Statement on the Self-Determination Referendum for the People of Southern Sudan and the Abyei Referendum

Let My People Choose

We FECLALA members from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda meeting in Nairobi, Kenya from the 30th November to 3rd December 2010 have received updates on the progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the preparations for the self-determination referenda for the people of Southern Sudan and Abyei from the Ecumenical Special Envoy to the Sudan and the General Secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC).

MEETING at a time of joyful hope and expectation and a critical time in the history of the Sudan as the country prepares for the self-determination referendum for the people of Southern Sudan and Abyei;

APPRECIATING the unrelenting struggle of the church in the Sudan for justice, peace and democratic transformation and support of the right of the people of Southern Sudan to exercise their right to self-determination as agreed in the CPA;

COMMENDING the church in the Sudan for its rallying call to the people, ‘Let My People Choose’, with which it continues to stand by the right of all Sudanese people to determine their own future;

APPRECIATING the efforts to promote reconciliation between various Southern Sudan political actors particularly the Southern Sudan Political Parties Conference held from 13th to 16th October 2010;

COMMENDING the African Union High Level Implementation Panel on Sudan (AUHIP) for its facilitation of negotiations between the parties to the CPA on outstanding issues in CPA implementation and post-referendum arrangements;

APPRECIATING the commitment of the parties to the CPA to respect the outcome of the referendum and ensure a peaceful and stable Sudan in the aftermath of the referendum;

CONCERNED about the heightened tensions including threats and intimidation of Southern Sudanese residing in the North after inflammatory statements by some senior government officials and the media;

ALARMED by attempts to intimidate civil society organizations including the recent illegal forced entry into and search of the headquarters of the Sudan Council of Churches in Khartoum by the Sudanese Police;

HAVING deliberated on the current situation in the Sudan and the need to stand in solidarity with the church and people of the Sudan during this critical time in the history of their country;

We commit ourselves to engage closely and accompany the church in the Sudan through prayers, regional and global advocacy for timely implementation of the CPA and in observation and monitoring the self-determination referenda for the people of Southern Sudan and Abyei.
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NOTING with satisfaction the progress made by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) in preparing for the self-determination referendum and aware that the voter register provides the 100% figure against which the required turnout of 60% is calculated;

We join the church in the Sudan in respectfully urging the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) to:

- Facilitate a comprehensive, accurate, transparent and verifiable voter registration exercise;
- Ensure that the turn-out requirement does not result in a violation of the international obligation to provide the equality of the vote;
- Ensure voting arrangements allow all registered Southern Sudanese an equal and reasonable opportunity to vote;
- Conduct a free, fair and credible referendum;
- Ensure that the self-determination referendum meets internationally acceptable standards; and
- Assure the freedom of movement of election observers. Local and international election observer missions should enjoy freedom of access to the referenda process and freedom of movement to all areas of the country.

We join the church in the Sudan in respectfully calling upon the Government of National Unity (GoNU) and the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) to:

Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) Implementation

- Protect the achievements so far realized by the CPA; and
- Resolve all outstanding issues in CPA implementation towards successful and timely completion of the implementation.

Completion of the Demarcation of the North-South and Abyei Border

- Facilitate the full implementation of the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration with the support of local communities;
- Resolve outstanding questions to allow full demarcation of the border on the ground preferably before the referendum; and
- Expeditiously allow the Ad hoc North/South Technical Border Committee to complete its work.

Self-Determination Referendum for the People of Southern Sudan

- Demonstrate exceptional leadership and commitment and rise to the challenges of this historic moment; and
- Treat as binding and respect the choices of the people of Southern Sudan and Abyei.

Abyei Referendum

- Seek a holistic solution to the Abyei issue consistent with agreements entered into and the rights and interests of the communities that reside in and utilize the resources of Abyei; and
- Give the people of Abyei the opportunity to decide on their future status.
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Post-Self Determination Referendum Arrangements

- Increase efforts towards resolving the outstanding issues in CPA implementation and post referendum arrangements and in reaching a framework agreement in the ongoing negotiations facilitated by the African Union High Level Implementation Panel on Sudan; and
- Facilitate a smooth transition in 2011 whatever outcome of the self-determination referenda.

Popular Consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile

- Consider the aspirations of the people of the transitional areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and finalize popular consultations in the areas before the end of the Interim Period on 8th July 2011.

Security

- Ensure that the self-determination referenda take place in a well-maintained security environment;
- Respect the rights and dignity of minorities in North and South Sudan and guarantee their protection;
- Guarantee the safety and security of vulnerable communities particularly Southerners in the North and people of the transitional areas; and
- Ensure Sudanese people do not suffer any abrogation of human rights before, during or after the referendum on self-determination.

We join the church in the Sudan in respectfully calling on Multilateral Institutions, the Guarantors of the CPA and Humanitarian Agencies to:

- Exercise leverage on the parties to the CPA and urge them to peacefully manage political tensions, respect the outcome of the self-determination referenda and dissuade them from opting to a return to war;
- Put in place contingency plans to cater for the ongoing population movements within the Sudan and the broader Horn of Africa region; and
- Urge the parties to the CPA to ensure returns are voluntary and in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights norms and standards.

Done in Nairobi, Kenya, 3rd December 2010,

Bishop Dieudonné Mbaya Tshiakany,
FECCLAHA Chairperson.

Fred Nyabera,
Executive Director.