

19th June 2014

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Your Excellencies,

We write to request your urgent intervention in the South Sudan crisis which is now entering its seventh month with no end in sight. In our view as stakeholders, we believe that the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa has failed in resolving the protracted conflict and lost credibility in the eyes of South Sudanese people as an honest and credible mediator.

The current stalled talks in Addis Ababa have exposed IGAD's inability to manage the conflict resolution process competently. Like the conflicting parties, IGAD is also breaching the 9th May 2014 agreement between the government of South Sudan and the SPLM (in Opposition) rendering the whole process a farce. In our opinion, IGAD is unable to remain neutral. It is biased and as such it is unsuitable and unfit to be an honest mediator. We are therefore requesting that the talks be relocated preferably to either Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania or Nairobi, Kenya under a new neutral

international leadership. As you are undoubtedly aware, IGAD has a history of failed mediation in the Sudan which appears to be replicating itself in the current crisis in South Sudan. For instance, from the mid 1990s to the early 2000s, IGAD was impotent in brokering a peace deal between the SPLM and the government of Sudan. Years were wasted without any tangible results as the people of South Sudan continued to suffer immeasurably. It was only when President George Walker Bush of the United States of America intervened decisively at the time that things began to move, leading to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005.

We are deeply concerned that what is currently going on in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in relation to IGAD'S role in mediating the conflict between the incumbent President of South Sudan Salvatore Kiir Mayardit and his former Vice President Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon and their cohorts is following that failed pattern. Worse still, this time, IGAD has even blindly or deliberately tilted its weight towards the side of the government of South Sudan in direct opposition to its role as a neutral mediator. It is even applying uncalled for and unnecessary pressure on the stakeholders to quit the talks. For proper clarification of the foregoing point, we narrate below what transpired in Addis Ababa in the last fortnight, most probably unbeknown to your country envoys.

1. When the 18 political parties of South Sudan arrived at Addis Ababa Airport on Wednesday 4th June 2014, they were rounded up by Ethiopian immigration officers who demanded that the invited stakeholders pay 20 US dollars each which they did not have. It was only through the help of a Good Samaritan who rang the IGAD officials and made them aware of the troubles the eminent persons selected to participate in the peace talks were facing at Addis Ababa Airport that IGAD officials came to the Airport and took the delegates to their hotels by bus. What is important to note is that IGAD did not make any arrangement to meet guests that were crucial to the peace process.
2. Once the delegates were settled at their hotels, they discovered that they were allowed only two small bottles of water a day and the allowance was only during meals. If they wished for and/or needed extra water, they were expected to foot the bill using their own financial resources which they did not have.
3. The delegates were also told that if they needed laundry facilities, they would have to foot the bill themselves!
4. After a symposium that was publicized as an inclusive and successful process was concluded, the delegates were told that only seven groups had to remain in Addis Ababa to negotiate. They were directed to nominate the seven groups and told that if they refuse to do that, all of them would have to leave Addis Ababa and go home to South Sudan! Great pressure was brought to bear on the stakeholders to such an extent that in the end, some political parties simply could not countenance the humiliation and withdrew. The rest continued under pressure from the SPLM's Lieutenant Susan Jambu (with both the Government of South Sudan and IGAD undoubtedly in the background) resulting in the choosing of seven political parties, almost all of whom were/are either government satellites or affiliates, rendering the process unfair and a farce.
5. In the meeting of IGAD with the political parties on the 30th May 2014 in Juba, IGAD unequivocally told the stakeholders that they, the 19 political parties present would attend the symposium and they would then continue to negotiate with the belligerent parties. They were told that if some organizations were to return to Juba after the symposium, it would probably be the civil society organizations. It is worth noting here that IGAD never raised as much as an eyebrow, in protest against the barring of Mr Peter Abdulrahman Sule of the UDF Party from boarding the plane to Addis Ababa, together with his colleagues the leaders of political parties invited by IGAD to attend the peace talks in Addis Ababa. As Chair of the UDF Party, Mr. Sule is a legitimate stakeholder in the peace talks but perceived as a threat

by the government of South Sudan, contrary to Democratic principles.

(<https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/politics-udf-chief-blocked-traveling-addis-talks>;

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article51247>;

<http://www.southsudannation.com/pres-kiir-violates-the-may-2014-addis-ababa-agreement/>; <http://www.southsudannewsagency.com/opinion/articles/cheers-for-machar-and-boos-for-kiir>

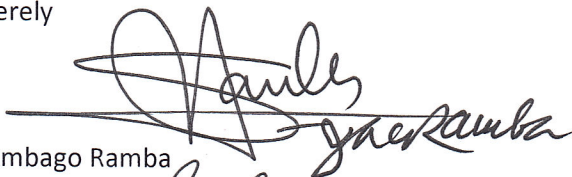
6. No one ever thought that the IGAD would be so capricious to such a degree that what they said earlier in Juba would be without any value. Who would believe them again? And who would not believe the inference now being made that IGAD is in cahoots with the Government of South Sudan? If the stakeholders left behind are simply to repeat what the Government of South Sudan says or desires or if they are even to keep silent about what the Government of South Sudan says as instructed or forced, then what kind of serious negotiations are we talking about? Would not Dr Riek Machar rightly complain that the so called political parties are in truth government stooges on the sly? Would not Machar be right to reject such farcical peace talks? Or, would not he be right to demand having his own satellites also, and who would blame him?
7. IGAD deliberately cut off communication with all its invitees who were blocked by the government and those in the Diaspora without any clear explanation. For example, in addition to lack of action in demanding that Mr Peter Abdulrahman Sule of the UDF Party be allowed to travel to Addis Ababa, the Secretary General of USSP was stranded in London and IGAD ignored all his emails and phone calls.

These violations by IGAD are indicative of its partiality in the mediation of the conflict between the incumbent President of South Sudan Salvatore Kiir Mayardit and his former Vice President Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon and their cohorts. The current IGAD leadership truly cannot be viewed as impartial for the reasons given above, but also because they have personal vested interests individually in South Sudan. Thus they are blind to a lot of things that need to be carried out for a successful peace process. Therefore, what is needed is an impartial mediator.

As can be seen, there is need for a decisive push from your Excellencies by appointing a more competent and neutral party. We recommend any of the following eminent persons or a combination of them to lead the process in a new venue: Mr Kofi Annan, Mr Bill Clinton, Mrs Hilary Clinton and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. By taking such an action, peace could be achieved faster and the suffering of the people of South Sudan brought to an end in a holistic manner.

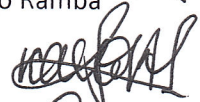
Yours sincerely

Elhag Paul

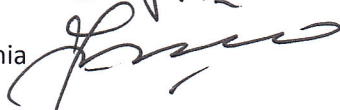


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