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September 16, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
State Department  
Washington, DC 20520

Ambassador Susan Rice  
National Security Adviser  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Secretary Kerry and Ambassador Rice:

In light of the approval of the Compromise Peace Agreement between the opposing parties in the conflict in South Sudan, as Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and President of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), we write to urge the United States Government to take measures to support and incentivize the implementation of the peace agreement. We also recommend that you continue humanitarian and rehabilitation efforts to reduce the suffering caused by the fighting and to support the initiatives of the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) to promote dialogue among political leaders and reconciliation at the grassroots level of society.

This summer with the assistance of CRS, one of us (Bishop Cantú) had the opportunity to travel to South Sudan and meet with many of the SSCC leaders. We discussed the conflict, the impact it has had on society and the efforts of SSCC members to stop the fighting and rebuild society. Church leaders of all denominations were adamant that the war has no reason to continue and must stop. They urged the political leaders in the conflict to sign the peace agreement and since its signing last week, the SSCC has been urging the parties to implement all its measures. We attach a statement made by the SSCC on July 31 that lays out their positions on the agreement.

We also had the opportunity to discuss another important issue, the imposition of an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on parties who block the implementation of the new peace agreement in South Sudan. Although local Catholic leaders understand the reasons behind the proposed sanctions on South Sudan leaders, they believe that sanctions will not work and could in fact be counterproductive. Sanctions would require the cooperation of many stakeholders and would be difficult to impose effectively. In addition, the Church leaders believe that the imposition of sanctions would embolden those parties opposed to the agreement and could lead them to scuttle this fragile chance for peace.

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Instead, South Sudan needs to reduce tensions and divisions. We urge the United States to give this fragile peace agreement a chance. Our government, working with regional countries and the international community, should look for ways to strengthen the hand of those leaders who want to implement the agreement and incentivize them for the progress they make. Incentives should be investments in the long term future of South Sudan. Now that the agreement is signed, the country needs to develop a shared sense of a broader, inclusive national identity. South Sudan also needs a government that will operate on the basic principle of deploying all its human and natural resources for the common good of the people. To reach this point, South Sudan has to establish the conditions under which the interim government can take up its duties, build health, educational, and development services, and then set up the structures needed for the free and fair election of a new legitimate government. That government must reflect and represent all the peoples of South Sudan and serve the needs of the common good. The United States should support all of these initiatives.

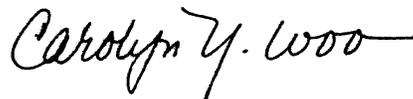
The United States should also maintain, if not increase, its support for humanitarian assistance and recovery efforts led by agencies like Catholic Relief Services. We urge you to support the SSCC neutral forums designed to promote dialogue among political leaders and their supporters. The SSCC efforts to build reconciliation among people affected by the violence is another initiative that deserves U.S. assistance. You should offer assistance for UNMISS and other peacekeepers, who will separate the belligerent parties, monitor the ceasefire and guarantee humanitarian access to all people in need of life-saving aid. It is also very clear that South Sudan requires a reformed defense force that is divorced from politics and is united around the protection of all South Sudanese in their diversity.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services are ready to work with you in all of these efforts. We are grateful for the leadership shown by President Obama during his recent trip to Africa, especially when he urged regional leaders to resolve the conflict in South Sudan. It is logical to believe that his intervention played a role in convincing the parties to the conflict to lay down their arms and build peace. We welcome your leadership as we look for ways to support peace and reconciliation in South Sudan.

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend Oscar Cantú  
Bishop of Las Cruces  
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo  
President  
Catholic Relief Services

Encl:



Our Ref:

Your Ref:

**Juba, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015**

**SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES  
STATEMENT ON  
PROPOSED COMPROMISE AGREEMENT ON THE RESOLUTION OF  
THE CONFLICT IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN**

**"SIGN THE AGREEMENT!"**

We, the Heads of the member Churches of the South Sudan Council of Churches, met today in Juba with our collaborators to reflect on the Proposed Compromise Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan presented to the parties by IGAD.

