

COMMUNIQUÉ

THE EQUATORIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN, 26TH—31ST AUGUST 2019

The delegates representing 24 counties of the 3 former states of Equatoria Region met in Juba from the 26th to 31st of August 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 the Regional Conferences and is planned to end with the National Conference. The objective of the Greater Equatoria 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 Greater Equatoria 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, economy, security 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 specific 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 recommendations:

On Governance

The Conference,

1. **Notes** with grave concern the challenges facing the current decentralized system of governance and endorses the establishment of a federal system with more powers devolved to the states;
2. **Proposes 39 states** as sub-units of the federal system to be shared equally among the three regions of Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile, each with 13 states;
3. **Endorses** a presidential system of government and limits federal powers over the states;
4. **Recommends** four-year term of office for president, and if re-elected can only serve for another four years;
5. **Recommends** that the post of president should rotate among the three regions of Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile;
6. **Recommends** rotation should start immediately after the end of the transitional period stipulated in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan;
7. **Strongly recommends** that state government should have the three arms of government: executive, legislature, and judiciary, with full competences;
8. **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, and further recommends the independence of the legislature and the judiciary from executive interference;
9. **Calls** for the establishment of an independent constitutional court;

10. **Recommends** that any member of parliament appointed to an executive position must resign from parliament and be replaced through by-elections;
11. **Strongly recommends** that access to, and transfer of power should only be through legitimate, timely, free and fair democratic elections;
12. **Recommends** that land shall belong to the community and be protected by the government and it shall be managed and administered by the local government in collaboration with the indigenous communities;
13. **Recommends** formation of a border Commission with a strong and clear mandate to protect our national borders and international boundaries;
14. **Strongly recommends** that state boundaries must be managed and demarcated by the national government as they stood on the 1st January 1956;
15. **Strongly recommends** the enforcement of affirmative action to enable full participation of women, youth and people with special needs in governance;

On the Economy

The Conference,

1. **Calls** upon the government to make Peace a priority in order to restore macroeconomic stability in the country, accelerate economic growth, sustainable livelihoods, and employment opportunities, and formulate inclusive and equitable socio-economic programs throughout the country;
2. **Recommends** inclusive and fair allocation and distribution of national resources and further recommends that the national budget be divided 55% for the federal government and 45% for the states;

3. **Recommends** compensation for damages caused to the land by allocating 10% of the net revenue to the natural resources producing states;
4. **Strongly urges** the government to invest in agriculture as the engine of the economy;
5. **Calls** on government to urgently develop policy for industrialization;
6. **Emphasizes** the need for the diversification of the economy through the development of both oil and non-oil sectors and strengthening the National Revenue Authority to improve tax collection and revenue management;
7. **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, airports, dams, power plants and the improvement of information technology and telecommunication services;
8. **Strongly condemns** the rampant corruption in the country and calls for establishment of anti-corruption court;
9. **Recommends** complete overhaul of public financial management systems and institutions with a view to restoring public trust, credibility and integrity in the economic system;
10. **Recommends** that as a matter of strategic national interest, South Sudan should build a modern international airport that can handle heavy planes;
11. **Recommends** development of sound economic and trade policies that promote competitiveness of South Sudanese entrepreneurs through capacity building and access to financing;
12. **Appeals** to the government to strengthen cooperatives and microfinance institutions and ease access to credit facilities to alleviate poverty;

13. **Recommends** establishment of social welfare;
14. **Recommends** economic empowerment of women, youth and people with special needs so as to promote inclusive growth;
15. **Calls** for the construction of domestic oil refineries in South Sudan;
16. **Calls** for the adoption of mixed economy in South Sudan;
17. **Recommends** the establishment of Petro-chemical and agro-industrial schemes;
18. **Calls** for the revival of the six national parks and 8 game reserves in South Sudan;
19. **Recommends** the promotion of tourism and the hotel industries;

On Security

The Conference,

1. **Calls** for an immediate end to all forms of violence and hostilities in the country, urges the government and all the armed groups to seek peaceful means to address their grievances;
2. **Appeals** to the government to engage directly with the hold-out groups;
3. **Calls** for full and immediate implementation of the R-ARCSS, especially chapter II on security arrangements;
4. **Calls** for the establishment of a unified, regionally balanced, and ethnically representative, professional national army and organized forces;
5. **Calls for immediate** return of all pastoralists currently in Equatoria to their place of origin and further calls for the disarmament of all pastoralists;

6. **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;
7. **Strongly** disapproves of accession to and retention of power through violence;
8. **Condemns** rewarding of rebels with high-ranks and political positions;
9. **Recommends** that promotion in the army should be based on merits;
10. **Calls** for the de-politicization, professionalization and unification of the national army and organized forces through comprehensive security sector reforms;
11. **Strongly** condemns child abduction and trafficking and calls for the criminalization of such inhumane practice;
12. **Strongly condemns** the practice of cattle raiding and calls for enactment of laws that criminalize the practice;
13. **Strongly condemns** gender-based violence and calls for immediate enactment of family law;

On Social Cohesion

The Conference,

1. **Calls** for the dissolution of all tribal political organizations, associations and council of elders, which negatively influence national decision-making processes;
2. **Strongly condemns** changing of indigenous names of places and calls for reverting to original names;

3. **Recommends** to the national parliament to enact laws against all forms of discrimination;
4. **Urges** the government to support and encourage inter-communal dialogue;
5. **Calls** for the **appreciation**, preservation and promotion of the diverse South Sudanese cultures to foster national unity and harmony;
6. **Calls** for the preservation and protection of all national and local historical sites across the country;
7. **Strongly recommends** the relocation of national capital to Ramciel, which is more at the center of the country;
8. **Stresses** the need to create conducive environments to enhance communal relations, social cohesion and peaceful co-existence;
9. **Supports** multi-party democracy and calls for widening of the political space and funding of political parties;
10. **Recommends** that the government invests in education, especially civic education, through public institutions, as a strategy for promoting unity, harmony and national solidarity.
11. **Strongly recommends** the restoration of powers of traditional authority;
12. **Calls** for the introduction of annual cultural festivals all over South Sudan to foster national identity and national unity;
13. **Demands** an immediate end to arbitrary arrest and forced disappearance of citizens by National Security Service and other organized forces, and further demands for immediate release of those who were innocently arrested;
14. **Calls** for the review of the National Security Service Act;

15. **Calls** for the government to create conducive environment and facilitate the voluntary return of refugees, internally displaced persons, and South Sudanese on the Protection of Civilian Sites (PoCs) to their homes;
16. **Demands** an immediate enactment of a national law that protects people with special needs and ensures they are given employment and other enabling opportunities;
17. **Recommends** establishment of national boarding schools from upper primary to secondary to promote nationalism and national unity.

Following the adoption of the above recommendations, the Conference endorsed the Steering Committee documents 1—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 expresses its gratitude to H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit, for initiating the National Dialogue and providing political will and material support to facilitate the work of the Steering Committee.

The Conference endorses the outcome of the Abyei Referendum and urges the Government to stand with the people of Abyei.

The Conference also expresses its deep appreciation to Hon. Francis Latio, Deputy Governor of Jubek State who represented the governor, members of his government, and the people of Jubek for the warm reception and logistical support accorded to the Conference, and which significantly contributed to its success.

The Conference also expresses its gratitude and appreciation to the following: all Governors of the states of Greater Equatoria who participated in this conference, the Japanese Government, UN fraternity in South Sudan and UNDP in particular for technical and financial support to the Conference.

The Conference strongly calls for full implementation of the recommendations and resolutions of the National Dialogue.