

COMMUNIQUÉ

THE UPPER NILE REGIONAL CONFERENCE JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN, 20TH—25TH May 2019

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The delegates representing 33 counties of the 3 former states of Upper Nile Region, and the former Pibor Administrative Area, met in Juba from the 20th to the 25th of May 2019, under the chairmanship of Co-Chair, Hon. Angelo Beda.

The South Sudan 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 Greater Bahr el Ghazal Conference was held in February, and the Greater Equatoria Conference will conclude the Regional Conferences. The objective of the Upper Nile Regional Conference was to deliberate on issues emerging from the Grassroots Consultations and make recommendations to the National Dialogue Conference.

The Conference deliberated on the agenda of the Upper Nile 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 and meaningful participation, the delegates broke up into groups on the basis of the clusters and specific issues in each cluster.

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 reached 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 with devolved powers to the states;
2. **Strongly supports** the establishment of the 32 states and Abyei Administrative Area, as sub-units of the federal system and recommends the creation of more states, as needed, to meet the legitimate aspirations of the people;
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. **Recommends** that the 2010 elections be recognized as the first term for the incumbent and the next elections be the second term.
5. **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 credible independence of the legislature and the judiciary from executive interference.
6. **Recommends** that any member of parliament appointed to an executive position must resign from parliament and be replaced by the constituency through by-elections.
7. **Recommends** that the president appoints only those judges recommended by the Judicial Service Commission.
8. **Strongly recommends** that power can only be transferred from one person to another through legitimate, timely, free and fair democratic elections;
9. **Recognizes** the importance of land to the people of South Sudan and declares that rural land be owned and managed by indigenous communities and urban gazetted land be owned and managed by the government. Notes further that any government in need of rural land for development and for purposes of other public interests should be granted such land with consent of the indigenous communities.
10. **Strongly recommends** that state boundaries must be managed and demarcated by the national government as they stood on the 1st January 1956.
11. **Strongly condemns** the abduction and trafficking of children and calls for an immediate end to these practices.
12. **Endorses** the results of the Abyei Referendum and recommends that the government endorse the same and ensure speedy and final settlement of the status of Abyei.

On the Economy

The Conference,

1. **Calls** for the diversification of the economy by making agriculture the engine of growth and using oil revenues to fuel this engine through investment in roads, telecommunication and electricity;
2. **Strongly urges** the government and oil companies to immediately address social and health problems created by environmental degradation of oil production in Greater Upper Nile
3. **Recognizes** that there are two types of land - rural and urban land, the rural land is owned by the community, while the gazetted urban land is owned by the Government, leased and distributed to individuals and allocated to institutions;
4. **Calls** for the urgent resolution of land disputes between a number of ethnic groups through recognition of boundaries as they stood on January 1, 1956;
5. **Appeals** to the government to strengthen social safety-net programs through the establishment of cooperatives with the aim of alleviating the cost of living;
6. **Calls** upon the government to exert more efforts in stabilizing peace and in restoring macroeconomic stability within the overall framework for sustainable peace, economic growth, and poverty eradication;
7. **Recommends** the empowerment of women and youth through the establishment of microfinance institutions to expand access to credit and promote inclusive growth;
8. **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;
9. **Recommends** equitable and fair allocation and distribution of national resources and further recommends that oil and mineral producing states take 15% of revenue and the national government takes 85%.

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 Condemns** cattle raiding and related killings and recommends that the government formulate and implement policies against this practice.
4. **Strongly** disapproves of violent means for seeking power and mobilization of ethnic communities for the same purpose;
5. **Calls** for professionalization and unification of the national army through comprehensive security sector reforms in which all the nationalities/ethnicities are represented proportionately.

On Social Cohesion

The Conference,

1. **Calls** upon the government to formulate and implement policies against hate speech and propaganda that spread social discord;
2. **Recommends** that the government ban songs and media outlets that spread hate, fear, violence, and war propaganda;
3. **Calls** upon the people of South Sudan to embrace and respect diversity of cultures and preserve and promote our cultural heritage;
4. **Strongly recommends** that the government formulate policies against tribalism, nepotism and favoritism in employment;
5. **Recommends** that tribal markings and facial scarification as well as the removal of teeth be ended forthwith;
6. **Recommends** the establishment of national boarding schools that bring students together from diverse ethnic backgrounds so as to foster national unity and identity;
7. **Recommends** annual regional and national conferences of chiefs to promote dialogue and understanding;
8. **Recommends** the establishment of national and regional museums;
9. **Calls** for the formation of a joint committee of the parties to the R-ACRSS to engage citizens at UNMISS PoC sites to return home.
10. **Calls** for a speedy and voluntary return of refugees, internally displaced persons, and South Sudanese on the (PoCs) to their homes in safety and with dignity.

Following the adoption of the above conclusions and recommendations, the Conference endorsed the Steering Committee documents 1—5. The Conference ended with the selection of delegates to the National Dialogue Conference and called 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 expressed 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. Augustino Jadalla, Governor of Jubek State, members of his government, and the people of Juba for the warm reception accorded to the Conference, and which significantly contributed to its success. The participation of the Governors of the states of Greater Upper Nile added to the consolidation of the regional character of the conference. Much appreciation is also expressed to the Japanese Government and UNDP for their financial and technical support to the Conference.

The Conference expresses gratitude to all the musicians who entertained the gathering, including the Episcopal Church youth choir which sang on the closing day. Their entertainment greatly enriched the Conference and enabled the healing process.

The Conference finally calls upon the people of South Sudan to come to the table and dialogue because healing and change are not only urgently needed but are indeed possible only through dialogue.