



COMMON SENSE 3

A CALL FOR SOUTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE AND SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN THE SUDAN

ABOUT SSLM

The South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) formed in January 2000 in Upper Nile Region of South Sudan to restore unity and democratic civic order among a people that have been devastated by lawlessness, overlooked by the outside world since 1991—and politically neutralized.

In mobilizing people for peace-building, the SSLM aims to complement the efforts of other political and military groups who are defending South Sudan against Arab/Islamic domination and oppression.

The SSLM follows two avenues to assert the rights of the people of South Sudan to freedom and self-determination. First, we seek the peaceful resolution of the conflict through negotiated settlement. Second, we will defend ourselves against Northern aggression.

It is the SSLM's belief that peaceful resolution of conflict must build upon the civic tradition of the people. It must encourage reconciliation and forgiveness. And it must focus upon the common ground of a unity of purpose.

August 2003

The southern Sudanese people are yearning for peace, but the last thing they want is a peace agreement that sets the stage for oppressive unity. The southern Sudanese people believe that peace can be negotiated, but the National Islamic Front's Government of Sudan and John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Movement behave as if they alone are to decide the South's future.

The southern Sudanese people have not empowered any one group to speak for them. On the contrary, a healthy dialogue and reconciliation process is taking place among the southern groups. The SPLM/A, however, refuses to recognize the efforts of others and has used its influence to encourage the international community to ignore what is taking place. It's time for this blackout to end.

South-South dialogue necessary for sustainable peace

1. The makeup of the peace talks will shape whatever follows the peace agreement.

If there is any expectation that a pluralistic, consensual democracy will take shape in the Sudan after peace is negotiated, then it must begin shaping up now. The character of the peace talks will shape the outcome of whatever follows. Will this be a pluralistic democracy or a monolithic one? The current structure of the Machakos peace talks virtually guarantees a monolith. And that virtually guarantees that the peace will not hold.

The Machakos talks are exclusive to all but the current Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM/A). These two are negotiating under international supervision how they will share power, how they will divide Sudan's wealth, and how they will ensure their own security.

Everyone is focusing on making these two groups happy, and no one is acknowledging that there is a big elephant on the table at Machakos. The big elephant sits on top of the arrangements for shared government and shared natural resources. As long as he sits quietly, people will continue to work around him. The big elephant, of course, is the issue of who ends up controlling the guns, the machetes, and the mechanisms of terror. What no one wants to acknowledge is that exclusive peace talks between the GoS and the SPLA are in fact granting them the power to set up a police state and crush opposition.

The sponsors of the Machakos talks have invested a great deal of time and money in the process. Why would they now fail to address a flaw in the process that will lead to dictatorship? Exclusive talks are not a recipe for peace. They are a recipe for continuing war and international heartburn.

2. History demonstrates the strength of inclusive processes where all interested parties participate in dialogue and take ownership of the outcomes.

The current Machakos talks are constructed upon a flawed, twentieth century ideal. That ideal is the belief that a messianic movement can lead the masses into a utopian future. Twentieth century reality demonstrates that no political or (any other objective) can be achieved by exclusive processes and force. The reality will be rule by terror.

For the international community, the decision to work exclusively with the GoS and the SPLM/A may seem like drawing a straight line between two points. In reality, it is drawing a line of exclusion that will further divide the Sudan. It is a policy formula that will not yield sustainable peace. It will lead to more war.

In contrast, in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the international community has taken great care to include as many military and non-military parties as possible in the peace and rebuilding process. This can also be done in Sudan. We can only imagine the outcome if the Machakos talks were conducted like the Dayton Talks which ended the Bosnian war. The point is, we know that the inclusive process we are advocating is a recognized path to peace. It is not radical. It is common sense.

3. The “underground” peace dialogue is working.

The January 2002 Nairobi Declaration of Unity between the SPLM/A and the Sudan People’s Democratic Front/Sudan People’s Defense Force (SPDF) fell apart after only 16 months. In *Common Sense 1* (January 2002) we said that if the declaration ever fell apart, it would happen because it compelled people to unity without processes of dialogue. That is what happened.

Unity is not a merger of different independent movements into one unified movement. Unity is not something that someone declares and then asks others to support. It is not a process of “harmonization” that seeks to marginalize and eliminate the voices of opposition and dissent.

Unity is a consensus that southern Sudanese people will achieve only through dynamic processes of dialogue in which all parties are free to engage with others, to define their own interests, and to uncover the interests of others. Peaceful resolution of conflict must build upon the civic tradition of the people. It must encourage reconciliation and forgiveness. And it must focus upon the common ground of a unity of purpose. This kind of dialogue is not on the agenda at Machakos. But it is occurring spontaneously among southerners on the grassroots level.

The grassroots peace and reconciliation process among the Dinka, Nuer, and other peoples in the South has stopped the fighting among southern groups. The success of this decade-long “underground” peace process is well documented, yet it has received little recognition or support from the international community.

Although it has been a slow process, the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) and those working with us continue opening the doors to broad-based discussions about the barriers and approaches to creating unity among the southern Sudanese people. Today there is growing cooperation and dialogue among all southern Sudanese, including those in the South, the Diaspora, and in the North. The South Sudan Democratic Forum (SSDF) is an umbrella organization that is making effective use of processes of dialogue. The SSDF is working among the diverse southern Sudanese groups to restore trust and repair relationships that have been undermined by years of division and violence.

What can be done to achieve sustainable peace?

1. Southerners must come together to reject the war option.

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The grand delusion of contemporary liberals [and of the architects of exclusive IGAD talks] is that they have both the right and the ability to move their fellow creatures around like blocks of wood—and that the end results will be no different than if people had voluntarily chosen the same actions.

