JOINT STATEMENT

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, Commissioner Georgieva and Commissioner Piebalgs on the recent boat accident in South Sudan

The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, together with Commissioner Georgieva, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, and Commissioner Piebalgs, EU Commissioner for Development, made today the following statement:

"We are very saddened by the information of a boat accident in which reportedly more than 200 civilians, many of them women and children, may have lost their lives while fleeing the violence in Malakal, South Sudan. Our thoughts are with the families and friends of the victims.

This tragic incident adds to the human toll that the current conflict has already inflicted on the South Sudanese people. The EU deplores this loss of innocent lives which causes suffering to countless families.

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The EU is particularly preoccupied by the deteriorating humanitarian situation and reports of large-scale human rights violations. According to latest estimates, at least 10 000 people have been killed and more than 400 000 are now internally displaced in South Sudan, while close to 50 000 people are seeking refuge, or being registered, in neighbouring countries.

This dramatic event is a demonstration of the risks desperate and fearful people are willing to take. It is the responsibility of all the country's leaders to ensure that situations like these do not happen. The EU therefore urges all parties involved to agree on an immediate, unconditional cessation to hostilities and violence and engage in a political process under the auspices of IGAD. It calls on all political and military leaders to protect the population and to act in the interests of the South Sudanese people as a whole.