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## **JOINT PRESS RELEASE**

# **Japan and UNDP Witness Inauguration of South Sudan's State Revenue Authority in Juba, Jubek State**

**Juba, 28 February 2018** – Jubek State Deputy Governor Hon. Francis Latio along with the Japanese Ambassador to South Sudan H.E. Seiji Okada, and UNDP officially inaugurated the Jubek State Revenue Authority today in Juba. The Jubek State Revenue Authority is the second-ever state revenue authority launched in South Sudan.

The Government of Japan, with UNDP technical support, has assisted the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to address the economic situation in South Sudan and to diversify the revenue base from near complete dependency on oil revenue.

Through Japan's support, State Legislative Assembly members have been trained on transparent public revenue generation and accountability; a unified tax system was developed in Jubek, Aweil, and Yambio; and a tax education program to increase public knowledge of accountable tax revenue systems and promote voluntary tax compliance is airing on local TV and radio.

In September, Gbudue State Legislative Assembly became the second state to sign the harmonized State Revenue Authority Bill into law, constituted the Revenue Authority governing board and appointed the new commissioner to manage the day-to-day administration of the Authority.

"Inauguration of the state revenue authority today is timely for the benefit of the people of Jubek State. At this critical time, what we need is a sustainable peace to accelerate growth in our economic development sector, improvement in the public accounts, financial management, resource mobilization as well as expenditure management and reduction of corruption," Hon. Latio stated, while reading a written speech on behalf of the state Governor Hon. Jadalla Agostino Wani.

Hon. Latio underlined that for the authority to succeed in its task, it is necessary for them to improve modality of financial recourse mobilization and management, reforms in revenue collection and its disbursement, integrate electronic revenue management system and capacity building of the staff.

H.E. Seiji Okada, the Japanese Ambassador to South Sudan, pointed out that the government of Japan is very committed to support the revenue authority because we [Japan] believe the tax is a foundation for the government policies and nation building.

"We believe that nation building is one of the most important thing in this country to achieve peace. And to provide service to the people, you have to have a very solid and stable government first of all. From that point of view, we strongly support your tax revenue office," Mr. Okada stated.

Mr. Okada underscored that transparency, fairness, and benefit are the most important attributes of tax collection. He further said, "If people believe they get benefit from the tax they pay, they will be willing to pay tax."



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Senior Programme Advisor Lealem Dinku Berhanu, representing UNDP's Country Director, emphasized the urgent necessity to diversify the Government's income for ensuring stable economy and reliable service delivery. "Enhancing non-oil revenue is a very strategic choice as South Sudan's economy almost depend on oil receipt, which render the economy highly vulnerable to unstable oil prices."

Mr. Berhanu reiterated UNDP's commitment to working together with the subnational government as well as the national government in providing technical support, capacity building, creating awareness and ensuring enabling regularity framework.

According to the World Bank, the economy of South Sudan is one of the world's most underdeveloped and the most oil-dependent. UNDP has been supporting the state government to build a sustainable and transparent non-oil revenue system since 2015 with funding from the Government of Japan since 2016. This pilot program has a roadmap to be replicated in other states in the future.

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