

# COMMUNIQUÉ

## THE BAHR EL GHAZAL REGIONAL CONFERENCE WAU, SOUTH SUDAN, 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY—2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2019

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The delegates representing 23 counties of the 4 former states of Bahr el Ghazal Region, including Abyei, met in Wau town from the 25<sup>th</sup> of February to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2019 under the Co-Chairmanship of H.E. Abel Alier and Hon. Angelo Beda.

The National Dialogue is a three-staged process starting with the Grassroots Consultations, followed by Regional Conferences and is planned to end with the National Conference. The objective of the Regional Conference was to deliberate on emerging issues from the Grassroots Consultations and make recommendations to the National Dialogue Conference.

The Conference deliberated on the agenda of the National Dialogue for Bahr el Ghazal Regional Conference prepared by the Steering Committee. The agenda contained key issues that emerged from the Grassroots Consultations as reflected in various documents of the Steering Committee. These issues were categorized into four substantive clusters: governance, security, economy and social cohesion.

To facilitate in-depth discussion of these issues and to ensure greater participation, the delegates broke up into groups on the basis of the clusters and issues.

After extensive deliberations of the issues, inspired and guided by the objectives and principles of the National Dialogue, and recognizing the complementarity between the National Dialogue and the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), the Conference agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations:

### On Governance

The Conference,

1. **Notes** with concern the challenges facing the current decentralized system of governance and recommends the establishment of a federal system;
2. **Strongly supports** the creation of the current 32 states, and Abyei Administrative Area, as sub-units of the federal system and recommends the creation of more states to meet the legitimate aspiration of the people of the area concerned;
3. **Endorses** a presidential system of government as opposed to a parliamentary system, recommends appropriate limitations on presidential powers over the states, and also recommends two consecutive five-year term limits for the president;

4. **Calls** for strict adherence to the normative principles of constitutionalism, including the separation of powers among the three arms of government: the executive, legislature, and the judiciary;
5. **Recognizes** the popular demand for peaceful democratic transfer of power through regular, free and fair elections;
6. **Calls** upon the government to deliver peace dividends and the expansion of essential services with special focus on the vulnerable groups such as IDP and refugee returnees;
7. **Recognizes** the importance of land to the people of South Sudan and recommends that the government should own and manage the land.

## On the Economy

The Conference,

1. **Emphasizes** the need for the diversification of the economy through the development of non-oil sectors and strengthening the National Revenue Authority to improve tax collection and revenue management;
2. **Strongly urges** the government to invest in agriculture as the engine and backbone of the economy and an essential source of livelihood for most of the people of South Sudan;
3. **Recognizes modern** infrastructure as an essential driver of economic development and social integration, and therefore calls upon the government to give priority to the construction of roads and bridges, river transport, electricity and telecommunication services;
4. **Appeals** to the government to strengthen social safety net programs through the establishment of cooperatives with the aim of alleviating the cost of living;
5. **Calls** upon the government to exert more efforts to restore macroeconomic stability in the country to accelerate economic growth, sustainable livelihoods, and employment opportunities and to accelerate formulation of inclusive socio-economic programs throughout the country;
6. **Recommends** the empowerment of women and youth through the establishment of microfinance institutions to expand access to credit and promote inclusive growth;
7. **Notes** with serious concern the pervasive corruption in South Sudan and calls for strengthening legal, institutional, and regulatory frameworks to ensure accountability and combat impunity;
8. **Recommends** inclusive and fair allocation and distribution of national resources and further recommends that oil and mineral producing states take 20% of revenue and the national government takes 80%, which shall be shared in the ratio of 70% for the national government and 30% for non-producing states to foster a sense of belonging and inclusive development

## On Security

The Conference,

1. **Calls** for an immediate end to all forms of hostilities in the country and urges all armed groups to end violence and seek peaceful means to address their grievances;

2. **Expresses** serious concern about the impact of small arms and light weapons in the hands of civilians and strongly recommends comprehensive and simultaneous civilian disarmament across the country;
3. **Strongly** disapproves of violent means for seeking power and mobilization of ethnic communities for the same purpose;
4. **Calls** for the depoliticization, professionalization and unification of national army through comprehensive security sector reforms;

## **On Social Cohesion**

The Conference,

1. **Calls** for the **appreciation**, preservation and promotion of the diverse South Sudanese cultures to foster national unity and harmony;
2. **Stresses** the need to demilitarize and depoliticize communal relations in order to enhance social cohesion and peaceful coexistence;
3. **Recommends** that the government invest in civic education, through public institutions, as a strategy for promoting unity, harmony and national solidarity.
4. **Calls** for a speedy and voluntary return of refugees, internally displaced persons, and South Sudanese on the Protection of Civilian Sites (PoCs) to their homes.

Following the adoption of the above conclusions and recommendations, the Conference endorsed the Steering Committee documents 1—5, although a few delegates expressed their reservations on documents 1, 4, and 5. The Conference ended with the selection of delegates to the National Dialogue Conference and calls upon the people of South Sudan to embrace the National Dialogue, its objectives and principles, toward the achievement of lasting peace, security and stability in South Sudan.

The Conference was informed of the meeting on the sidelines of the Regional Conference by the Chiefs of the Greater Bahr el Ghazal Region who presented a statement to the Conference expressing their solidarity with the people of Abyei and appealing to the President and the National Dialogue to support the outcome of the Abyei Referendum.

The Conference expresses its gratitude to H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit, for initiating the National Dialogue and while rendering full moral, political and material support to the process, ensuring the independence of the Steering Committee and its adherence to the principles of inclusivity, credibility and transparency, which have been the pillars of its success thus far.

The Conference also expresses its deep appreciation to Hon. Angelo Taban Biajo, Governor of Wau State, members of his government, and the people of Wau for the warm reception and logistical support accorded to the Conference, and which significantly contributed to its success. The participation of all the Governors of the states of Greater Bahr el Ghazal and the Chief Administrator of Abyei Administrative Area added to the consolidation of the regional character of the conference. Much appreciation also goes to the Japanese Government, UN fraternity in South Sudan and UNDP in particular for technical and financial support to the Conference.

The Conference hopes that the success of the Bahr el Ghazal Regional Conference and the lessons learned from it will help guide and facilitate the remaining Regional Conferences for the Greater Upper Nile and the Greater Equatoria as well as in concluding National Conference of the National Dialogue.