



South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), P. O BOX 209 Juba, South Sudan.

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**SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SSCC)**  
**ACTION PLAN FOR PEACE (APP)**

**Position Paper on a Peaceful Resolution to the  
Conflicts in South Sudan**

**“The war must stop!”**

***“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be  
called sons and daughters of God!”***

**(Matthew 5:9)**



SSCC ADMINISTRATION

Email: [oyet@sscchurches.org](mailto:oyet@sscchurches.org), Web: [www.sschurches.org](http://www.sschurches.org), Tel: +211956363666

## THE GENESIS

The Church proclaims that human life is sacred, and that the dignity of the person is at the core of a moral vision for society and beliefs in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person. Church tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social, and how we organize our society directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The Church teaches that the role of the government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and to promote the common good and reminds each person: *"Then the King will say... 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Mathew 25:31-41*

The Church has historically played a significant role in peace making. In June 2015 twenty-five leaders and representatives from South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) met in Kigali, Rwanda on a retreat and agreed on the following actions:

1. Advocacy at national, regional and international forums for a negotiated peace Agreement including its implementation, while changing the narrative of war and violence to one of peace;
2. Neutral forums to bring stakeholders into a less politically charged atmosphere with an aim of overcoming mistrust and disagreements on critical issues;
3. Reconciliation leveraging the churches' values of forgiveness and reconciliation to help repair broken relationships. *Luke 15:17-24*

## HISTORIC AND CURRENT ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN PEACE MAKING:

The Church in Sudan and South Sudan has played either a direct mediating or a supporting advisory role in past national peace



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processes (Addis Ababa 1972, Comprehensive Peace Agreement 2005, ARCSS 2015), domestic peace processes (e.g. Kejiko 1 and 2 in 1997, Wunlit people-to-people in 1999, South-South Dialogue/Covenant in 2005, grassroots peace in Jonglei in 2011 and Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation between 2013 - 2016) and mediation between army and armed factions from the 1990s to the present day.

It has numerous structures that work through communities on key issues of managing conflicts, bringing people towards justice and reconciliation such as Justice and Peace Committees and ecumenical Inter-Church Committees. The SSCC works through its platform of ecumenical churches and applies a common strategy in the Action Plan for Peace (APP) working at national and local levels. This builds off four key pillars: Advocacy (changing the narrative from violence to peace while raising the voice of the voiceless up), Neutral Forums (establishing safe spaces to bring conflicting parties into dialogue on urgent issues), Reconciliation (building a process of repairing broken relationships through trauma healing, training and community conversations) and Organisational Strengthening (building up the Church structures, establishing and enabling transparent and effective processes while providing platforms for building individual knowledge and capacities). Individual member churches and other churches have their own approaches and processes as well.

### **GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POSITION PAPER:**

This position paper seeks to provide a roadmap to help South Sudan political leaders and citizens engage in dialogue at multiple levels, while urging the regional and international communities to put pressure on the conflicting parties to end this senseless war. The principle approach, as set out in Rwanda in 2015, is the South Sudan Council of Churches' Action Plan for Peace (APP).

### **Specific Objectives:**

- To provide the Church's expert analysis of the current crisis and conflicts, historical roots and causes, as well as experiences of the past to address these (what worked, what did not work and why) while pinpointing critical areas of intervention (short term and long term);
- To develop home grown solutions for responding to root causes of the conflicts through building dialogue processes at multiple



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levels (neutral forums and community conversations) both within and outside the country and ensuring that all voices are heard within these even as the narratives of violence begin to be changed to those of peace. This will help people to journey towards finding justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing;

- To share and structure ways towards durable peace and to engage in a genuine dialogue that takes into consideration past and present dynamics and issues and to offer the support of the Church in building such a process with regional, international and national leaders as well as with all South Sudanese citizens.

### 1. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION OF SOUTH SUDAN

*“But you people! You are stubborn and rebellious; you have turned aside and left me. You never thought to honour me, even though I send the autumn rains and the spring rains and give you the harvest season each year. Instead, your sins have kept these good things from you... Evildoers live among my people; they lie in wait like those who lay nets to catch birds, but they have set their traps to catch people. Just as a hunter fills a cage with birds, they have filled their houses with loot. That is why they are powerful and rich, why they are fat and well fed. There is no limit to their evil deeds. They do not give orphans their rights or show justice to the oppressed.”*

*Jeremiah 5:23 - 28*

The people of South Sudan are experiencing the most difficult time in their history of suffering and self-destruction. The rapidly deteriorating economic situation coupled with the halting of most developmental projects and investments has led to extreme hardship for most ordinary citizens, while the war and violent conflicts have driven millions from their home and made them extremely vulnerable. Fracturing of the country has deepened as the economic crisis has combined with political and social factors characterized by creation of further administrative units with little consultation and increasingly lethal inter and intra-communal conflicts. South Sudanese are sharply divided along ethnic and tribal lines, even as youth are increasingly militarized. New armed groups have sprung up across the country.



