

South Sudan Civil Society Forum

Press Release

March 28, 2018

Response to warning on civil society participation in the peace process

The South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) is deeply dismayed by the warning of Honourable Michael Makuei Lueth, Minister of Information, Telecommunications and Postal Services for civil society to stop participating in the peace process. The Honourable Minister characterized civil society participation as a game of “politics,” grossly misrepresenting our ambition to channel the views and aspirations of our people on the ground in South Sudan and in refugee camps in neighbouring countries into the peace talks in Addis Ababa. We ask that the Hon. Minister retract his statement and renew the Transitional Government’s commitment to work together with civic actors to find a solution to the conflict.

This undeserved warning of the Honorable Minister was published on the Dawn Newspaper, Issue 3 Volume 610, March 26, 2018, page 3. The paper quoted him saying, *“The civil society which are here in South Sudan, which have been politicized are not Civil Society and if you are Civil Society, keep away from all that which have been done to you, or else take your money and keep quiet”*.

The SSCSF does not accept this notion that only those with guns or political ambitions have the right to participate in the peace process. The SSCSF believes in non-violent contribution to the search for peace and stability in South Sudan and considers the warning of the Honorable Minister as intimidation and a violation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities of December 21, 2017 in which parties agreed not to engage in hostile propaganda.

The SSCSF wishes to clarify to the Honorable Minister and the general public that the persistent call from civil society to those responsible for the conflict in South Sudan to stop violence, respect the dignity of citizens especially women, girls and children, negotiate peace in good faith, end the conflict and restore peace and stability in the country is a genuine civic responsibility.

The SSCSF informs the Honorable Minister that the civil society does not need to be paid or influenced to remind entrepreneurs of this devastating civil conflict that the outcomes of their decisions and actions remain painfully destructive to lives, property, economy, future and hopes of South Sudanese citizens and relegating millions of them to the miserable life of refugees, internal displacement and hunger.

The SSCSF further believes that it is not “politics” to demand that those responsible should reflect on their own contributions to this appalling situation and bring this destructive civil conflict to an immediate and dignified end.

The SSCSF informs the Honorable Minister that the participation of civil society in the peace process is guided by the interests and aspirations of the ordinary citizens who innocently bear the pains of the current political crisis in the country, principles of impartiality and the need for genuine peace in South Sudan.

The SSCSF is encouraged by the level of inclusive participation of South Sudanese stakeholders at the High-Level Revitalization Forum. The civil society remains committed to this process and expects it to culminate in a lasting and implementable peace agreement that primarily meets the aspirations of all citizens of South Sudan.

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