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25th April, 2019.

A Follow-up to Rome Retreat and the Implementation of Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

1. Introduction

The Catholic bishops have been following the situation in our country since the signing of the Revitalized-Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) on 12 September 2018. We have been observing the current events on the difficulties in the implementation of the peace agreement which is not forthcoming due to lack of political will and commitment from the parties to the agreement.

We are now at a critical stage of the implementation of the peace agreement. As we all know, the Transitional Period is due to begin in May. Therefore, it is essential for us in the Catholic Church to raise our concerns to the political leaders, guarantors, TROIKA, IGAD, AU, and the International community on the challenges facing the formation of the Reconstituted -Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) on the 12 May 2019. Instead of finding a common strategy to out the challenges in the implementation of R-ARCSS, the parties remain divided.

2. Rome Spiritual Retreat

On 10 -11 April, 2019 the Church and expected presidency gathered in Rome for a spiritual retreat to stand before God and to reconcile among themselves before assuming the enormous shared responsibilities on the 12 May 2019.

The purpose of the spiritual retreat was for the leaders to reflect on their own lives and the common mission the Lord has entrusted to them for the present and future of South Sudan, and to recommit themselves, to the building up of our nation.

3. After Rome Retreat

His Holiness Pope Francis, the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Grace Justin Welby, the former Presbyterian Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland the Very Reverend John Chalmers and the religious leaders of South Sudan Council of Churches expected the political leaders to be men and women of good will to work for peace through dialogue, negotiation and forgiveness among our people. And that we the people of South Sudan should seek what unites us, beginning with the fact that we belong to one and the same nation and people, and above all to overcome all the challenges that divide us.

Our people accompanied the Rome retreat with fervent prayer and great hope, expecting reconciliation of all its members and the beginning of a new era of justice, peace and prosperity for all. They hoped that the spiritual retreat could transform, reconcile and unite our political leaders so that they might pursue the paths of peace and reconciliation in the interest of our nation and our people.

4. Concerns on the Formation of the Reconstituted Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU)

In our analysis on the status of implementation of the Pre-Transitional Period tasks, we identified key activities which were to be completed by the end of the period. Of these, some have been completed and others are ongoing, while a good number of these activities are yet to begin. Unfortunately, those pending activities or ongoing

activities are the most critical and consequential. They are critical to lay a firm foundation upon which the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) can be formed to take forward the implementation of the peace agreement.

The parties did agree on a formula by which all armed forces of the warring parties to be unified to create a nucleus national army of South Sudan within eight months so as to be deployed before the end of the pre-transitional period, to provide reliable security to all parties, and to avoid any future conflict.

Article 2.2.1 of R-ARCSS ties the end of the Pre-Transitional Period to the completion of “training and redeployment of the necessary unified forces...” and stipulates further that “this provision prevails on any other contrary text”.

The disagreement by the parties to the R-ARCSS over the formation of the R-TGoNU in the month of May could likely lead the country back to unnecessary conflict.

5. Way Forward

1. The Catholic Church calls upon the parties to examine their failure to adhere to the implementation of the pre-transitional activities as soon as possible and agree on a roadmap for the way forward.
2. Recalling His Holiness Pope Francis blessing and his humility of historical kneeling and kissing the feet of the main principals to the conflict, the two main principals should humble themselves and attend in person the forthcoming meetings on the current situation.
3. The parties should collectively show the determination and necessary political will to sit down and discuss a compromise solution to the dispute over the formation of the R-TGoNU; by reviewing the implementation status of the activities of the Pre-Transitional Period and make recommendations on the way forward.

4. The leaders should promote peace and striving in a spirit of solidarity with every member of the people, to build peace through dialogue and negotiation.
5. The parties should refrain from hostilities to enable the implantation of R-ARCSS, so that there will be lasting peace for the common good of all those citizens who wish to begin to build the nation.
6. The parties to refrain from mobilizing, recruiting and training of soldiers/militias.
7. The parties to maintain open channels of communication with other stakeholders, including those who have not signed R-ARCSS.
8. The Catholic Church is urgently calling upon the IGAD, AU, TROIKA, Guarantors to the Agreement and the International Community to rescue the situation before the parties relapse to a conflict.
9. Finally, the Catholic Church is calling upon IGAD to urgently convene a Summit of the IGAD Heads of State and Government to assess the status of implementation of the R-ARCSS matrix.

Happy Easter and God bless you.


✠ Paolino Lukudu Loro
Metropolitan Archbishop of Juba.

The image shows a blue circular official seal of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Juba, Sudan. The seal contains the text "Archdiocese of Juba S. Sudan" at the top and "Metropolitan Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro" at the bottom. In the center of the seal is a coat of arms featuring a cross, a book, and a chalice. A handwritten signature in black ink is written over the seal. Below the seal, the name "Paolino Lukudu Loro" is printed with a small cross symbol to its left, and "Metropolitan Archbishop of Juba." is printed below that.