



Saturday 9th November 2019.

LET HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR A PEACEFUL SOUTH SUDAN PREVAIL
“... My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!” (Psalm 121:1).

As we approach the 12th of November, all eyes are once again on the signatories to the agreement and on our Political Leaders. The question on the minds of South Sudanese everywhere is, will our Political Leaders through their actions demonstrate their genuine will for peace? “I look up to the mountains - does my help come from there? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth! (Psalm 121:1).

The will for peace is not measured only by deadlines and technical arrangements. Whether the government is formed on the 12th November 2019, or a further extension is agreed, it is a question of the heart and the political will. The book of Psalms expresses: “I am exhausted from crying for help; my throat is parched. My eyes are swollen with weeping, waiting for God to help me.” (Psalm 69:3). The people of South Sudan have begged their political leaders to find a peaceful way forward, to look beyond political interest, emotional turmoil and historic grievances, and to hold their duty towards the people of the country as a sacred calling which is to be gravely cherished in holy servitude and with deep respect.

When His Holiness Pope Francis knelt with visible suffering to kiss the feet of the political leaders, this was a gesture of the purest humility, beseeching the political leaders to follow the way of truth and light at this moment when the lives of millions are at stake. The gesture recalls the memory of the Jesus Christ’s Last Supper, when at the Vigil of His Passion, washed the feet of the Apostles, showing them the way of service. The powerful spirit of peace, forgiveness, reconciliation and humble service from the retreat in Rome must prevail. His Holiness Pope Francis told the political Leaders of South Sudan that: “With great openness of mind and heart, turn away from violence, abandon conflict and hatred, put an end to war, and leave the people of South Sudan to God’s promised land of unity, harmony, joy and prosperity. Build peace and friendship amongst the diverse people of South Sudan, and never relent in pursuing the path of reconciliation, justice and peace. Go forth, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ; follow the path that God calls you to and heed the words of our redeemer. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

The Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) had demonstrated the willingness of the parties to stop the unnecessary violence as a prerequisite for lasting peace, and it has resulted in a ceasefire. This in turn has enabled some humanitarian assistance to reach those most in need, has created the space for some progress in critical areas. But it also represents only the very first signs of the promise of peace - the journey is far from over, and the duty to continue to fulfill obligations in the agreement remains more strongly than ever. The urgency of the situation and what is at stake must never be forgotten. Today we are at the crossroads in the implementation. The implementation of the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) has lagged behind especially in the areas of the Security arrangements and the Boundaries and number of States. However, with regards to cantonment, though some progress has been made under the guidance of the R-JMEC and JMCC, the process is far from complete.



As the deadline looms for formation of an inclusive Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU), the Government and Parties to the Revitalized Agreement should focus not on the politics of power sharing positions, but rather on the dignity of every human person; prioritizing the safety and prosperity of the South Sudanese people, the maintenance of the ceasefire, and should continue to work towards an inclusive government. It is critical that parties work together to lay the building blocks for inclusive peace, including agreeing security arrangements, resolving differences over the number and boundaries of States, making progress on Governance and Transparency issues, and ensuring that perpetrators of violations against civilians are held to account.

Member Churches have spoken and made their positions and principles clear¹. Our focus is not on politics but on the dignity of every human person. The incumbent Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) should look at the critical barriers and prioritize the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement of the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). However we ideally support the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) when essential preconditions have been met, and when it is truly inclusive, including non-signatories to the R-ARCSS. There has been a National Dialogue process and a report has been issued which highlights the concerns of the ordinary citizens of South Sudan. The people have spoken; let their voice be heard and respected. Let their wishes be implemented.

We pray that the violence of 2013 and 2016 will not be repeated, and critical issues are adequately addressed. Therefore, we urge the parties to the agreement to engage in constructive dialogue to decide on the basis of gaining political consensus, with a clear way forward. Bringing an end to the suffering of the people of South Sudan is paramount, and the political leaders have a moral responsibility to deliver the country to peace. At the same time, this process must not be personalized between a few elite leaders, but rather the people and the future of the country must be at the centre. The formation of a government is not an end in itself, and the new government will only have legitimacy if it addresses the root causes of conflict and provides Peace, Justice, Security, Basic Services and Good governance for the people.

As the CHURCH in South Sudan, we stand united as we seek to guide the political leaders of South Sudan in servitude of their country. We are working together across the nation to stand in solidarity with our communities and work with them to address the root causes of conflict, as realized through the Action Plan for Peace (APP), which connects us in peace across local, national and international levels. The extension of the extra One Hundred days can serve as an opportunity to dialogue and implement the unresolved issues in the agreement.

People of South Sudan not withstanding all our challenges and pain which are humanly created, “let us be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality ... Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another ...” (cf. Romans 12:12-16). Come, people of South Sudan, and let us walk in the light of the Lord our Hope. (cf. Isaiah 2:5).


Oh God Bless South Sudan.

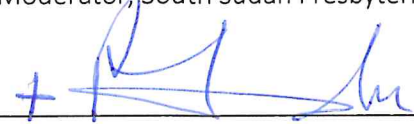
¹‘Let the cry for peace and justice of the people of South Sudan be listened to and respected’ - South Sudan Catholic Bishops message, 18th October 2019; ‘The implementation of the peace agreement’ Office of the Archbishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church South Sudan, 26th October 2019

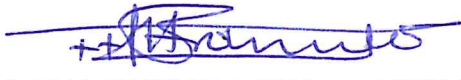


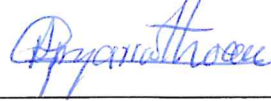
Given this 9th day of November 2019 in JUBA - SOUTH SUDAN.

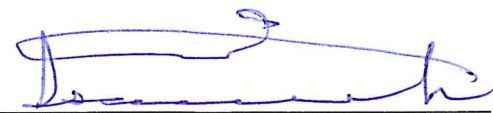

Bishop Dr. Arkanjelo WANI LEMI JEBERI
Chairman, South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)
And Presiding Bishop, Africa Inland Church (AIC).

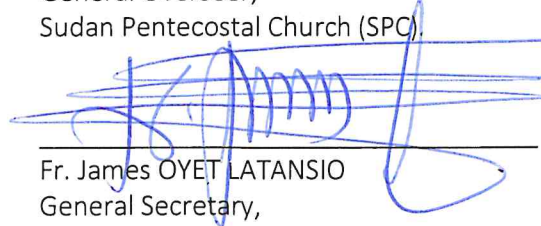

Rt. Rev. Moderator James PAR TAP HON
Vice Chairman,
South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)
Moderator, South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC).


His Grace Paolino LUKUDU LORO
Metropolitan Archbishop of JUBA,
CATHOLIC CHURCH.


The Most Rev. Justin BADI ARAMA
Archbishop and Primate,
Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS)
And Diocesan Bishop of JUBA.


Rt. Rev. Moderator Peter GAI LUAL MARROW
Moderator of the General Assembly,
Presbyterian Church of South Sudan and Sudan (PCSS/S).


Bishop Dr. Isaiah MAJOK DAU
General Overseer,
Sudan Pentecostal Church (SPC).


Fr. James OYET LATANSIO
General Secretary,
South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC).

