

**Statement of the Ecumenical Network on South Sudan (ENSS)
Europe and North America Hub**

International Peace Day, 21st September 2020

Today, the 21st of September we, the undersigned Christian organisations and members of the Ecumenical Network on South Sudan (ENSS), mark the International Day of Peace and would like to draw attention to the urgent need for peace in South Sudan. We want to reiterate our solidarity with women, men, boys and girls in South Sudan who have for many years borne the burden of conflicts in South Sudan. Despite some progress in bringing peace to the country, we are gravely concerned about the continuation of violence in various areas of the country and the availability of arms which continues to fuel violence in the country.

South Sudan continues to face multiple types of violence such as inter-communal violence, political violence and cattle-related violence, causing displacement, insecurity and human rights violations. We are particularly concerned about the escalation of violence in Jonglei, Central Equatoria, Lakes, Warrap and Unity State and highlight the need for all sides to immediately stop all hostile and violent action. Furthermore, the abduction of children and women and sexual and gender-based violence continues to be pervasive in South Sudan. We call upon all in South Sudan to respect the dignity of human life as we call for increased preventative, investigative and just efforts to end these devastating acts of violence.

The conflict has led to a dire humanitarian situation with 7.5 million people requiring humanitarian assistance. More than 2.26 million have been forced to flee the country and 1.6 million remain internally displaced. South Sudan is ranked third in terms of countries most vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19¹, and has one of the largest food crises in the world². We call for adequate, multi-year and flexible humanitarian funding, expedited especially to frontline organisations. We also urge the Government of South Sudan and other parties to ensure full, unrestricted and unhindered humanitarian access to all regions of the country.

¹ <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/inform-covid-19-risk-index-version-0-1-2>

² <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8786en/CA8786EN.pdf>

The theme for the International Day of Peace 2020 is “Shaping Peace Together.” For peace to take place in South Sudan, the implementation of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) should be a key priority for all parties to the conflict and any other competing interests should be put aside. We thus call on the Government of National Unity of South Sudan and all the parties who signed the R-ARCSS to implement the outstanding items to support a lasting peace. We recognise the need to strengthen the efforts to bring on board the parties that are non-signatories to the R-ARCSS as this continues to present challenges to realising peace across the country. Tackling the spreading of misinformation and hate speech should be a key priority for all stakeholders, also during the time of COVID-19 crisis. We call on the parties to regain trust in each other and act together for peace in South Sudan. Furthermore, we call upon all stakeholders to shape peace together while upholding and respecting democratic space. We also urge the international community to continue to monitor and engage in the peace process.

Despite the devastating conflict in South Sudan, there are various actors in South Sudan who are undertaking invaluable peacebuilding work to shape peace together at local level - these include local peace activists, churches, faith-based organizations, women’s groups, community leaders and NGOs, who use a myriad of methods to bring communities and individuals together and restore relationships. As members of the ENSS, we would like to highlight the role of the churches in peacebuilding and bringing communities together in South Sudan. The churches and the South Sudan Council of Churches support long-term transformational changes through the Action Plan for Peace (APP) aimed at transforming the narratives from that of conflict to peace at community and national level. They provide psycho-social support to victims of violence and support reconciliation processes that address historical grievances to shape a peaceful future together. We call upon the international community to continue to support the church-led and nation wide Action Plan for Peace.

The inclusion of broad and meaningful participation of various groups - civil society, youth and women groups, diaspora communities, churches and faith-based organisations- in both local and national peacebuilding and reconciliation processes to address historical grievances remains critical to ensure that the voices of ordinary South Sudanese are being heard and to start shaping a peaceful future together.

As this year marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, it is a timely call to highlight the importance of inclusion of women in monitoring and engaging in the peacebuilding work in South Sudan. It remains crucial that women’s positive contribution to peace is acknowledged, supported and celebrated.

As members of the ENSS, we continue to stand with the people of South Sudan. We lift the nation of South Sudan to God and pray fervently that the people of South Sudan may live in unity and peace.

SIGNED:

Brot für die Welt, Cafod & Trocaire, Christian aid UK, Christian Council of Norway, The Church of Scotland, Church of Sweden, Danish Church Aid, Diakonie katastrophenhilfe, The Episcopal church, Evangelische Kirche Deutschland, Finn Church Aid, HEKS-EPER Swiss Church Aid, KAIROS Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Misereor, Mission 21, Norwegian Church Aid, PAX, PMU, Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Presbyterian Church USA, South Sudan Council Of Churches, Tearfund, World Vision South Sudan, Council of Churches in the Netherlands

