrations in 1911, since then it has been celebrated every year. Two years later March 8 was selected to be the International Women's Day [IWD]. We pay tribute to Clara Zetkin in 1975 the United Nations [UN] officially recognized IWD. The recognition by UN encouraged many countries to declare IWD a National Holiday. We hope the 54th African youngest Country, SS will do the same.

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The Theme of the Centenary is: **Equal accesses to Education and Science and Technology: Pathway to Decent Work for Women.** The theme fits the situation of women in SS. Due to imbalances created by customs and traditions women lagged behind men in education and employment. Women get the low paid jobs, because most jobs need qualification, possibly involving education and science knowledge. The National household survey 2009 revealed literacy rate among 15-24 years as follows:

Gender	Can read & write	Cannot read and write
15-24 years		
Female	28%	72%
Male	55%	45%
	In school	Not in school
6 years old		
Female	19%	81%
Male	38%	62%

This Gap in education must be bridge because these children are the future human resource. We call upon parents to take serious the government policy of all children go to school, with emphasis to girl child education. Parents and guardians to stop early and forced marriage; give the girl child her right to education.

It is through education and training can female get better paid jobs otherwise they will never have pathway to decent work.

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As we commemorate the centenary it is time for SS women to evaluate the 55 years of Sudan Independence and women struggle for their rights. Women awareness on social/political activities in the Sudan varies from region to region of the Sudan: East, West, South and North. We understand in the North, the struggle started in early 1930s. The women's maturity in socio political awareness was reflected when the women came out from their houses to the streets to demonstrate against female genitals mutilation because has negative impact on women's reproductive health and deforms womanhood.

In SS the women social/political activities as I recall came to full swing in early 1970s. To record history it was during the regime of President Gaffer Mohamed Nimeri. The Sudan Socialist Union [SSU], the then ruling party encouraged women participation. For the first time in the history of SS, six [6] women became members of parliament in 1974. Three [3] were in the National Assembly Khartoum and three [3] in Regional Assembly Juba. Each of the then three regions of the South: Bahr El Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile each had two women MPs. Effective mobilization and social political activities of the women in the South was interrupted in 1983 by the uprising of SPLM. Nevertheless women joined the liberation struggle too. Others picked up arms, others cared for the sick and wounded, others headed household single handed, others lobbied for peaceful resolutions to end the war, others cared for orphans and the old, others taken to prison for brewing Woragi to get money for education and livelihood of their children. The list is long suffice to mention the few.

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- In 1994 at SPLM first convention held in Chukudum, women's effective contribution was recognized resulted in AA of 25% for women.
- After the signing of the CPA followed in 2005 with the establishment of the state organs, women pushed for their demands. E.G when the Intrim National Constitution [INC] was being reviewed women demand that Affirmative Action [AA] of 25% be included to benefit all women in the Sudan.

- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW] was adopted and opened for ratification and accession by the UN General Assembly in December, 1979. There are only two countries in Africa which upto date did not ratify CEDAW and these are Somalia and Sudan. We the women in the Sudan have waited for too long nearly 32 years the good news is by 9th July, 2011 we shall have a country, the Republic of SS; we believe the new nation will ratify CEDAW.

Finally, we the women shall continue to demand for the Rights of women, equal access to education and science and technology to give the women an opportunity to get better jobs and better living conditions for themselves and their children and communities at large.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the people and institutions which supported the MGC&SW to make this day possible for us to celebrate. Special thanks go to Mama Mary Ayen Mayardit, the first lady of SS in waiting for her assistance. Similarly thanks to the first ladies from Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and North Sudan for sharing this important day with us.

In conclusion I say congratulations to you all for being part and parcel of the celebration of 100 years of IWD. The next 100 years let us leave them to generations to come.

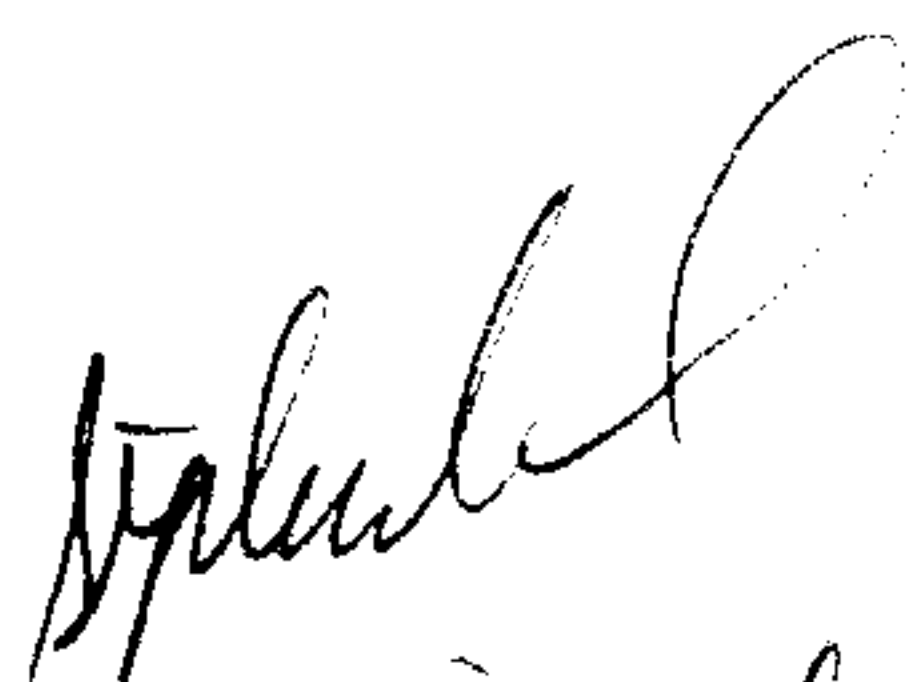
Thanks you all and God bless us.

- Women demanded that Rights of Women should be included in the Constitution, and indeed Article 20 of Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan [ICSS] covers Rights of Women.
 1. **Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men.**
 2. **Women shall have the right to equal pay for equal work and other related benefits with men. and**
 3. **All levels of GoSS shall**
 - a. *Promote women participation in public and representative in legislative and executive by at least 25%.*
 - b. *Enact laws to combat harmful customs and traditions.*
 - c. *Provide maternity, child care and medical care.*
- Currently out of 171 Hon. Members of Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly [SSLA] 53 are women, out of 32 Ministers, 7 are women, out of 32 Undersecretaries 8 are women, out of 15 Presidential Advisors only one is woman, out of 10 Governors only one is woman, out of 17 Chairpersons of Commissions three [3] are women.
- During the January 2011 referendum, out of the 60% women population 55% registered and 55% voted, that was 100% turnout. The women of SS are determined to get their rights. So far, for a young Nation, women are progressing well though in other institutions not very well, mainly on technical and professional fields.

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- Despite some of the women's achievements during the 55 years we are faced with many challenges. Some of the challenges we face are universal. As the Africa's youngest Nation, we shall always seek advice and support from the old Nations as well as the International Community, to assist us in implementing the 8 Millennium Development Goals [MDGs]
 1. **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
 2. **Achieve universal primary education**
 3. **Promote gender equality and empower women**
 4. **Reduce child mortality**
 5. **Improve maternal health**
 6. **Combat HIV/AIDs, Malaria and other diseases**
 7. **Ensure environmental sustain**
 8. **Development a Global Partnership for Development**

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