Thomas Sowell

- If there is not a broad-based rejection of the war option, the South Sudanese Liberation Army (SSLA) and the South Sudanese Defense Force (SSDF) may attempt to win in the field fighting against the SPLA. But continued fighting is bad for peace in the long run because it will jeopardize implementation of any peace agreement and make the path to reconciliation more difficult.
- Some are hoping that war can be averted through applying formulas for handing out national and regional government positions among the Southern Sudanese groups. But dishing out the positions of power is not the key to sustainable peace.
- The Machakos Peace Talks (or any other peace forum for that matter) can achieve a permanent peace only if all parties are invited to the table and together reject the war option. Only then will the majority of Sudanese support the peace and work to protect it.
- Southern unity achieved through dialogue will not upset the IGAD sponsored Machakos peace process. Instead, it will have a positive, catalytic impact on the talks.

2. The South and friends of South Sudan must support a South-South dialogue now.

- The enemies of the South thrive on our internal divisions. It is time to deny them this by closing our ranks. It is imperative for all parties to forgive each other for the supreme interest of all in the southern Sudan.
- Reconciliation will be one of the keys to good governance in the southern entity during the interim period. The southern people are yearning for reconciliation, unity, and peace in the South. Reconciliation is a proactive, brotherly wound-healing process. The parties involved should exercise self-criticism more than concentrating on the grievances and actions of the adversaries.
- The South-South dialogue and reconciliation is crucial for the South's survival and the attainment of our aspirations. It is our responsibility to take the initiative to reject the war option together, close our ranks, and move forward as a united block into the next stage of our struggle for self-determination.
- The dialogue process should have clear expected outcomes. The minimum expected outcome of the South-South dialogue is to agree on a formula for peaceful coexistence among the political organizations.
- The dialogue should seek to identify the areas of contention among the parties and lay out an amicable solution as agreed upon by the participants. Since the differences in the South are not irreconcilable, organic unity is also possible and must be pursued.

3. The South and friends of South Sudan must shape a more inclusive peace process now.

- Inclusiveness does not mean starting over. It is acceptable to start from where the Machakos talks are right now and go forward.
- When we talk about inclusiveness, it is difficult for the negotiators and sponsors of the IGAD talks to see how this can be done. They are afraid that opening up the table will upset the whole process. Yet it is better to act now to save the process than to continue on when the outcome is doomed to failure.
- It also is difficult for the negotiators and sponsors of the IGAD talks to know how to begin the dialogue process. They don't have to. The dialogue is already taking place among the southern groups. They have only to recognize it and include it.

4. The South and friends of South Sudan must understand that South-South dialogue lays the foundation for sustainable peace now.

A lesson from history...

Some lessons learned in the field of conflict resolution over the past twenty years:

- ✓ Including all groups with military power. Otherwise peace won't be the result.
- ✓ Including non-military groups. This will help make peace benefit more than just the soldiers.
- ✓ Diffusing aid and power, and not concentrating it. When there are more leaders involved in the process, they must direct more effort toward the people's goals instead of their own.
- ✓ Constantly keeping in mind the peaceful future, not just the present war. Cessation of hostilities is not the only objective.
- ✓ Putting non-military items on the agenda. Even without a final peace, progress can be made.

From Common Sense 2, October 2002

Common Sense 1

(A Call for Reconciliation, Peace, and Unity Through Confederate Cooperation, January 2002)

and

Common Sense 2

(A Call for a More Inclusive Peace Process, October 2002)

are on our web site
www.geocities.com/sslm4peace

- The South-North conflict can only be resolved through allowing the people of South Sudan to exercise their right of self-determination.
- The political parties in the South will have to adopt a Charter that spells out the basis for cooperation for governing the South during the interim period and for scenarios appropriate to the outcome of the referendum at the end of the interim period.
- Peace in the South can be sustainable only if it is inclusive in the governance of the southern entity during the interim period
- Inclusiveness is not only the participation of various sections of Southern societies in running the affairs of the South, but it also entails adherence to democracy, upholding basic freedoms, and the respect of human rights.
- Meetings of southern Sudanese leaders and civil society leaders aid the process of achieving harmony and sustainable peace among groups and societies driven apart by violence and suspicion. These meetings are necessary for realizing reconciliation and good governance during the interim period. We strongly recommend encouraging more dialogue and more meetings among southern groups.

How the International Community can help.

Restructuring the IGAD forum does not require starting from scratch. The mediators can agree now to amend the Protocol to include other northern and southern Sudanese parties in the talks. They can agree now not to attempt to implement an agreement that is made without including all parties in the process of taking ownership and taking into account their views. All mediators, but especially the United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway, should play a role in bringing individual leaders of all South Sudanese parties together.

The South Sudan Democratic Forum and the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) appreciates the role of the international community, especially the United States and the members of the European Union, in helping to relieve the immense suffering and social injustices being inflicted upon the peoples of South Sudan. Now, the international community can help best by:

- Helping to restructure the Machakos forum so that talks include all groups, northern and southern.
- Encouraging dialogue and cooperation to expand on the grassroots level, as well as among all southern Sudanese, including those in the South, the Diaspora, and in the North, to build a broad-based southern unity.
- Putting their support behind even-handed efforts and material assistance that build peace and harmony among all peoples of South Sudan. This means that assistance, food, and development must be shared equitably among southern groups and not exclusively given to or administered by the SPLM/A.
- Calling for reconciliation, peace, and unity through confederate cooperation among peoples of South Sudan in promoting dialogue, reconciliation, building peace, and restoring the civil society.