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Roads leading to the States have become unsafe and dangerous even as the national capital of Juba is reached with military convoy or by air. Human rights are being abused at every level, people are being killed, women and men are raped, children recruited into armed groups, while security organs are apparently acting above the law. Also commonplace are armed robbery, arbitrary arrests with often delayed judicial process and shrinking space for citizens, journalists and civil society to speak out. These bring back the harsh memories of the previous Sudanese regime for many citizens. The grassroots feel that leaders and parties fail to represent their interests.

This tremendously challenging human disaster has further led to the tearing of the social fabric of South Sudan, even the fragmenting within communities and homes. The Church itself has not been immune given its presence across the entire country and has suffered from divisions and tensions, even as it has come under intense political pressure.

The situation in South Sudan can be characterized by:

- (i) Divided, oppressive and unresponsive leadership across the country,
- (ii) Social and political fragmentation (across Government, Opposition and ethnic groups) which challenges building peace and seeking political resolutions,
- (iii) Breakdown of law and order leading to further insecurity.

Without swift and concerted actions South Sudan is heading further towards the darkest chapter in its history. This collapse must be prevented at all costs. Given the escalating situation in the country, there is no time to lose. The key objective is bringing all stakeholders to Neutral Forums to critique and review past dispensations, acknowledge failings and chart alternative approaches to restoring peace and stability in the country. At the same time, building spaces across the country to engage communities and in particular youth into dialogue while changing the narratives of violence to those of peace.



## **2. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PEACE INITIATIVES:**

### **a. Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS):**

Brokered by IGAD, it was signed by President Salva Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar in August 2015. The Agreement recognizes the need for change in the way South Sudan is governed proposing social, economic and political reforms to ensure effective governance and promotion of improved quality of life, security and dignity for all citizens.

It has acknowledged that even though the political crisis began in December 15<sup>th</sup> 2013 within the leadership of SPLM, the violence has long since moved through states and social institutions down to household level across the country. In this sense the disastrous consequences of the conflict have been felt by everyone.

The Agreement has implementation schedules and timelines with a pre-transitional period of ninety days and a transitional period of thirty months with sixty days for national elections before the end of the transitional period. The thirty months will expire at the end of February 2018. It demands the cooperation of all the parties to the letter and spirit of the agreement during the implementation period.

### **b. Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU)**

The TGoNU was formed on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and rapidly met some serious challenges. Only three months into the Government's term of office the forces of the principals again renewed fighting on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2016 resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands of displaced and forcing the Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of SPLM/A IO out of Juba and into the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many of his followers took refuge at the UNMISS Protection of Civilian sites and in neighbouring countries.

Due to his absence, his chief Negotiator General Taban Deng was appointed as the new first Vice President representing the SPLM/A IO in the Government. This created a split within SPLM-IO, with an SPLM-IO in Government and an SPLM-IO outside of Government areas led by Dr. Riek Machar. This led to intensifying hostilities. The combination of violence has changed the political and security situation in South Sudan, with areas changing hands frequently, major defections of



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leading officers and troops and more human suffering. New armed groups such as the National Salvation Army (NAS) under Thomas Cirillo, National Democratic Movement (NDM) under Dr. Lam Akol, the South Sudan National Movement for Change (SSNMC) under Joseph Bakosoro and Federal Democratic Party/South Sudan Democratic Forces (FDP/SSDF) under Gabriel Changson and Peter Gadet have sprung up putting the Government under further pressure.

The rapidly deteriorating economic situation has led to extreme hardships for the ordinary citizens. The Government is unable to regularly pay the civil servants and law enforcement agencies (including the army) and is struggling to maintain the rule of law. Inflation has reached serious levels and the value of the South Sudanese Pound has fallen to the lowest level to International currencies leaving salaries worthless. The bulk of any financial resources still available largely go to the war efforts and security.

The international community has struggled to come with a unified position on resolution of the conflict and many diplomats seem tired of the situation in South Sudan. The IGAD Heads of States and Governments hold on to the idea of a Transitional Government of National Unity and the ARCSS while adhering to their bilateral interests on economic and security grounds. But increasingly, as the fighting continues, statements from various international actors suggest that the Agreement is largely obsolete.

