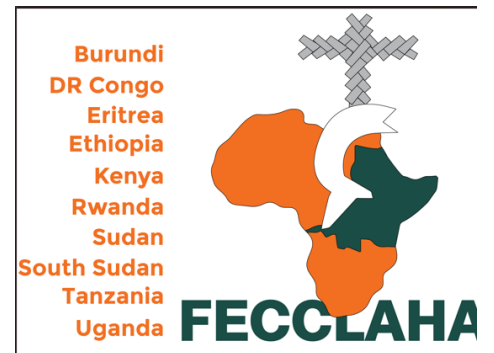




Inter-Religious Council for Eastern Africa
Religions for Peace



MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE AND LEADERS OF SOUTH SUDAN

Delivered by Faith Leaders from the Eastern Africa Region
To the Delegates of the Kenya-Led South Sudan Peace Negotiations in Nairobi and
the National Leaders of South Sudan

June 26, 2024

“Let Our People Have Peace Now, Enough is Enough!!”

Psalms 34:14 “Turn from Evil and do good: seek peace and pursue it”.

Surah Fussilat “Goodness and evil cannot be equal. Repel evil with what is better than one who you had enmity with will become a close friend “

We, the Inter-Religious Council East Africa (EAIRC), Fellowship of Christian Councils in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa, and the All Africa Conference of Churches, stand united as one in fervent support of the Kenyan-led peace process for South Sudan. For generations, Kenya has served as a beacon of peace in the region, a commitment we deeply commend. We extend our appreciation to the President of the Republic of Kenya His Excellency Dr. William Samoei Ruto for the trust and responsibility he bestowed upon General Lazarus Sumbeiywo to lead this process. And we extend heartfelt gratitude to Ambassador General Sumbeiywo for his leadership as the Chief Mediator in these historic Tumaini (Hope) Initiative High-level peace process for South Sudan.

The dream of a peaceful and prosperous South Sudan seems to recede further with each passing day. Political uncertainties cast a long shadow, economic hardship cripples’ families and the spectra of violence continues to haunt countless communities. We, the faith leaders and people of Eastern Africa, stand with the people of South Sudan in their deepest longing for peace.

The scars of conflict run deep in South Sudan. For decades, its people have carried the burden of war, their dreams and aspirations overshadowed by the constant threat of violence. Their yearning for peace

resonates across Eastern Africa – a yearning shared by the citizens of Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda. We, the inhabitants of these nations, stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our South Sudanese brothers and sisters in unwavering solidarity. This long must now come to an end.

To the esteemed leaders of South Sudan, both at the negotiating table in Nairobi and those holding the reins of power in Juba, South Sudan: a historic opportunity lies before you. Let peace be the defining act of your leadership and every decision you make in this peace process. History beckons. This is your chance to engrave your names in history as the team and generation that ushered in a new era for your nation. This turning point demands a choice: peace or continued suffering. Seize the opportunity presented by Tumaini peace talks and let hope triumph over despair. Let Tumaini be the platform that secures a brighter future for South Sudan. By demonstrating courage and wisdom throughout this process, you will be remembered not for the conflicts of the past, but for forging a lasting peace.

Seize the Tumaini negotiations, as a turning point in South Sudan's narrative. Imagine a future where children can play freely in the streets, where families can rebuild their lives without fear, and where the echoes of gunfire are replaced by the sounds of laughter and hope. Let the weapons fall silent. Let this be the generation that ushers in an era of lasting peace for South Sudan.

We extend this urgent plea to all parties involved, including those who have yet to join the negotiations. The path to peace requires a commitment from all. Together, we can build a future where the children of South Sudan inherit a legacy of peace, not conflict. This is the moment. This is the chance. Let the cries for peace be answered. **Enough is enough. Let our people have peace. Now.**

The Tumaini (Hope) Initiative represents a critical juncture. While the 2018 Revitalized Agreement (R-ARCSS) faces significant hurdles – delays in key provisions and a deep erosion of trust among parties – the very fact that these discussions are taking place offers a glimmer of hope. We, the faith leaders of Eastern Africa, gather in Nairobi with a unified message: **peace is not a distant dream, but a tangible possibility within reach.**

The future of South Sudan rests in your hands. We implore you to prioritize peace and utilize the Tumaini negotiations to achieve these critical goals: We further envision a future for South Sudan built on the pillars of trust and mutual respect, where all voices are heard, and all parties can participate openly and freely in shaping the destiny of their nation.

Let Tumaini pave the way for; a constitution that reflects the voices and aspirations of all South Sudanese citizens, regardless of ethnicity or background; a reformed and unified security sector that upholds the rule of law and protects civilians is paramount; a transitional justice process that addresses the root causes of human rights violations and ensures accountability for past abuses; economic revitalization efforts that create jobs, alleviate poverty, and foster sustainable development and a meaningful start of a democratization process that enables freedom of speech, assembly, and the press and allow open dialogue and dissent.

The Tumaini process offers an opportunity to craft a roadmap towards a brighter future. This is a chance to address the critical issues above and the need for a more inclusive and representative government. Let these talks reignite the transitional process and lead to a lasting solution and a successful transition from

conflict and violence to peace, shared prosperity and democracy. We believe that through genuine commitment and collaboration, Tumaini can deliver the peace and stability that the people of South Sudan so desperately deserve.