Since we issued our first statement on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013, we have consistently called for an immediate and unconditional end to the fighting. The war must stop immediately. There is no moral justification for this senseless war. It is unacceptable that people continue to kill and be killed while leaders argue over power, positions and percentages.

We are calling for an immediate ceasefire, and we ask the IGAD PLUS to put down the mechanism of protecting and maintaining the ceasefire. This will give the parties in the conflict an atmosphere for frank, trustful and sincere talks. We welcome the Proposed Compromise Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan because it achieves this end. Within 72 hours of its signing, a Permanent Ceasefire comes into force. This is a worthy achievement, a major step forward, a great blessing, and we warmly thank all those who have worked to bring it about. We therefore urge all parties to sign the Agreement, and to honour it by implementing the Ceasefire.

As Church leaders we do not wish to comment on the substance of the Agreement. We are not politicians and it is not our place to enter into the details. We see many good things in the Agreement, but we are also aware that many people have reservations and concerns about parts of it. We reiterate that the most important part of it is the Permanent Ceasefire. Once the guns have fallen silent, there is a window of opportunity, a breathing space in which South Sudanese can consider all the points of disagreement and controversy in a peaceful manner until a consensus is reached which meets the needs of the people, not just the political and military elites. This Agreement is not in itself a solution but it is a mechanism by which a solution can be reached. It creates a space in which we can all discern together how we will become a nation.

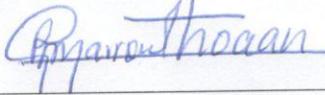
Once the Ceasefire is in effect and the people of South Sudan begin to grapple with the way forward, there will be more need than ever for the Church-facilitated Peace Process described in our Statement of Intent issued in Kigali on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015. It will have three main pillars: Advocacy to change the narrative from war to peace; a Neutral Forum where stakeholders can discuss the pressing issues in an atmosphere which builds trust rather than polarisation; and Reconciliation. The Church has a special role to play in Reconciliation, and we will ensure that we are in the forefront of this great endeavour to bring healing to our people.



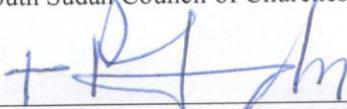
Once again we urge the parties to sign this Agreement and to implement the Permanent Ceasefire. Do not miss this opportunity to end the evil which has befallen our country. The Agreement is a compromise, it is not perfect, it has its shortcomings, but disagreement with some aspects of it does not justify the continuation of the war. It must be signed and implemented in good faith.

We pray for the warring parties, for those who have worked to bring about this Agreement, and for all the people of South Sudan. May God guide you and bless you all.

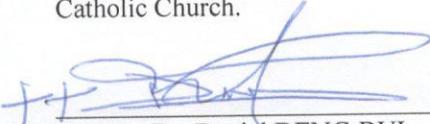
Given in Juba this 31<sup>st</sup> day of July 2015



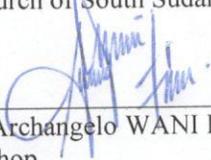
Rt. Rev. Peter GAI LUAL MARROW  
Chairman  
South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC).



His Grace Paulino LUKUDU LORO  
Metropolitan Archbishop of Juba  
Catholic Church.



Rt. Rev. Dr. Daniel DENG BUL  
Archbishop and Primate  
Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan (ECSS/S).



Rt. Rev. Dr. Archangelo WANI LEMI  
Presiding Bishop  
African Inland Church (AIC).



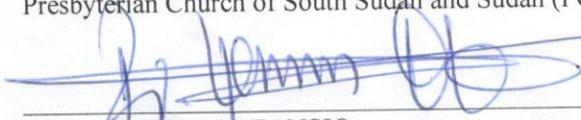
Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaiah MAJOK DAU  
General Overseer  
Sudan Pentecostal Church (SPC).



Rt. Rev. James PAR TAP HON  
Moderator,  
Evangelical Presbyterian Church of South Sudan and Sudan (EPCoSS/S).



Rev. Alex Gabriel LADU  
Moderator  
Presbyterian Church of South Sudan and Sudan (PCoSS/S).



Fr. James OYET LATANSIO  
General Secretary  
South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC).

