

South Sudan National Dialogue

Juba, South Sudan, October 2017

**South Sudan National Dialogue
Conceptual Reflections**

Francis Mading Deng

Contents

About the Author.....	9
Preface.....	11
One: National Dialogue Strategy.....	15
Two: National Dialogue: A Policy Framework.....	35
Three: National Dialogue: A Critical Perspective.....	69
Four: Abyei Dialogue: Bottom Up and Top Down....	75
Five: Negotiations in the Cultural Context.....	129
Six: South Sudan: A Framework for International Cooperation.....	147
Seven: Challenges for South Sudan Diplomacy.....	155
Eight: National Dialogue: A Quest for Collaboration.....	169

About the Author

Francis M. Deng currently South Sudan's Roving Ambassador, is Deputy Rapporteur of South Sudan National Dialogue Steering Committee. He was the country's first Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Prior to that, he served for five years as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide at the level of Under-Secretary-General. From 1992 to 2004, he served as Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons. His first position in the United Nations was that of Human Rights Officer in the Secretariat from 1967 to 1972 when he was appointed Sudan's Ambassador to Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (Nordic Countries). He was also Sudan's Ambassador to Canada and the United States of America and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. After leaving his Government's service, he held a series of positions in leading think tanks and universities in the United States. Dr. Deng graduated with an LLB (honors) from the University of Khartoum to which he was appointed member of the Law Faculty and then went abroad for post-graduate studies. He holds

an LL.M and a JSD from Yale Law School. Dr. Deng has authored and edited over thirty books in a wide variety of fields and has written two novels on the crisis of national identity in the Sudan.

Preface

I wrote the first of the articles in this volume shortly after His Excellency, the President of the Republic, announced the National Dialogue in December 2016, with me as one of four Advisors to him as the Patron and a Steering Committee of 'eminent personalities and persons of consensus.' The President subsequently reconstituted the Steering Committee and relinquished his role as Patron to ensure the independence of the process. The Steering Committee comprised a leadership composed of two Co-Chairs, a Deputy Co-Chair, a Rapporteur, two Deputy Rapporteurs, three members and a Secretariat. The Plenary of the Steering Committee was expanded to be more comprehensively representative.

The other articles in the series record my reflections on the process following up on the initial paper about the national dialogue strategy one focuses on policy perspective, and on to a critical preview of the process thus far. This is

followed by a report of special reconciliation talks between individual leaders from the Ngok Dinka of Abyei and their neighboring Twic Dinka, which developed into a model of the bottom up and top down approach stipulated for the National Dialogue.

Since the concept of dialogue implies negotiating differences, I decided to include in this collection a revised version of a paper I had prepared earlier for a seminar in negotiations at Johns Hopking School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Washington and which had appeared as a chapter in two published volumes. An article which I had written on international cooperation as a response to the proposed Regional Protection Force is included as an example of the challenges of partnership with the International Community. Chapter Seven comprises of talking points lecture I recently gave at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation which discusses foreign policy as an extension of domestic policy and the role of diplomacy in promoting

international partnership, with a focus on support for the National Dialogue. The collection ends with a quest for International Collaboration in the support of National Dialogue.

It is never easy to acknowledge exhaustively all those who help in making a publication possible, but some names must be mentioned. I would like to acknowledge those who have contributed more directly to the production of this publication. First, I would like to thank the Sudd Institute for publishing these pieces as a series of policy briefs. My appreciation goes specifically to Abraham Awolich for approving the publication and Dr. Augustino Ting Mayai for editing and formatting the papers for publication. Dr. Lual A. Deng, Executive Director of the Ebony Center and Coordinator of the National Dialogue Steering Committee Secretariat, encouraged and supported the publication of the articles. The Leadership of the Steering Committee, specifically Co-Chair, Honorable Angelo Beda, the Rapporteur, Bona Malwal, and Deputy Rapporteur, Dr. William Othwonh Awer,

approved the publication. A special word of appreciation goes to Vincent M. Wanga (Dupty Head of Communication Unit of the National Dialogue Secretariat) who labored tirelessly to ensure not only the production of the booklet, but also its quality, under considerable time pressure. While I am deeply grateful to these institutions and individuals, I alone bear the responsibility for any errors or shortcomings in this publication.

Francis Mading Deng
Juba, South Sudan,
October 4, 2017.

One

The National Dialogue Strategy

Summary

This concept paper outlines some of the principal elements involved in promoting peace, unity, reconciliation and a shared sense of national identity, the overriding goals of the National Dialogue. The National Dialogue is an opportunity to address the complex web of conflicts afflicting South Sudan through a top-down-bottom-up process that links the national, regional, and the grassroots levels of the interconnected conflicts. Achieving the National Dialogue's goal requires reinforcing and strengthening traditional authorities whose ability to contribute to the maintenance of law and order and to the security and stability of the country at the grassroots level, has long been tested.

The Dialogue's Steering Committee needs to be assisted by resource persons to carry out consultations with stakeholders at the regional and local levels to report to the National Conference which will then prepare an integrated report to the President for the final submission to Parliament for adoption and

implementation in collaboration with the Executive.

