

# Taskforce on the Engagement of Women

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## **Joint Statement & Recommendations Sudan and South Sudan Bilateral Gathering Addis Ababa, Ethiopia January 22 – 31, 2015**

Women make significant contributions in building peace and fighting war. However, they are not widely considered vital decision-makers whose participation in political and security processes is essential for stability. The experiences and expertise of women offer information vital for more legitimate, sustainable settlements. Women are interlocutors. They know what is happening in communities. Women build trust, share information, contribute to technical discussions, prevent escalation of violence, and more. Leveraging women's intellectual capacities and social connections is essential.

The Taskforce on the Engagement of Women – a group of 20 peacebuilders from Sudan and South Sudan - have been coming together across divisions to promote more inclusive, effective peace and transition processes in and between the two countries. The Taskforce views its role as a conduit between women in civil society and senior officials in national and bilateral peace processes. We seek to increase the credibility and effectiveness of peace processes in both states by ensuring they are inclusive, comprehensive, and gender sensitive.

### **Vision of the Taskforce**

South Sudan and Sudan are stable, peaceful, just, and prosperous.

### **Goal of the Taskforce**

Increase the credibility and effectiveness of peace processes in South Sudan and Sudan by ensuring they are inclusive, comprehensive, and gender sensitive.

### **Objectives**

Ensure that:

1. Women comprise 50% of participants at all levels and bodies of all peace processes
2. Women's priorities are mainstreamed throughout peace processes
3. Peace processes are linked to communities

### **Debrief and Recommendations from the African Union Summit**

The Taskforce recently gathered in Addis Ababa leading up to and during the African Union Summit. We affirmed a common need to promote and advance collaboration amongst and between women in civil society and government, and across the two nations.

While in Addis, Taskforce members consulted with technical experts, insiders, and senior principals to analyze the transition processes underway in both countries and determine key entry points for women's engagement. Though the Taskforce shares a common vision and goal, they recognize the unique circumstances in each state, and thus the need for tailored approaches that consider each context deeply. For both Sudan and South Sudan, the Taskforce shares the following political updates and recommends the related, specific actions:

## South Sudan

In the spirit of coordination, the Taskforce acknowledges the hard work and highly relevant information in the *Women's Agenda for Peace and Sustainable Development in South Sudan*. While in Addis, Taskforce members gathered detailed information on the status of the IGAD-led talks, the African Union Commission of Inquiry Report, and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. We also met with several technical experts and insiders to determine the opportunities for influence and notable gaps in these processes. From our consultations, we determined the current IGAD-led summit between the two parties to the negotiations should adopt the following 10 guiding principles in drafting a final agreement on the transitional arrangements:

### **Ten Guiding Principles for the Final Transitional Arrangements**

1. Uphold the spirit and text of the peace agreement and demonstrate the political will to abide by and implement the accord;
2. Refrain from all forms of violence, including the use of sexual violence as a means of dehumanization, in order to solve the crisis in South Sudan;
3. Commit to address the root causes of the South Sudan conflict that has led to mass destruction and the loss of lives and dignity;
4. Acknowledge the need for and commit to meaningful representation of women, at a minimum of 35 percent, in the transitional arrangements in all six thematic areas of the negotiating text;
5. Commit to a peace process that is centered on the people of South Sudan through consultations at all stages with various stakeholders including women, those with disabilities, civil society organizations, religious groups, minority groups, youth, traditional leaders, the private sector, and political parties;
6. Ensure the dissemination of information about the peace process on a consistent basis and in an accessible way at all times with the whole population of South Sudan;
7. Guarantee the transitional arrangements result in the creation of structures and processes that need for truth, reconciliation, memorialization, and healing and that acknowledge the suffering, loss, and overall impact of this conflict on the whole population.
8. Commit to review and reform the security forces through confidence building measures such as dialogue between the military, police, others in the security sector, and civilians; prioritizing community security; and considering alternative forms of policing such as community policing and providing safe spaces;
9. Establish a transparent and professionalized transitional government structure both in composition and competency; and
10. Guarantee justice for the people of South Sudan with consideration for international standards for accountability.

## Sudan

The Sudanese members of the Taskforce continue to promote and offer technical advice on an inclusive national dialogue process in the country. To this end, members have convened numerous meetings with various stakeholder to the process over the last 10 months. Our below recommendations are crafted based upon those relationships and interactions, and offer concrete,

relevant, and timely suggestions for what steps must be taken in order to secure a viable dialogue process.

The Sudan National Dialogue (SND) must have a clearly defined mandate and purpose. Clarity will help to manage expectations of the citizenry, ensure focus for the implementers, and increase the chance of actual peace for the country. The mandate, as well as the process that follows, should reflect the principles of Sudanese ownership, inclusion of diverse populations, transparency and openness, and accountability. The SND must yield solutions that address the longer term structural challenges in Sudan which have enabled conflict for many years. A legitimate national dialogue process will lay the foundation for the reforms needed in governance, rule of law, and issues of social cohesion.

Operationalizing inclusion will introduce complexity and challenge, to be sure. However, without structuring mechanisms to ensure the representation and participation of Sudan's diverse populations and to raise myriad issues, the SND will be seen by most Sudanese as a hollow gesture by the elite to prevent real change, which will only drive more social conflict. To be truly inclusive, a reciprocal loop of information between citizens and the SND process must exist. Access to information as an essential principle in the process should be a commitment of the Coordinating Committee and all related official bodies.

