



National Council of  
Churches in Australia

## Australian Sudanese & South Sudanese Church Leaders' Statement for Addis Ababa talks on 17 May 2018

arising from a national consultation of Sudanese & South Sudanese church leaders  
under the auspices of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA)  
held at the Australian Centre for Christianity & Culture (ACC&C)

**Canberra, Australia on 15-16 May 2018**

*Jesus said "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called  
children of God." (Matthew 5:9)*

### **Four Affirmations:**

*We are called by faith to love our neighbour (Mark 12:30-31), to forgive our enemies (Mark 11:25), and to be one (John 17:21).*

*We acknowledge the impact of war in giving rise to conflicting loyalties based on tribe, denomination and nationality within South Sudan and the South Sudanese diaspora in Australia.*

*We resolve to build unity, and model "one people", within the diaspora in Australia.*

*We long for there to be, and we pray for, peace and unity within the leadership and people of South Sudan based on universal values for good government. This longing focuses our prayers.*

### **Unity Statement for Peace:**

We make this unity statement from the Australian national consultation of 26 church leaders from seven different denominations (Anglican, Catholic, Uniting, Lutheran, Salvation Army, Presbyterian and Baptist) living in seven different Australian states and territories. With the encouragement of senior diplomats from our Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) we want to bring to you the following reflections from our discussions in Canberra held 15-16 May 2018.

We know that our own local issues have required this national dialogue because we are heavily impacted by the situation in South Sudan. The healing of divisions here has to be parallel with the healing of those in Sudan and South Sudan.

We are aware that as a significant diaspora community within Australia (33,000+), we can and should make a contribution to our beloved South Sudan. As spiritual leaders, we are aware of the extent and intensity of trauma from the violence of war and the need for deep healing now across several generations. This issue continues to focus our spiritual and pastoral ministries in Australia, and we are very aware that many suffer from wars and trauma in South Sudan, and in neighbouring countries. Many people live in and with families who have experienced trauma. The path to peace in South Sudan therefore requires special attention with regard to the

healing of memories and the renewal of hope. In partnership with the churches of South Sudan and with your support we would want to assist in this healing ministry.

Therefore, in reflecting on the transitional justice provision in the ARCSS<sup>1</sup>, we ask that there is specific reference to the churches providing a National Healing and Reconciliation Process framework as a priority.

We believe that the Australian South Sudanese diaspora can play an important role in nation building in South Sudan. In Australia, we diminish our potential for healthy lives and flourishing communities when we have allowed tribal and denominational loyalties to supersede national loyalty. This is a corrosive, divisive and distressing matter which means that suspicion and deep distrust are often present in our gatherings. When tribal or denominational loyalty dominates, we cannot provide, under God, the quality of leadership that our people need. We know that we must unite ourselves and speak with one voice by striving for unity in Australia. Through this we will set an example and give encouragement to our brothers and sisters in South Sudan.

We have reflected on the leadership that our communities are seeking. In Australia, we have a safe place to live. We want to see in South Sudan, communities that are safe for our families and that have all the values of good governance eloquently enshrined in our Constitution. We want to see a wholly civil government in South Sudan, where government appointments are based on merit, and where primary health care and education are priorities in government expenditure.

We address these issues with a strong resolve and readiness to engage women in leadership and give thanks for the women involved in the current peace talks. Women have a major role in peace building and challenging the way that our society has been dominated by militarised conflict for decades. Right now and going forward women need to be given their own space in the mediation process, and a mechanism established and followed, that selects non-partisan women to be involved in current peace talks. In the next government women have to have a role on merit and their representation in that government needs to be proportionate.

In relation to good leadership for the future of South Sudan, we think it is important that emerging leaders are identified and effectively mentored. We recognise that many of our youth are reaching across community divisions here in Australia and have something of value to share in the peace process for South Sudan.

If conditions for a lasting peace include dealing with trauma and divisive tribal loyalties, there are very practical steps which must be taken to curb the escalation of violence. A key step is ensuring that a third party enforcement mechanism is put in place to enhance the mandate of JMEC<sup>2</sup> and CTSAMM<sup>3</sup>.

We believe strongly in the safety and protection of church leaders and those that speak truth in South Sudan, and we grieve those who have been killed for naming injustice.

Aid and development assistance free of corruption and the perceived biased influence of third party international and regional organisations has to be assured. You would be aware that diaspora communities contribute significant resources and advocacy back into South Sudan. Better transparency and integration of this generosity with others will help secure sustainable health and education systems.

We need to prepare the conditions so that those internally displaced and in neighbouring countries of refuge, returning to South Sudan, can participate in nation-building.

We are struggling with the impact of social media in our communities when it has been used to deepen divisions. As spiritual leaders, we must join together and decry this use of the very communication that helps us support and help our family and community in South Sudan. We have to help people understand that good will only come from face-to-face dialogue and that the tools of social media need to be used wisely. We commit to educating our diaspora communities about the wise use of social media.

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<sup>1</sup> Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), August 2015

<sup>2</sup> Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), August 2015

<sup>3</sup> Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM), August 2015

Whilst we are struggling to appreciate the continuing and sometimes unrelated roles of third party international and regional parties in the political and peace process as forces for good, we as church leaders in the Australian South Sudanese diaspora are ready to support and assist.

Be assured of our prayers and goodwill as your important meeting begins in Addis Ababa. And as our meeting ends we will take up our own responsibilities as Christian leaders to work for unity and peace here in Australia.

### **Summary of Recommendations:**

1. That the path to peace in South Sudan requires special attention with regard to the healing of memories and the renewal of hope. We ask that there is specific reference to the churches providing a National Healing and Reconciliation Process framework as a priority.
2. That women need to be given their own space in the mediation process, and a mechanism established and followed that selects non-partisan women to be involved in current peace talks.
3. That emerging leaders are identified and effectively mentored.
4. That a key step in curbing the escalation of violence is ensuring that a third party enforcement mechanism is put in place to enhance the mandate of the JMEC and the CTSAMM.
5. That we commit to educating the communities of the diaspora about the wise use of social media.
6. That we commend the African Union and the Churches in the ongoing work of peace making in Sudan.

**Dated this 16<sup>th</sup> day of May 2018 at Canberra, Australia.**