

**Closing Remarks by Minister Marial Dongrin Ater (Ph.D)**  
*at the*  
**BUDGET PREPARATION WORKSHOP**  
**August 10, 2024**

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*Honorable Undersecretaries, Directors-General,*

*Distinguished Guests;*

*Ladies and Gentlemen;*

Good afternoon.

I want to express my sincere gratitude for your active and constructive participation in this **Budget Preparation Workshop**. Your inputs have been invaluable in shaping the Fiscal Year 2024/25 budget. I extend sincere appreciation to my team at the Ministry of Finance and Planning, particularly the Planning Section led by Undersecretary Benjamin Ayali Koyongwa, for their diligent efforts in planning and executing this process successfully.

The discussions we have had during this workshop have deepened our understanding of budget preparation and provided essential guidance for approaching the upcoming fiscal year, especially in prioritizing our plans amid economically challenging environment.

The budget ceiling presented to you, approved by the Council of Ministers on **August 2, 2024**, aligns with the directives of His Excellency President Salva Kiir Mayardit, under the theme: "*to accelerate economic recovery through improving livelihoods, sustaining peace, and investing in social services and agriculture.*"

We all know that we face significant budgetary constraints, with a fiscal deficit of 45% of proposed expenditure estimates. Addressing this challenge realistically and proactively is crucial, as the consequences of inaction are even more severe.

While we have made great progress lately in expediting the process, we are still short of meeting the critical budget timelines outlined in the Public Financial Management and Accountability Act, 2011. To rectify this, I urge you to diligently complete the Budget Costing Tool (BCT) within five days and submit it to the Ministry of Finance and Planning. This will enable us to finalize the draft budget for tabling at the Revitalized Transitional National Legislative Assembly (R-TNLA).

*Distinguished colleagues,*

As public service leaders in our respective Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), we are counting on your support of the Budget Blueprint approved by the Council of Ministers, including ensuring effective implementation of the following priority reform initiatives:

1. **Strict budget discipline:** Adherence to the approved budget and prohibition of off-budget spending, including new contracts by MDAs.
2. **Consistent salary payments:** Ensuring public sector employees receive their salaries as a fundamental obligation of the government.
3. **Investment in critical social services:** Particular focus on disaster response and recovery, and investment in the agricultural sector.
4. **Improved creditworthiness:** Paying back a portion of our debt obligations to enhance our ability to secure loans from reputable lenders.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to our development partners for their unwavering commitment to supporting South Sudan's development journey. Your support has been instrumental in strengthening the Public Finance Management Reform Agenda. We particularly acknowledge the World Bank for its longstanding partnership and technical assistance in facilitating our budget planning processes.

As we navigate these challenging economic times, we appeal for even more robust and sustained technical and financial support from our development partners. By deepening our collaboration, we can enhance our capacity to deliver essential public services, create jobs, and improve the livelihoods of our citizens. We believe that a stronger partnership will yield greater impact and accelerate our progress towards sustainable development.

Thank you all for your contributions to this workshop. I wish you a restful weekend.

**May God bless South Sudan.**