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The University of Juba and UNHCR formalise partnership to re-establish a Center of Excellence on Forced Displacement and Peacebuilding

Wednesday – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency and the University of Juba on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalise their collaboration and to support the re-establishment of a Centre for Excellence on Forced Displacement and Peacebuilding.

The Centre will serve as a source of capacity building for academics, educators, learners and practitioners engaged in forced migration studies and peacebuilding across South Sudan, including in government and non-government institutions.

"This MoU marks an important milestone in acknowledging the University of Juba's leadership in pursuing knowledge and skills in the field of refugees and forced displacement," said Arafat Jamal, UNHCR Representative to South Sudan. Jamal also expressed his wish that the centre could position South Sudan as an intellectual hub, providing a distinct and directly experienced perspective on matters of displacement and peace.

In addition to the need to boost in-country research, Jamal highlighted the staggeringly low numbers of refugees in higher education. "Only 2 percent of refugees have access to higher education globally. We cannot support young women and men with opportunities for livelihoods and a better future unless we change this reality."

Speaking at the event, Amos Samuel Manoa, a student at the University and a former refugee who came of age in Uganda's Bidi Bidi settlement, confirmed the importance of education also for those returning home. "I am happy that I am back, because wherever you go there is no place like home. I believe despite the challenges we are facing as returnees, still we carry our ambition that we shall finish our education, and continue to move forward in our lives."

"For South Sudan, UNHCR is a household name, considering the huge support the international organisation has provided to our people over the decades of the conflict and displacement," noted Prof. Robert M. Deng, acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Juba. "The MoU builds on an excellent relationship between our institution and academics with UNHCR."

The MoU signing, attended also by the Minister for Higher Education Hon. Gabriel Changson Chang, reflects the recognition given by the Global Compact on Refugees to the vital contribution of universities, academic alliances, research institutions and thinktanks to the understanding of forced displacement, enhancing the protection environment and finding solutions.

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