Press Release

The Voluntary Civil Society Taskforce on the Implementation of the Peace Agreement (the Taskforce) organized three consultative meetings in Juba on February 15, 22 and 24, 2017 for civil society to discuss the national dialogue announced by President Salva Kiir Mayardit in his address to the Transitional National of Legislative Assembly on December 14, 2016.

These three civil society consultative meetings brought together more than 260 participants from over 100 diverse South Sudanese civil society organizations, academic institutions, groups for persons with disabilities, faith-based groups, women’s associations, youth groups and university students, among other members of society, to discuss the national dialogue.

After lengthy deliberations on the concept of the national dialogue and reflections on comparative analysis of national dialogues in other countries, the participants in the consultative meeting:

1. Welcome the call for national dialogue as a non-violent means of resolving conflicts among South Sudanese.

2. Agree to contribute to the national dialogue process through community mobilization, civic awareness and engagement with stakeholders to this national process.

3. Agree to expand and extend such consultative meetings to citizens in the states and in camps of internally displaced persons with the aim of enhancing public awareness and to generate and document opinions of citizens to inform the planning process of the national dialogue.

4. Recommend that the national dialogue does not come as a substitute to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan—both instruments should be pursued.

5. Recommend that the national dialogue be truly inclusive and open to full participation of all South Sudanese citizens within and outside the country including those in camps of internally displaced persons and refugee settlements in foreign lands; South Sudanese diaspora communities around the world and all opposition forces regardless of their locations.

6. Recommend that the agenda of the national dialogue should reflect major areas of national concerns in the country including national vision, identity and unity, security sector reforms, economic sector reforms, historical grievances among communities, distribution of natural resources, and system of governance.

7. Recommend that the Steering Committee and Secretariat of the national dialogue take into consideration and contextualize international best practices for national dialogues to enhance the credibility and integrity of this national dialogue.

8. Acknowledge that the continuous violence coupled with famine, severe food insecurity and economic hardships on the civil population in several parts of the country may limit the ability of citizens to effectively participate in any national process; and therefore recommend that the Transitional
Government of National Unity stabilizes the situation in the country to create a conducive environment for citizens to meaningfully participate in the national dialogue.

9. Recommend that the promise of the President to “…guarantee safety and freedom of all the actors who are going to participate in the National Dialogue, including those who are currently out of the country, some of whom are opposed to the government” be translated into action and should include:
   a. Reaching out to South Sudanese who are still opposed to the government;
   b. Re-declare ceasefire and its enforcement in all honesty and sincerity;
   c. Release of all political prisoners as a gesture of goodwill for inclusive participation in the national dialogue;
   d. Guarantee protection and freedom of expression to the media and civil society actors across the country.

10. Recommend that the directive of the President for “all security forces to support a broad-based national dialogue and ensure that they provide enabling environment for this national project” be enforced prior to commencement and maintained throughout the national dialogue process.

11. Urge all South Sudanese opposition political forces both within and outside South Sudan to embrace the call for national dialogue as a peaceful means to end the prolonged violent conflict in our country and to participate in the process.

12. Acknowledge concerns participants raised over the decision of the President to be patron of the national dialogue and recommend that the national dialogue proceeds without a patron in the interest of consensus and public confidence in the process.

13. Call for representation of civil society particularly women and people with disabilities on the steering committee and the Secretariat for the national dialogue to ensure the process is citizen-driven.

14. Call on the international community to support the national dialogue process in a manner that enhances full implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

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The Voluntary Civil Society Taskforce on Implementation of the Peace Agreement (the Taskforce) is a coalition of over 20 diverse and non-partisan South Sudanese civil society organizations and networks. The Taskforce is interested in genuine and full implementation of the Peace Agreement and a quick end to the suffering inflicted on innocent citizens of South Sudan by the political crises in the country.