

Consultative Meeting on the ECSS Position  
On the National Dialogue  
16th – 18th JUNE 2017  
JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN

“WALKING TOGETHER”

“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?” (Amos 3:3)

#### Introduction

We the Archbishops, Bishops, Clergy and Laity of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS) meeting at the ECS Guest House in Juba from the 16th to the 18th of June 2017, painfully recall that since independence in 2011, our country has never enjoyed peace. There have been internal conflicts followed by a full-blown civil war that erupted on 15th December 2013 which continues to date.

In all this, the ECSS has consistently made her position very clear by issuing a number of statements. Our position has always been ‘dialogue, dialogue, dialogue’ as issued in the position papers on the following dates:

- 30th November 2013, in Bor, “End the conflict through peaceful and negotiated settlement.”
- 29th January 2014, in Juba, “Let The Spirit of the Lord Rest Upon Us.”
- 24th November 2014 in Kajo-Keji, “Prepare the Way of the Lord.”
- 29th November 2015 in Juba, “Remove the Rock.”
- 16th July 2016, in Juba, “Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

In all these position papers we have consistently called upon the warring parties to embrace peace and unity - and be guided by the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge and fear of the Lord. We have and continue to appeal to them to put the interest of the Nation first, before their own political interests and affiliations.

#### The National Dialogue

We welcome the National Dialogue announced by President Salva Kiir Mayardit. The reason being that, as the Church, the word ‘dialogue’ comes from our understanding of God’s engagement with humanity. God initiated and entered into conversation with the human race through Christ incarnate and sustains this dialogue through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, as the Body of Christ, the Church should in turn enter into dialogue with the world in which it exists and serves, and should promote dialogue in our broken world. It is through dialogue that human beings are reconciled to God, among themselves and with nature.

The National Dialogue should therefore create space and provide opportunity for every South Sudanese to contribute towards meaningful and intentional conversation to resolve our differences, end the conflicts, and find common ground to restore confidence, peace and nation building.

As a Church we strongly support inclusive dialogue that does not exclude any stakeholders. For example, without participation and inclusion of every stakeholder of warring parties in the Sudan conflicts we wouldn’t have had the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA 2005).

We appeal to all South Sudanese to accept talking and listening to one another. Isaiah 51: 4 says: “Listen to me, my people: hear me, my nation: for my law will be proclaimed, my justice will become a light to the nations”. Let us forgive one another and put aside our bitterness, fears, preconceptions, and the desire to win an argument – but instead take time to listen to other voices and views that may differ from ours, and make compromises. We believe that the objective of a dialogue is to think together and consider each other’s opinions and views, avoiding taking our own position as final. It is only when we undertake sincere, frank, honest and open conversations among ourselves, addressing the root causes of the problems affecting us that we begin to heal the wounds of the conflicts and restore peace in our country.

#### The Kind of a Nation We Want

The question that we should ask ourselves as South Sudanese is - what kind of a nation do we want to see? The National Dialogue will provide us with an opportunity to redefine the vision of our beloved nation. As the ECSS, we want to see a South Sudan that is free from wars and conflicts, where her people live in absolute peace and harmony. A nation where there is no bitterness, hatred, division, faction, regionalism, tribalism and ethnic violence- but where all tribes and ethnic groups live together united and in love of God and of one another.

We want to see a South Sudan where cities, towns, villages, roads and streets are filled with people who are honest, truthful, faithful and trustworthy- where there is rule of law and order that protects people and their property. A nation that is free of crimes. A nation where pastoralist communities live in harmony without cattle rustling and raiding - and without conflict between farmers and cattle keepers. We want to see a South Sudan where there is no nepotism and corruption – where leaders are responsible and accountable. We want to see a South Sudan where there is respect for human rights including the rights of women, girls, children, the elderly, and vulnerable groups - and where there is fear of God.

#### Call for Credible Dialogue

We encourage the National Dialogue Committee to choose a neutral and conducive venue for both National Government and Opposition stakeholders to share their views freely and peacefully. We request the stakeholders to respect and fully implement the outcomes of the National Dialogue.