The recommendations below introduce options for inclusion with a specific focus on the need to ensure women are central contributors. Historically, women have played a leadership role in Sudan. The voices of women are critical to an effective SND. Women will ensure social issues are on the table, will help seed community buy in, will often act as interlocutors between groups, and will work across the many divisions in Sudanese society currently.

#### **INCLUSION: THE KEY PRINCIPLE OF NATIONAL DIALOGUE**

A key principle of the SND must be inclusivity. In line with this principle, each and every committee and mechanism must include 50 percent women to ensure the Sudan National Dialogue will be a true reflection of Sudanese society. There are ample women capable and available from throughout Sudan – as committee chairs and members, as technical experts, as advisors, as representatives, etc. The following constituencies should also have direct representation, *determined through a process and structured proposed later in this paper*, in the SND (each constituency composed of 50% women):

- Youth groups
- Professionals
- Sectors such as trade unions
- Civil Society Organizations

Acknowledging the need to ensure inclusivity as a means of legitimate national dialogue, the Taskforce also notes the dire need for a clearly outlined preparatory process and sequencing map in order to properly operationalize inclusion. The SND is currently an elite-driven process rather than a process for the people. A true dialogue along national lines must be well thought out, communicated, and structured. Therefore, below we will provide a critique of and offer solutions to fill the inclusion gaps in the current structure, as well as propose additional structures, processes, and actors.

## CURRENT STRUCTURE: INCLUSIVITY GAPS

**Coordination Committee:** Contains only 14 members – seven from NCP and allied parties, and seven from other political parties.

- *Recommendation:* This central, decision-making body should **expand to reflect members of key constituencies** to lay the foundation for the SND, including civil society and armed groups.
- *Recommendation:* All parties of the Coordination Committee, current and proposed, **must include women as 50 percent of their delegation.**

**National Dialogue Committees:** Contain six thematic committees, some of which have been appointed chairs. To the Taskforce’s knowledge, there is yet to be a clear mandate, timeline, and composition guidelines for the NDC.

- *Recommendation:* **A mandate and roadmap for the committees must be drafted and disseminated** as a first step towards transparency and to build trust in the process.
- *Recommendation:* As well, the composition of each committee **should include 50 percent women – as chairs, deputy chairs, members, and advisors.**

**National Dialogue Conference:** The current format for this conference notes a very limited participant list of 120 political party members and 50 public figures, a regrettably exclusive process. The bulk of decision-making will happen at this forum, so a more inclusive composition is vital.

- *Recommendation:* The participation in this conference **must be expanded** to include NCP non-aligned political parties, armed groups, and civil society.
- *Recommendation:* **Women must compose 50 percent** of all groups participating in the conference.
- *Recommendation:* The nationally representative **Taskforce on the Engagement of Women** should be named **official observers.**

## ADDITIONAL STRUCTURES FOR INCLUSION

### **University of Khartoum: Technical and Substantive Advisory Body**

We proposed that in order to ensure inclusivity, the University of Khartoum (an institution with great social ‘approval’ and capacity) should take the lead in mapping and subsequently organizing civil society organizations, women groups, youth groups, and others. The purpose would be to map groups, identify and select viable participants, and consistently convene gatherings at the state, local, and administrative levels of society to facilitate information gathering. The University of Khartoum would act as the central funnel of information – both substance and technical input – to the National Dialogue Committee six working groups. This information will then be fed to the Coordination Committee to inform the actual National Dialogue Conference. The addition of the University of Khartoum as a formal part of the SND structure would ensure that the voices of myriad constituencies were able to feed into the process and reach the National Dialogue Conference.

### **Formation of Community Engagement Plan**

It is vital that the SND forms a community outreach plan that includes a mechanism of continued reciprocity to share and gather information about the process on an ongoing basis. These should be formed to include consultations at the levels of administrative unit, locality, and state. Each level would form sub committees to lead consultations at that level to feed into University of Khartoum's Technical Advisory Body process that then feeds into the high-level National Dialogue Committee process to inform the content of the National Dialogue Conference. Each subcommittee (administrative, local, state) must be composed of at least 50 percent women representatives.

## **Taskforce Recommendations on an Inclusive Sudanese National Dialogue**

*We call upon the International Community, particularly the US Government, to:*

1. Ensure the Sudan peace process is approached in a holistic way. The focus, or umbrella, for this holistic process should be the Sudan National Dialogue, which should be credible, effective, inclusive, comprehensive, and gender sensitive.
  - a. An effective National Dialogue requires an enabling environment, which will result from the following actions:
    - Ensure freedom of expression for all, including an independent media
    - Release detained human rights defenders
    - End the restriction and closing of non-government organizations
    - Ensure participation of armed groups (which requires strong guarantees)
    - Increase international humanitarian aid
    - End the fighting and ensuring security for those affected
    - Guarantee that women comprise 50% of participants at all levels and bodies of the national dialogue processes
    - Mainstream women's priorities throughout the national dialogue processes
2. Forgive Sudan's national debt in exchange for the Government of Sudan postponing the proposed 2015 elections.
3. Provide more technical support to all actors in Sudan to increase education through a series of workshops about effective, inclusive, and credible national dialogue processes. The actors who participate should include: government, political parties, armed groups inside and outside the country, women's groups, civil society organizations, and youth groups.
4. Strengthen the Sudan National Dialogue process by providing funding and other support to civil society organizations to lead outreach and consultations with communities.