### **c. National Dialogue (ND):**

H.E President Salva KIIR, announced the commencement of National Dialogue (ND) on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016, as a means through which South Sudanese could preserve, protect and restore the integrity of the country. In his view National Dialogue is both a forum and process through which the people of South Sudan can gather to redefine the basis of their country as it relates to nationhood, citizenship, and sense of belonging.

H.E President Kiir stated that, "The National Dialogue should have an acceptable agenda and a set of parameters to guide the process". One of the parameters, he stressed, is for all the stakeholders to accept the fact that the National Dialogue is placed within the framework of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in Republic of South



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Sudan (ARCSS). From various high-level public statements, the timeframe for ND is set to end with the ARCSS.

The broader objective of ND is to end violent conflicts in South Sudan, reconstitute national consensus and save the country from disintegration and usher in a new era of peace, stability and prosperity. After a strongly criticised start (centred around few participating representatives), April 2017 saw a new decree with appointments of over one hundred members across its leadership, steering committee, secretariat and members. H.E the President, after standing as the Patron of ND, responded to strong criticism from a wide range of actors and announced he would hand over to the Chair and Co-Chair. No written decree has yet rescinded this. Equally criticized are the perceived lack of neutral oversight and the absence of Opposition groups, with a number of the key groups rejecting the ND.

The idea of National Dialogue and even its objectives is a noble one and has the backing of many South Sudanese. But public scrutiny of how the Steering Committee and the Secretariat implement the objectives and how they approach the substantive issues involved, as well as statements by Government representatives create perceptions that the process is politically manipulated. Conditions placed by the Government on Opposition groups' participation have been seen to undermine the concept of inclusivity.

### **d. Revitalization of ARCSS**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2017 IGAD, through its Council of Ministers and Special Envoys, conducted a round of pre-consultation meetings pursuant to the decision to convene a High Level Revitalization Forum. The objective was to bring the parties (with new armed and political groups) to the table and seek to look at the ARCSS with a view to bringing the process forward. IGAD highlighted that it would consider punitive measures for any party who would continue with hostilities, obstruct monitoring of the agreement or violate ceasefire provisions and Implementation schedule. The process will begin mid-December.

### **3. POSITION OF THE CHURCH**

Since the outbreak of the fighting on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2013, Church leaders have consistently stated that this is a senseless war which





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must stop immediately. It once again categorically states, the war must stop!! There is no moral justification for killing, regardless of any perceived legitimate political issues with government or Opposition. A cessation of hostilities must be implemented before detailed long-term negotiations for the future are ironed out. It is immoral and unacceptable to negotiate posts and positions while people are losing their lives. The needs of the people must first be met, while those of political and military leaders come second. It appears that pride, power and politics have become a greater priority than the value of human lives and peace in South Sudan.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017, the South Sudan Council of Churches issued a position regarding the Revitalization of the Implementation of the Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan stating: *"The Church welcomes the various efforts and attempts made by IGAD, and International Community to resolve the conflict especially the current attempt to revitalize the ARCSS. It also recognizes the key role of the Region in sheltering many South Sudan Refugees. All efforts towards Peace must look beyond individual interests and those of narrow political perspectives. The root causes of the conflict and grievances must be addressed, and an environment for building a long-term future for South Sudan must be created"*.

South Sudanese appreciate all the processes to bring peace to South Sudan, and hope the steps taken to revitalize the Agreement will be honoured, but the timeline for both the Revitalisation and ARCSS is desperately short with only five months to the end of the implementation period. All actors must move with urgency and be committed to achieve results. The suffering of the ordinary citizens (both from the collapsing economy and ongoing violence) is prominent in the hearts of the Church leaders, even as their concern is for the complete lack of trust between the parties and unwillingness to make peace, as they attempt to take military advantage. Furthermore, the parties have no exit strategy and are not seeking compromise or a face-saving formula. If the principals agree to revitalize the ARCSS, they likely need to convince their followers that they have gained something. There are no guarantees that all parties to the conflict, their commanders and other followers would actually agree to come on board.



#### 4. THE WAY FORWARD:

Different initiatives and processes serve as tracks at different levels and can strengthen confidence and build towards sustainable peace. High-level political (Track 1) approaches cannot succeed if delinked from the root causes of the conflicts and the aspirations of millions of citizens.

