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Working for the people of South Sudan

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UNMISS SRSG paid tribute to South Sudanese Women

Hilde F. Johnson, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in South Sudan, Thursday paid tribute to the contributions of women in the world's newest nation and called on the international community to help them achieve their rightful role in the society.

"Today is the first International Women's Day in independent South Sudan. One of the best things this new nation can do is to invest in women and girls. Evidence shows that they are among the greatest assets in the world's least developed countries. It is even more true for South Sudan," Johnson said.

The theme for the 2012 International Women's Day is "Empower Rural Women, End Hunger and Poverty."

Echoing the call to action by the Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, Johnson said, "Women and girls in South Sudan are suffering from lack of the most basic education and health services. More than 80 percent live in isolated rural communities. The country is the size of France, with virtually no paved roads and none of the basic infrastructure even many developing countries take for granted. The challenges are immense."

Despite this, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said South Sudanese women have already achieved laudable progress.

"Even with the long history of male dominance in decision-making, some positive steps have been taken. In the Transitional Constitution, the Government recently introduced a quota of 25 per cent for female representation in government bodies. Female parliamentarians make up over 24 per cent of the National Legislative Assembly," she said.

SRSG Johnson pointed out that women have been the backbone in South Sudanese society during the many decades of civil war. "Now is the time for them to take their rightful place in society and political life, and to reap the dividends of peace."