In order to guarantee a credible dialogue process in South Sudan, the ECSS will liaise with the other Churches to consult citizens and all stakeholders on their views for consideration in the national transformation process. This initiative will feed into the ongoing National Dialogue process. Our unity in this process is guided by Jesus’ prayer on the night before he was crucified -‘As you Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me’ (Jn.17:21). He prayed for the unity of the Church. When the Church is united, the people and the nation will be united too. It is Christ’s profound desire that we must be one people and one nation.

#### The Role of the Church in the peace building conflict transformation

For a long time, the Church has been greatly involved in peace building and conflict transformation; for example the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All African Conference of churches (AACC) in collaboration with the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) mediated the short-lived 1972 Addis Ababa peace agreement in Sudan. There had also been several peace initiatives mediated by the Church in South Sudan including Kejiko I in Yei (1997), Wunlit in Bahr el Ghazal (1999), Lillir in Jonglei (2000), Kejiko

II in Juba (2010), and six tribes reconciliation conference in Bor in 2012. Also the Church under the umbrella of the SSCC was involved in the observation of the peace talks that led to the August Peace Agreement 2015.

In the National Dialogue the Church will therefore be “a go-between” between the warring parties and shall stand in the gap. The Church will continue with mediations and facilitation of community peace processes at the grassroots level as it has been doing. This will bring about credible peace, reconciliation and harmony in the country. The Church will also pay visits to all South Sudanese in displaced people and refugee camps as well as in the diaspora to preach the message of peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing and hope. In the process we will also solicit their views on the South Sudan they would like to see.

#### Call for Permanent Ceasefire

We call upon the warring parties to silence the guns and restore peace so as to enable the people who are in internally displaced and refugee camps to come back home and participate in the National Dialogue.

We appeal to the South Sudanese who are killing and robbing their brothers and sisters everywhere to stop such destabilising and destructive activities. We also appeal to South Sudanese in diaspora to stop hate speech and divisive messages through social media.

A permanent ceasefire will enable our people to embark on economic development in our country. Our poverty is man-made and undermines God’s will for creation and purpose for humanity.

We appeal to the international communities: IGAD, AU, and UN to help the warring parties to reconsider their positions and embrace peaceful resolution of the conflict.

#### Conclusion

As the Church we have a spiritual, ethical and moral responsibility to help our nation out of this endless political crisis. Our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ said: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God’. As the Church we commit ourselves to peace building and conflict transformation through participating in a credible and people driven National Dialogue process.

It is our prayer that we will achieve this goal through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Zechariah 4:6 “Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit says the Lord of hosts.”

#### SIGNATURES

1. The Most Rev. Daniel Deng Bul Yak  
Archbishop and The Primate of the  
Episcopal Church of South Sudan & Sudan  
and Bishop of Juba Diocese \_\_\_\_\_

2. The Most Rev. Peter Munde Yacuob  
Internal Archbishop of Western Equatoria Province  
and Bishop of Yambio Diocese \_\_\_\_\_

3. The Most Rev. Alapayo Manyang Kuctiel  
Internal Archbishop of Eastern Bahr el Ghazal Province  
and Bishop of Rumbek Diocese \_\_\_\_\_

4. The Most Rev. Ruben Akurdid Ngong  
Internal Archbishop of Jonglei Province  
and Bishop of Bor Diocese \_\_\_\_\_

5. The Most Rev. Hilary Garang Deng  
Internal Archbishop of Upper Nile Province  
and Bishop of Malakal Diocese \_\_\_\_\_

6. The Most Rev. Moses Deng Bol  
Internal Archbishop of Northern Bahr  
el Ghazal Province and Bishop of Wau \_\_\_\_\_

7. The Most Rev. Barnard Oringa Balmoi  
Internal Archbishop of Eastern Equatoria Province  
and Bishop of Torit Diocese \_\_\_\_\_

8. The Most Rev. Paul Benjamin Yugusuk  
Internal Archbishop of Central Equatoria Province  
and Bishop of Lomegga Diocese \_\_\_\_\_