STATEMENT

by the Spokesperson on the resumption of fighting in Bentiu, in South Sudan

"We strongly condemn the resumption of hostilities in and around Bentiu, in South Sudan. We note the statement by IGAD attributing responsibility for hostilities to the SPLM-in-Opposition and look forward to a more detailed assessment from the IGAD Monitoring and Verification Mechanism.

We urge both parties to cease immediately all military operations and remind them that ensuring the protection of civilians is of paramount importance.

The EU is following these events extremely closely and will take appropriate measures.

We reiterate that there can be no military solution to the conflict in South Sudan; only political negotiations can resolve the crisis. In this context, we urge President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar to engage in the IGAD-led peace talks in good faith and urgently to reach an agreement on inclusive transitional arrangements, as a first step to bringing lasting peace to South Sudan and its people."

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