



Date: Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2018

SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SSCC)  
STATEMENT ON THE REVITALISED ARCSS

*Hope and Opportunity for a Peaceful South Sudan*

*"I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close..." (Revelation 3:8)*

Ever since the current conflict began in December 2013, the Church of God in South Sudan has consistently called for the violence to stop as a prerequisite for lasting peace. We therefore welcome all attempts to bring about a permanent ceasefire. We are grateful to all those who have negotiated the new Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, including our neighbours in IGAD. We also thank our political and military leaders who have signed the agreement. We note with sadness that this is not the first time they have signed agreements, but that previous agreements have not been successful, and thus we urge them to be true to their signatures. "As a Church, we believe that peace is not something on paper. Peace is a practical reality on the ground". This time the peace agreement must not be allowed to fail. This time they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hook (Isaiah 2:4).

Stopping the violence is indeed the first step, but the conflicts in South Sudan have deep roots. We believe that signing the Revitalized ARCSS is only a first step. Once the guns are truly silent, the real peace process will begin. The roots of the conflict must be addressed, honestly and transparently, and there must be all inclusive and impartial dialogue. Reconciliation must begin, at all levels. Impunity must be stopped. The narrative of violence and revenge must be replaced by a narrative of peace and love. Justice must be served, although we believe that restorative justice seeking to redress the harm that has been done and to rebuild relationships for the good of the community is more likely to succeed than focusing only on retributive justice, which seeks mainly to punish. Good governance is needed, to restore the economy and allow people to have access to basic services. Corruption within the government and in our society must be rooted out. Security sector reform is a priority, creating a single national army is a dire need for national cohesion. There must also be a downsizing of the security sector; it is immoral to spend so much on soldiers and their weapons when there are so many greater priorities for our suffering country, not least education and health. All of this requires the creation of a national identity, which can be owned by all South Sudanese. While we can be rightly proud of our own tribes, we must shun tribalism by all means.

We once again offer the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) Action Plan for Peace (APP) as a contribution to long term lasting peace. Through advocacy we will help to change the narrative. Through our neutral forum dialogues we will address the root causes of the conflicts, build trust, and seek a South Sudanese solution to our problems. Through reconciliation and trauma healing, we will help to bring our people back together and rebuild broken relationships. We believe that the Church has the credibility and the moral authority to provide leadership and guidance in peace building during the coming years. Perhaps we are the only institution, whether local or international, whose broad grassroots connections and high level links have the capability to do this.

While expressing our gratitude to the members of the IGAD, African Union, United Nations, Troika, the European Union, other members of the International Community and all other partners and friends of South Sudan for helping to negotiate and guarantee this agreement, we also wish to sound a note of



caution regarding our National identity and our natural resources. Recent history on our own continent teaches us that however good the intentions, control of natural resources can prove very tempting for neighbours. And while expressing our gratitude to our Leaders who have signed the agreement, we warn them that it can no longer be "business as usual" for them. If this peace agreement is to have any meaning, they must change their hearts and change their ways; and also put in their hearts and mind the strategic and influence role and presence of women and youth in a new South Sudanese context of change.

We see signs of hope amongst our people that lead us to hope that this time; our Leaders are serious about bringing peace. At the same time we encounter skepticism as based on previous experience, people fear that they will once again renege and return to violence. We hope and pray that this time common sense will prevail and that this immoral and pointless war will cease once and for all. We also urge the International Community to support implementation of the agreement despite of all its imperfections. We believe that this agreement offers South Sudan an opportunity to discuss the culture of war and create a culture of peace and prosperity. For this task, we commit ourselves to work and pray for peace in our country the Republic of South Sudan. Oh God Bless South Sudan.

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