The Church is centrally placed through:

- Moral and spiritual authority, providing confessional spaces that neither judge nor condemn;
- Its legitimacy and credibility;
- Its interest in peace, not power or profit;
- Affinity and common ground with the people, acting as the voice of the voiceless;
- Unique access through a wide network at regional, national and local levels;
- Access to all parties, in a non-partisan way, where it is both respected and trusted and can network these different opinions through facilitation, mediation and dialogue;
- Its particular approach to building peace that is apolitical with the combination of building advocacy, opening neutral forums and leading people through dialogue towards reconciliation;
- International and regional links.

The South Sudan Council of Churches recommends the following:

1. The South Sudan Council of Churches will provide pastoral, mediation and technical advice to the IGAD Revitalisation to ARCSS forum with strong emphasis on human rights, making the voiceless millions be heard at the table and encouraging links between national and local levels.

SSCC will support the IGAD Secretariat to build trust between the parties, given its strong relationship with them. It will seek to support the parties to compromise on bringing the conflict to an end in line with the spirit of the IGAD talks and in close cooperation with the IGAD Secretariat. It will be present morally and spiritually to remind the parties privately and publically to place their suffering people first and unconditionally cease all hostilities. It



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will urge the parties to prove their commitment to peace in a spirit that defies provocation ('turn the other cheek').

It will observe proceedings and offer technical advice, where appropriate, while monitoring the process and reporting back to the South Sudanese people when invited to do so. Provision of technical advice at the various sessions through accredited persons from and by the South Sudan Council of Churches will focus on key areas such as cessation of hostilities, governance, humanitarian support and justice, accountability and dialogue. This will be based on lessons learned from various peace processes including the most recent in Addis 2016, while placing the people at the centre of the discourse.

- 2. The South Sudan Council of Churches will engage the political and military parties to the conflict at Track 1 level combining its Advocacy and Neutral Forum approaches at the regional, international and national levels. This will be complementary to the Revitalisation process (see point 1 above).**

The Church, through its Action Plan for Peace (APP), continues to work largely behind the scenes across the political and social spectrum, building up relations, understanding the issues and inviting actors into neutral forums. This has been structured to engage both the higher political and military actors (in and out of the country) and actors in inter- and intra-communal settings across the country.

The higher level neutral forum (Track 1) is being mediated by the Church in an impartial, all-inclusive setting away from the public eye, building up the dialogue to address their identified problems. This process began in March 2017 and will continue through consultations with Government and Opposition leaders, as well as key South Sudanese inside and outside the country. Shuttle engagement will be undertaken (under Advocacy pillar) to build trust and understanding.

The groups thus far consulted have agreed that the Church should lead the Neutral Forum to bring them to dialogue in a stepped approach, building in a consensual way: (1) preparatory and sensitization meetings, on developing the agenda, agreeing the venue, and identifying the convener(s) among other details, (2) consultative meetings to expose the root causes of the conflicts, determining and accepting responsibilities, seeking to understand positions, needs and



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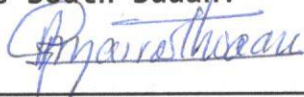
solutions and offering repentance and forgiveness and (3) building towards a plenary neutral forum in 2018. All discussions, recommendations and responsibilities for implementation will be mutually agreed and witnessed by the Church.

3. The South Sudan Council of Churches will engage South Sudanese citizens at Track 2 and 3 levels across the country combining its Advocacy, Neutral Forum and Reconciliation approaches while consolidating its structures and building its staff capacities to enable effective engagement.

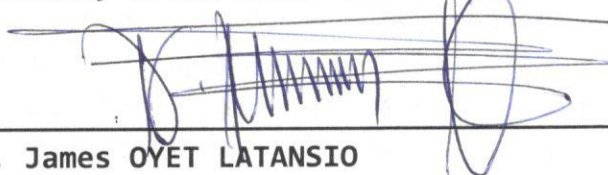
The Church, through the APP, will be open at any level appropriate to (1) help identify root causes of conflicts, (2) build approaches to resolve them, (3) mediate between conflicting individuals, parties and communities and (4) support processes towards dialogue, building peace and reconciliation acting as mediator, accompanier and witness. Political, military, social and traditional leaders and representatives (with a strong focus on women and youth) have already participated, bringing national and local levels into dialogue and these existing neutral forum platforms (those already started include Juba, Duk Padiet, Pibor, Pochalla, Wau and Yambio) and new ones will be supported with advocacy, training and other areas within the APP.

South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) is carefully developing those processes while noting common issues at both national and local levels, and seeking to deepen the roots of a genuine and lasting peace. Relevant information and connections will be provided between Track 1, 2 and 3 processes.

God bless South Sudan!



Rt. Rev. Moderator Peter GAI LUAL MARROW  
Chairman, South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)



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

