

Statement from the ECS House of Bishops, Juba, Saturday 12 February 2011

He has committed to us the message of reconciliation - 2 Corinthians 5:19b

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you - John 14:27

Preamble

The House of Bishops, composed of the 31 dioceses of the Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan, under the leadership of the Most Rev'd Dr Daniel Deng Bul Yak, met in Juba from 11 - 12 February 2011 to meditate, pray, and to discuss the future of the ECS in light of the new political dispensation. Our meeting was honoured with the presence of the General Secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), Rev'd Ramadan Chan, the General Secretary of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA), Rev'd Canon Grace Kaiso, and the Rt. Rev'd Daniel Munene, Diocese of Kirinyanga in Kenya representing the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

Inspired by the themes of reconciliation and peace, the House of Bishops issues the following statement:

1. Congratulations and appreciation

We congratulate the President of the Republic and Chairman of the National Congress Party (NCP), Field Marshall Omer Hassan El Beshir for his courageous decision to honour and accept the results of the Referendum.

We also congratulate our Joshua, First Vice-President of the Republic, President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) and Chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), General Salva Kiir Mayardit for accepting the will of the people of South Sudan.

We congratulate the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and the South Sudan Referendum Bureau for their dedication to the task of organising a peaceful, fair and credible referendum.

We congratulate the people of South Sudan for exercising a peaceful, orderly and successful referendum. We appreciate the fact that there was no violence or other related issues during this time.

We would like to thank our partners throughout the world for their prayer and support as well as the international community for their concern over the plight of the people of South Sudan. We pay tribute to the late Dr John Garang de Mabior, and the fallen heroes and heroines he led, for their contribution to the secession of South Sudan through their struggle.

2. Pending Post-Referendum issues

We call upon the two peace partners, the NCP and SPLM, and other parties to expeditiously work on the pending issues notably the issue of Abyei, the North-South border, and to bring the popular consultations in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States to their logical conclusions. Other pending issues that need to be agreed upon include the issue of citizenship, Sudan's foreign debt, and oil.

3. Poverty, ignorance and disease

We need to fight against poverty, ignorance and disease. We will work with the government in the provision of services that contribute to fighting and eradicating the above vices. We exhort the government to set up an economic system that is based on equity which means a fair system that provides equal opportunity for all and protects the poor from being manipulated or exploited by the rich.

4. Unity

We call on our people to be united. The unity that was shown during the referendum should continue to be seen all over the South and other marginalised areas of Sudan. By so doing, we will prove wrong those who are prophesying that South Sudan is likely to be a failed state.

5. Peace

We would like to see peace prevail all over the two new sovereign nations. For those who have taken up arms, we call on them to return home and join in the building of the new-born nation. We do not wish for our people to go through further suffering; we have suffered enough.

6. Darfur conflict

We call on the fighting groups in Darfur and the government to go back to the negotiating table.

7. The atrocities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

The LRA has caused immense suffering to our people in Western Equatoria and other parts of South Sudan. We strongly call on our government and the international community to put an end to these atrocities. We also urge the LRA leadership to reach a political resolution for their problems with the Ugandan government instead of killing and displacing our innocent people in a senseless war. Those who currently support or intend to support the LRA must refrain.

8. Multipartism

In the same way that we embraced democracy during the national elections and referendum, we also encourage our governments to embrace multipartism. For greater legitimacy of the parties in North and South Sudan, political parties with regional, religious, or tribal biases should not be tolerated.

9. Holistic gospel

As we wait for the formal establishment of the two new nations coming out of the old Sudan, we will remain committed to preaching a holistic gospel to meet the spiritual and physical needs of our people. The ECS will continue to advocate the importance of reconciliation and basic social services for all.

10. Tribalism, nepotism and corruption

Corruption and nepotism give birth to tribalism. Corruption is more than bribery or embezzlement of funds; it includes abuse of power or authority for private gain. The appointment of people to positions based on family or clan or other ties is also corruption; appointments to all positions should be based on merit. Similarly, the misuse or theft of public or church money is also corruption. Fraud, that is the illegal acquisition of money, goods or services, is also considered as corruption. We call on Sudanese people to reject tribalism, nepotism and corruption. The governments should put in place policies and laws that discourage any of these.

We demand that the Board of Selection and Appointment charged with the recruitment of all the government positions in South Sudan, base their appointments on merit and work ethic.

11. Land

In order to minimise the increasing land disputes and quarrels we appeal to our government to survey new areas and give land to those who are in need of it.

12. Constitution-making

We call on the Governments of South Sudan and North Sudan to be inclusive of civil society especially the Church and other faith-based organisations in the reviewing and re-writing process of the new constitutions. A constitution is supposed to be a covenant between those charged with the responsibility of governance and the governed. All stake-holders must be involved and once the two nations have been formed, there must be a constitutional conference to enhance ownership of the two constitutions. We call for an inclusive government where justice shall prevail.

13. Separation of State and Religion

There has been misunderstanding on the issue of separation of state and religion. Our interpretation of this is that no majority religion should be above another and that no one church should have the monopoly of being the State Church. Moslems, Christians and followers of other religions must live in harmony with one another. Individuals of North and South Sudan must be allowed to practice their religions freely whilst being tolerant and respectful of people of other faiths.

Concerning co-operation between state and church, the Episcopal Church of the Sudan endeavours to maintain a constructive relationship with the government in all matters pertaining to nation-building and the welfare of our people.

14. The Episcopal Church of the Sudan

As the people of Southern Sudan have voted for secession with the South becoming a new nation from 9th July 2011, we would like to assure the Christians of the ECS that the ECS will remain as one united church as part of the 80 million worldwide Anglican Communion. The Church is one body; God has no borders. We will not abandon each other regardless of the political geographical boundaries.

Conclusion

We pray that Almighty God will help us foster unity, peace and democracy as exhibited by all Sudanese and witnessed by the whole world during this Referendum process. We must all embrace the spirit of self-sacrifice, hard work, respect for one another, tolerance, and honesty as we endeavour to build the two new nations.

Unity in diversity is our strength.

Yours in Christ

The Most Revd Dr Daniel Deng Bul Yak, Archbishop and Primate Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan & Bishop of the Diocese of Juba