

Opening Statement

South Sudan Civil Society Delegation to the IGAD-led Peace Negotiations in Addis Ababa - Ethiopia

Your excellences Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, Chairperson of IGAD Special Envoys for the South Sudan Peace Process,

Representatives of IGAD member states, African Union, United Nations and international partners,

Chief Negotiator and delegation of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan,

Chief Negotiator and delegation of SPLM/A in Opposition,

Delegates representing different stakeholders present,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

On behalf of the South Sudan civil society delegation, allow me to remind you that today mark the beginning of the fifth session of phase two of the IGAD-led South Sudan peace process. The civil society delegation welcome the resumption of this session and it is our hope and belief that the expectations and desire of our people for peace will be the driving force behind all our deliberations for the coming days.

First allow me to convey greeting from our colleague who is not able to join us for this round of talks due to the unfortunate incident that occurred to him on Friday evening. We condemn the excessive proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country. We hope that investigations will be conducted and the culprits held accountable. However as he continues to recuperate, his message is that people of South Sudan deserve peace.

My fellow citizens and friends of South Sudan, allow me to take this opportunity and express my concern and that of my colleagues on the continuous displacement and killing of civilians in our country. This conflict is now in its eighth month and many South Sudanese families continue to be deprived of their rights to shelter, food, basic medical care and even life. Indeed it is disheartening that our people are still exposed to preventable diseases such as Malaria, Cholera, HIV and AIDs just to mention a few.

As civil society representatives, we would like to underscore the following;

1. Urge all stakeholders to commit and ensure that this round of talks will mark the beginning of a roadmap for restoring peace and stability in our country. This will not only end the political turmoil in South Sudan but see us emerge as true patriots as says the words of our National Anthem. Indeed we can only realize peace and stability in our beloved country through legitimate dialogue and negotiations by all stakeholders, not for personal gain but for the sake of South Sudan.
2. We remain optimistic that both parties will resolve to respect the cessation of hostilities agreement that was signed on May 9th 2014 and further develop a comprehensive, operational and logical matrix of implementation for the same.
3. We further urge the two parties to honor the agreement on creation of humanitarian corridors and refrain from any attack directed towards civilians, civilian settlements and give way for humanitarian assistance to reach the needy population.
4. The conflict in South Sudan has further developed beyond just being a political misunderstanding to a painful war that has adverse effect on women, children and youth. Indeed we are saddened by the gloomy testimonies shared by our people (IDPs/host communities) and the extensive use of sexual violence as a weapon of war in this conflict which is yet another element of shame added to the history of our nation.
5. We finally call upon the mediation team to apply equal standards for all stakeholders and at least call for adequate women representation in all delegations by at least 40% and youth representation in all the delegations.

In conclusion, it is our sincere hope that all gathered here will be discussing with only one objective of reclaiming our pride as people of one nation and indeed restore peace and stability in South Sudan.

May the Almighty give us wisdom and bless our beloved nation.