

## Governors' forum in South Sudan witnesses low turnout from top state officials

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November 26, 2012 (JUBA) – South Sudan's 2nd governors' forum which kicked off on Monday in Juba has witnessed unexpected low turnout from the governors as only 4 out of 10 state governors have attended the event.

Since 2006, the office of the President with support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has organized nine forums including this year's forum.

These events have acted as platforms for discussion, consultation and policy recommendations related to political, fiscal and administrative decentralization. The forums have also provided an opportunity for the central and state governments to engage in broader discussion on issues concerning public sector reform and basic service delivery.

This year marks the second time that key stakeholders will be meeting as an independent nation under the interim constitution. This year's theme is "agriculture for sustainable food security and economic growth."

The deliberations are expected to explore the concept of agriculture as a means for sustainable food security and economic growth and identify strategies and actions to achieve it.

The forum will also seek to understand the current security and economic situation and discuss the government's priorities towards the realization of the Vision 2040 as well as the challenges faced by state governments in the implementation of the decentralization system.

It is where the recommendations and resolutions of the previous forum can be reviewed for implementation.

However, despite the importance of the event the only four governors who have attended this forum are governors Kuol Manyang Juuk of Jonglei state, Simon Kun Puoch of Upper Nile state, Chol Tong Mayay of Lakes state and Rizig Zacharia of Western Bahr el Ghazal state.

The other six governors have either sent their deputies or a minister to represent them.

During his opening statement of the 2nd governors' forum on Monday at Freedom Hall in Juba, President Salva Kiir Mayardit continued to pledge his government's commitment to improve the welfare of the people by delivering basic services and developing the country.

South Sudan is classified as one of the poorest countries in the world despite its great potentials and has continued to maintain some of the worst indicators of countries that are backward.

For instance, 73% of men and 84% of women are illiterate; 4.7 million of its 8 million populations are food insecure; 50% of its civil servants are estimated to lack the appropriate qualifications and 87% of the population lack access to basic health care.

A 15 year-old girl has a higher chance of dying in childbirth than finishing school while the country has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world with 2,054 per 100,000 live births.

Only 110km of road are estimated to be paved in the whole country while an estimated 7,000km of roads are expected to be constructed and paved.

The country is still dependent on imports of food commodities from the neighboring countries in order to feed its people.

It exports none item because the only crude oil it exports was stopped and may take time to resume its operations.

(ST)