



SUDAN PEOPLES' LIBERATION MOVEMENT GENERAL HEADQUARTERS



SPLM LEADERS (FPD)

OPENING SPEECH AT THE START OF THE FINAL SESSION OF PHASE III OF THE IGAD LED PEACE SOUTH SUDAN PEACE PROCESS

By John Luk Jok - Team Leader, SPLM LEADERS (FPD)

H.E. Chairperson of IGAD Envoys,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

We are now in the final phase of the IGAD led efforts for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in South Sudan. More than a year has been spent on these efforts since the crisis erupted in mid December 2013, without achieving peace. The war is continuing to rage in our young nation unabated with its attendant dire consequences. All this is happening despite agreements and repeated re-commitments to the cessation of hostilities by the warring parties. The dire consequences of the war are no longer news to the world. They have almost become common statistics that are cited whenever the situation in South Sudan gets into focus. But the condition of the people remains desperate and unbearable.

Thanks to members of the international community who are doing everything possible to look after our people who are the victims of a war the objectives of which have now been reduced to mere struggle for power and much less to do with the people who have remained the main victims.

The war has already killed and maimed tens of thousands of our people both civilians and members of the opposing forces, displaced nearly two million of our citizens to the neighboring countries and beyond, caused a high degree of lawlessness in several parts of the country as local communities fight among themselves or with neighboring communities, forced thousands of our citizens to seek protection in UN Protection Camps in different parts of the country, and yet there is a looming famine in which it is estimated that nearly half of the entire population of the country will need humanitarian assistance.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The continuation of the war is now threatening the very foundation of the young nation. The social fabric of the society is in danger and is indeed being torn apart by the level of violence and growing disharmony that is gripping our communities and groups. The failure of these protracted negotiations under the auspices of IGAD to realize peace in the last one year, while the war continues, has certainly caused a lot of despair and a deep sense of uncertainty about the future of the country among the majority of people of South Sudan. This final session is seen by many as the last opportunity for peace. It therefore carries the last hopes for the people. All South Sudanese stakeholders must be engaged in these final efforts to salvage what already appears to be fruitless. All must demonstrate good will and show seriousness in these final negotiations and come up with the final peace agreement.

Many people of good will have sincerely done their part to restore peace and stability to our young nation. But we the South Sudanese political leaders must take responsibility for failing to make the necessary compromises for peace to come to our war-torn country. Therefore, in this final session, we must make the necessary compromises to achieve peace for our country. We must not put false hopes on the mediators. The decision for peace is simply ours and remains ours, so is the failure too.

Indeed, the ordinary South Sudanese are questioning the logic for the continuation of war that threatens to destroy their young nation. They could not understand why the killing should continue, while the warring parties have formally committed themselves in the IGAD mediation to stop hostilities and negotiate a peaceful end to the conflict. They are also aware of the commitment made by the leaders that war is not a solution and that the real losers in this brutal and unnecessary war are the people and the country. Therefore, the more the war continues to rage, the more its ultimate objectives become more senseless and difficult to understand. This war can only be considered by the people as a cruel game of the political elites who are oblivious to the suffering of their people and interested only in power for themselves. This is a serious indictment which the leaders must wake up to and be able to address correctly particularly in this final session.

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The root causes of the crisis have been correctly diagnosed as originating from within the SPLM Party before it subsequently evolved into a national crisis. This is known to all our citizens and beyond. The Arusha Agreement for the Reunification of the SPLM, signed on 21st January 2015 by the three SPLM Groups acknowledged this fact and has substantially addressed in principle those root causes of the crisis. What remains is the practical implementation of what has been agreed so that its spirit can have a positive effect on this IGAD mediation process. The Arusha process is not a substitute for the IGAD mediation. It has however a direct significance of its own as far as the SPLM issues are concerned.

In our view, the outstanding issues in the IGAD mediated negotiations, if taken together with the spirit of Arusha, are not impossible to resolve. They can easily be resolved if the three SPLM Groups fully commit themselves to the SPLM Reunification Agreement. This is because in one party and in normal

circumstances, the issue of who does what in the party or government as well as determination of leadership succession, are matters that are normally resolved democratically through the leading party institutions or organs.

Why these issues led to the current crisis in December 2013, it was due to lack of agreement on those contentious provisions in the SPLM Constitution of 2008. Those issues can now be considered as effectively addressed in the Arusha SPLM Re-unification Agreement as endorsed by the SPLM National Liberation Council. What is now required in this transitional phase is the show of good will by the SPLM leaders and other stakeholders and their readiness to build trust and confidence that can make them work together for the good of the people and country. That needed good will and trust can obtain if the leaders subordinate their personal interests and ambitions to the ideals of building a peaceful, democratic and prosperous multi-ethnic nation -state where justice, equality and fairness are upheld rather than fanning negative divisive, sectarian and primordial tendencies that are inimical to building a peaceful and harmonious multi-ethnic state.

Our firm position therefore, is to reject the continuation of war simply because of disagreement over sharing of political positions in government to satisfy individual political ambitions and egos. There is no justification whatsoever for any more shedding of innocent blood because of self-serving politics when indeed democratic mechanisms for transfer of power can simply be worked out through the envisaged constitutional making process in order to put in place a constitution that reflects the will and aspirations of the people of South Sudan.

All of us must admit that the tragic conditions currently facing our people must not be allowed to continue further not even for a single day. This final session must deliver a just peace that puts the interest of the vast majority of our people as the priority objective so that they can own and consolidate peace.

As we begin this final session of negotiations, we wish to reiterate again our earlier call to the warring parties to seriously consider declaring and committing their respective forces to a permanent cease –fire to signify their commitment to end the war in accordance with the time-table that the IGAD mediators have already issued. There is certainly nothing difficult about taking this approach. This was the route followed during the last stage of negotiations of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM/A).

It was the decision to stop all forms of hostilities during the negotiations that facilitated the conclusion of a final peace agreement. Stopping the hostilities did not only help in creating conducive environment for negotiations but it prevented any further unnecessary loss of lives among civilians as well as among the opposing forces.

Last but not least, let me take this opportunity to remind the distinguished IGAD mediators that the process is now at a very critical stage. The people of South Sudan are having their eyes fixed at Addis Ababa for a final peace Agreement. The expectations are very high. You have tried your best in the last one year to help us achieve peace. We the SPLM Leaders (FPD) gave our best to the process even at times acting as mediators between the warring parties for the sake of peace.

There is still an opportunity to achieve peace if we utilize this last chance well. Let all the stakeholders without exception collectively carry the heavy burden of this final session. All the outstanding issues in the agenda including the structure and power sharing must not be left only to the two warring parties as was in the previous session. It is all about the future and peace of the country. It should therefore be reduced into a bilateral issue contrary to the spirit that was engendered at Arusha, and in accordance with the principle of inclusivity, which is an important guiding principle of the process.

In this final session the possibility for failure is also real. The road to peace may not be only a single lane. You may therefore need to look at other options that are available provided that they lead to the same destination – peace.

Thank you for listening.