

National Reconciliation Committee for Healing, Peace and Reconciliation

Press Statement by Most Rev Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul

Following the welcome initiative by H. E. Vice President Riek Machar to raise awareness about the need for reconciliation in our new Republic of South Sudan, H. E. President Salva Kiir appointed a **Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation**.

The Committee is chaired by myself, Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul, with Bishop Emeritus Paride Taban as Vice-chair. The Committee includes a number of other Christian and Muslim religious leaders, a representative of each state, and representatives from civil society, women, youth and disabled members of our communities.

As per the Presidential Decree, a consultative body has been set up comprising well-known and respected elder statesmen. A sub-committee will be set up in each State to assist in the outreach to counties, payams and bomas. Various working sub-committees have also been set up, including a research sub-committee made up of respected academics.

The initial task of the Committee is not to prescribe a process for reconciliation. Rather we see our role as creating a space for listening and consultation, whereby the views of the citizens of South Sudan can be ascertained. This involves every level of society, from the grassroots to the Presidency, and includes government, politicians, intellectuals, academics, military, police, business leaders, civil society, elders, traditional leaders, women, youth, disabled, tribes, faith communities, insurgents and everybody.

Once the consultation process gets under way, if any groups or individuals feel they are not being heard, they are invited to contact any member of the Committee, or to come to our secretariat and to me directly.

This is a long term process which will take years, not months. While the Committee appreciates that there is a degree of urgency, there are no quick fixes and reconciliation will require patience and perseverance on the part of all citizens.

This is emphatically **not** a political process. It is based on spiritual values, which can be found in our Christian, Islamic and traditional African traditions. This is why we begin with a National Day of Prayer on Monday 8th July 2013, a significant date, as it is the eve of our celebration of Independence.

Our Muslim brothers and sisters will begin the prayer in their mosques on Friday 5th July. It will be taken up in our Christian churches on Sunday 7th July. On Monday 8th July there will then be a national prayer event in Juba, and prayers in each of the State capitals.

On that day, we are inviting the President, the Vice President, the entire Government officials, and members of the Legislative Assembly for the day.

Our Committee strives to be **independent**, and will not be swayed by various political parties, or any Government, be it national or state. The members of the Committee do not represent every single interest or community in South Sudan; if that were to be the case, the Committee would have hundreds of members and would be unworkable. But its role is impartially to create a space, to facilitate a listening process, where every community and every interest can be heard. From that platform, a credible reconciliation and healing process can be built.

As part of its work, the Committee will examine the roots of our current situation, the result of five decades of conflict. It will explore how our joy at the liberation and the birth of a new country is tempered by a realisation that we are bringing with us the same culture of violence and conflict. That cycle of violence must be broken if we are to build a peaceful, healthy, healed and reconciled nation for ourselves and our children.

Just as the people of South Sudan were able to unite in the past against a common enemy, and in pursuit of the referendum and the independence of South Sudan, I call upon you to unite now against the common enemy of division, hatred, tribalism, corruption and nepotism in pursuit of a peaceful future for our new nation.

Here I am appealing to our faithful citizens of our new nation, let us stand together and face the reality we are going through. I am appealing to you to let us change our attitude, our language, because we are in a new Republic of South Sudan. Let us build a united and a prosperous nation where everyone will be proud to belong, and where all tribes and all citizens live harmoniously side-by-side.