

South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA) & Other Opposition Groups

Update on the Tumaini Initiative

8 July 2024

Last week, the people of South Sudan have witnessed some disastrous decisions by the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) that have dangerous bearings on our search for sustainable peace, economic recovery and democracy in our country. The first of these was the unfortunate passage of the draconian National Security Service Act, which is entirely opposed by the people of South Sudan.

The second decision was a report of the so-called Interparty Dialogue Committee in which the Parties to the R-ARCSS have agreed to extend themselves in power for another 24 months. The third issue of utter dismay is the press briefing by the R-TGoNU Delegation to the Tumaini Initiative in which several baseless claims were made.

As the official Opposition to the Revitalized Government, the people of South Sudan deserve to hear our perspectives on these developments, and we will start with the National Security Service Act.

The many crises facing South Sudan are deeply rooted in bad governance and human rights violations, and there is no agency in South Sudan that has deviated from its constitutional mandate more than the National Security Service. This agency has reproduced the archaic Khartoum regime in Juba, and it has instituted a reign of terror and intimidation. Therefore, the democratic gains made by the people of South Sudan through the 2011 Referendum and Declaration of Independence; the ideals our people fought for have all been quashed using the National Security Service. It is utterly shocking that a parliament which purports to represent the people could be intimidated into giving such a notorious agency the power to terrorize our people and bury their hopes for freedom and rule of law.

The Opposition will not sign any agreement with the R-TGoNU until the National Security Service Act is repealed as agreed in the Tumaini Initiative. The National Security Service must be reconstituted into a civilian National Intelligence Service with the mandate to gather intelligence without powers of arrest, detention, and interference in the political processes. The rush by the R-TGoNU to push this Act through its rubberstamp parliament is intended to undercut the peace process in Nairobi and we consider this an act of bad faith.

The second issue is the extension of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU). The Inter-Party Committee for Implementation of the R-ARCSS has recommended another 24-month extension, which is an extremely devastating news for the people of South Sudan.

The third issue is the statement by the National Elections Commission (NEC) that it has scheduled national elections for 22nd December 2024; this is also an act of bad faith. The Tumaini Initiative will not run on the timelines of the R-ARCSS, it will come out with a timetable consistent with the agreed programs and activities. Thus, to preempt this process with the announcement of arbitrary elections date tells a consistent story: that of lack of good faith, lack of political will, and persistent disregard for binding agreements and the law.

Our position is neither the extension nor the scheduling of elections is warranted at the moment; especially as we are deeply engaged in peace talks in Nairobi. The Tumaini Initiative is the only mechanism which can usher in a new political dispensation and hold the first democratic elections in the country. Any unilateral decision on these issues, and outside the Tumaini Initiative will be considered acts of bad faith and will cast a dark shadow on the current peace process.

The people of South Sudan demand to restore their right to elect their government in periodic, free, fair and peaceful elections. We stand by this call. The question is, how do you return people's power after many years of dictatorship and authoritarianism without a democratic Permanent Constitution? This is the reason why the Tumaini Consensus must include an agreed text on the Permanent Constitution through an inclusive National Constitutional Conference conducted initially in Kenya and completed in South Sudan. Hence, there will be no legitimate democratic elections in South Sudan without a Permanent Constitution.

We therefore want to assure the citizens of South Sudan that we will not entrust the constitution making process only in the hands of the authoritarian regime which has been operating outside its very transitional constitution and delayed the permanent constitution making process for over a decade. The regime lacks moral legitimacy, and it shall not be allowed to deny the people their democratic aspirations.

Last but not least, the R-TGoNU Delegation to the Tumaini Initiative held a press conference in Juba, in which they claimed that the question of lean government and other positions made by the Opposition are things of the past and history. They went on to argue that the Tumaini Initiative is only about the implementation of the R-ARCSS. Therefore, we categorically state that the Protocol on Inclusive Governance and Responsibility Sharing would be the last agenda item to be discussed. We have not conceded on the demand for a lean government because the country is bankrupt, and the people of South Sudan cannot afford this bloated government. Hence, the lean government proposal is not a thing of the past; it remains on the table.

We also want to categorically state that the Tumaini Initiative is not about implementation of the R-ARCSS, but rather about agreeing on a Rescue Plan to avoid the disintegration and descent of South Sudan into chaos. The truth is that the Tumaini Initiative will produce a new agreement with strong implementation mechanisms to usher South Sudan into a permanent peace and new democratic dispensation. In fact, the agreement that will come through the Tumaini Initiative will end the self-perpetuating clause of the R-ARCSS. We will not sign an agreement that allows the Parties to the R-ARCSS to give themselves more time in office without delivering on their promises to serve and hand over power to the people.

In conclusion, we strongly believe that a combination of security sector transformation, national reconciliation and healing and making of a Permanent Constitution in South Sudan will lift the country out of the abyss. We therefore, call upon the people of South Sudan to protect the Tumaini Initiative to achieve peace and democratic transformation in the country. We urge the government of South Sudan and President Kiir in particular, to exercise leadership and cease unilateral actions that undermine the peace negotiations. We appeal to the region and the international community to continue supporting the Tumaini Initiative and its outcome and to bring pressure to bear on the spoilers of peace. We implore the mediation to restore the multi-stakeholder negotiation platform that includes the PCCA and other Stakeholders to maintain the inclusive nature of the peace talks.

Signed:



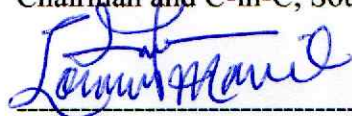
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