To the esteemed representatives at the table, you carry a weighty responsibility. You are the bridge between your leaders and the millions who yearn for peace. We implore you to act with urgency and conviction. Imagine the faces of the children who have never known a life free from fear, the families who have lost loved ones to violence, and the communities whose dreams have been shattered or deferred. **We urge you to Prioritize Peace. Peace at all costs.** Let the well-being of your people be the cornerstone of every decision. Every child deserves to play in safety, every family deserves to live without fear. Silence the guns and embrace a future where peace is not just a ceasefire, but a lasting reality.

We are inspired by the unwavering dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for a world transformed by justice and equality. Just like Dr. King Jr, we also hold a dream for South Sudan – a dream of a new dawn, a time of lasting peace, shared prosperity, and unity. Imagine a nation where children attend school without fear, where farmers cultivate their land with confidence and live to reap what they sowed, not having to be displaced by violence, and where communities come together to rebuild their lives. This is the future that awaits if peace takes root.

Dear leaders of South Sudan, a critical juncture lies before you. The 2018 Revitalized Agreement (R-ARCSS) was a testament to the resilience of the South Sudanese people. Forged in the fires of conflict, it offered a beacon of hope for a nation weary of war. Yet, delays and a lack of progress threatened to extinguish that flame. The Tumaini Initiative reignited that hope for peace.

The cries of suffering South Sudanese pierce the heart of Eastern Africa. Mothers in refugee camps and internally displaced camps cradle their children, whispering promises of a better tomorrow that never seems to arrive. Elders bear the scars of conflict, their eyes reflecting the weariness of years spent yearning for peace. Young people brimming with potential see their dreams shattered and deferred by the weight of violence. This is the human cost of continued conflict. Let their stories serve as a potent reminder of the responsibility you bear.

We firmly believe that the Kenyan-led Tumaini peace process holds the key to unlocking a future of lasting peace. Embrace this opportunity with a renewed sense of purpose. Let the Tumaini Initiative be a platform for genuine dialogue, where compromise takes precedence over confrontation, and where the well-being of the people of South Sudan becomes the guiding principle. Seize this moment to silence the guns and usher in an era of sustainable peace.

Our commitment goes beyond words. We stand with you as partners in peace. We will leverage our unique position to act as bridges between communities, fostering dialogue and understanding. We will facilitate peace education initiatives, equipping young people with the tools they need to be agents of positive change. We will champion the voices of women, youth and marginalized groups, ensuring that their perspectives are heard and their needs are addressed. We will provide pastoral care to all those affected by conflict, offering solace and hope in times of darkness.

We stand ready to support peacebuilding in South Sudan through a multifaceted approach:

1. **Shoulder-to-Shoulder with South Sudanese Faith Leaders:** We will continue to collaborate with our South Sudanese counterparts, offering unwavering support in their efforts to promote reconciliation, healing, forgiveness, and justice. This may include joint initiatives focused on interfaith dialogue, peace education programs that teach tolerance and understanding, and trauma healing workshops to help individuals and communities heal from the scars of conflict. By working together, we can help mend the social fabric of South Sudan.
2. **Monitoring and Implementation:** We commit to actively take part in shaping robust monitoring mechanisms for future agreements. Partnering with regional and international actors, we will ensure the Tumaini Initiative translates from words to concrete steps for lasting peace. We strongly advocate for joining the external guarantor mechanism, leveraging our regional influence and longstanding relationships and widespread community to solidify the monitoring process. We will also leverage our regional and international networks to urge all parties involved in the conflict to uphold the commitments they sign at the end of this negotiations.
3. **Hope for Refugees and IDPs:** The conflict has displaced millions, forcing them to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries. We, the faith-based organizations of East Africa, are committed to offer support and hope to refugees and IDPs. We will help ensure that refugees are prepared to return home and rebuild their lives.

The wounds of conflict run deep in Eastern Africa. We envision a region transformed where the cries of war are replaced by the songs of hope, and where the scars of violence are healed by the power of forgiveness. We believe that peace in South Sudan is not just a national imperative, but a catalyst for positive change throughout the region. As nations within Eastern Africa, we are bound by a shared history and a common destiny. Let the success of the Tumaini process serve as an inspiration for other nations grappling with conflict. Let us stand together, united in our commitment to building a region where peace, prosperity, and respect for human dignity prevail.

Our faith compels us to be instruments of peace. Across denominations and borders, we, the faith community of Eastern Africa, can serve as a powerful force for good. Together, through unwavering dedication and collaborative action, we can help turn the tide towards a brighter future for South Sudan and the entire region, and indeed as the psalmist tells us (Psalm 119:165) ***“Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble”***.

Let peace prevail in South Sudan. Let peace resonate throughout Eastern Africa. Let this be a region where faith guides us towards a future of unity, prosperity, and shared blessings. This is our prayer. May our collective efforts pave the way for a new dawn, where the dreams of a peaceful and prosperous South Sudan can finally be realized. We wish and pray for the wisdom and guidance of God be with you as you continue with the talks. We hope to hear a final breakthrough over the coming weeks.

Mather 5:9 “Blessed are the peace Makers, they will be called the Children of God”

MAY GOD BLESS SOUTH SUDAN, GOD BLESS EAST AFRICA, GOD BLESS AFRICA!!