Thus, the National Dialogue should aim at both ending armed conflicts with a sense of urgency and creating an on-going process aimed at engendering and sustaining a culture of Dialogue that is in conformity with the traditional African method of preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts and fostering reconciliation. The following recommendations are directed to the government.

- Commit to undertaking the National Dialogue as an opportunity to genuinely address the root causes of the crises afflicting the country and to consider with sincerity and credibility its recommendations;*
- Undertake to fully implement the recommendations of the National Dialogue that make a legitimate and credible case for the reform and transformation of the system toward a more appropriate, contextualized and effective form of governance that might require major changes in the current system;*
- Embark on a national campaign aimed at:*

- *informing the public to ensure inclusivity, credibility, and transparency of the National Dialogue process and the commitment of the Government to consider its implications with the clear objective of serving the overriding interest of the nation;*
 - *challenging communities to serve as agents of the required transformation, by owning the resolutions of the National Dialogue, and assisting in their implementation;*
 - *Identifying creative ways to harness internal resources, as part of a collective responsibility, to rescue their country and set it on a new path of socio-economic recovery and development; and*
- *Engage and impress upon the international community the sincere commitment of the Government to the principles of inclusivity, credibility, and transparency of the National Dialogue process and its determination to give its recommendations serious consideration for credible implementation, and evidencing that commitment through a methodology of outreach, data collection*

and analysis that engages the public and unlocks their full participation.

1. Introduction

The overriding goal of the proposed National Dialogue is to promote peace, national unity, equitable socio-economic development, and a shared sense of national purpose. To achieve this objective, it is essential to identify the underlining causes of the prevailing discord, confrontation and violent conflicts. As the President observed in the Concept Note on this initiative, “National Dialogue is both a forum and a process through which the people of South Sudan shall gather to redefine the basis of their unity as it relates to nationhood, redefine citizenship and belonging, restructure the state, regenerate social contract, and revitalize their aspirations for development and membership in the world of nations.”

While the details are bound to be more complex, it is safe to assume that these issues have much to do with identity conflicts and the challenges they pose for managing diversity constructively. Identity is an important element of self-awareness and solidarity with members of a kindred group.

It is both objective in the sense that it is based on discernable factors, such as ethnicity or region. But it is also subjective in that it is what people believe themselves to be, rather than what they are objectively, that counts the most. Identity can also be inclusive and accommodating, or exclusive and intolerant. Whether it is objective or subjective, inclusive or exclusive, identity and grievances related to it must be taken seriously. As the President stated affirmatively in his address to the nation, “no grievances will be left unaddressed in this process of national dialogue.”

While ethnicity as such is not a source of conflict, it offers opportunities for ambitious politicians to mobilize support and rally masses on the basis of ethnic solidarity and shared sense of grievances. These alleged grievances could be objective in the sense that they are well founded or subjective in that they reflect the feelings and perceptions that may not be supported by objective facts or based on unfounded assumptions and misinformation. In either case, they need to be addressed, whether by responding to genuine grievances or by correcting misperceptions and distortions.

2. Principles of Governance

The principles of governance that are currently applicable in South Sudan, as in most independent African countries, were inherited from the colonial rulers and reflected in constitutions that were thrust upon them at independence. These principles derived primarily from Western experience and embodied norms that were based on assumptions of significant racial, ethnic, and cultural homogeneity. They also represented ideals of democracy and fundamental liberties to which the colonial rulers themselves did not adhere, being essentially authoritarian and dictatorial. African principles of governance, which rested on autonomy, dialogue, persuasion and consensus building, were never observed. The colonial rulers, in particular the British in the Sudan, however, used indirect rule as an inexpensive means of maintaining law and order through peace, security and stability, but as a separate and isolated system that did not feature as part of the modernizing national political framework. This system did not treat all groups equitably; some groups were more privileged, while others were marginalized or ignored.

At independence, African Governments, fearful of ethnic diversity as a threat to the fragile unity of the infant nations, and in order to prioritize national unity and social and economic development, suppressed diversity, centralized governance, and postponed civil liberties and respect for human rights as luxuries the new states could not afford. Access to central power became the principal means of receiving services, employment opportunities and socio-economic development projects. Once the uniting objective of the independence movement was removed, the struggle for central power and national resources and services ensued, in some cases resulting in armed struggle for justice or independence from what was perceived as internal colonialism. Such was the case in the Sudan.

3. South Sudan's Liberation Struggle

The conflict in the Sudan essentially reflected an acute crisis of national identity. The core of the crisis was twofold. First, the dominant group, a hybrid African-Arab race, perceived itself as Arab and reinforced that self-perception with an extreme version of Islam that was exclusive and discriminating. Second, this distorted self-

perception was then imposed on the country as the national identity framework, despite the immense racial, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the country.

The struggle of South Sudan was for equality of citizenship and non-discrimination on any grounds, including race, ethnicity, religion, culture and gender. This was essentially a struggle for freedom, fundamental rights, civil liberties, and human dignity for all. If this was not possible within a united New Sudan, as stipulated by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army, SPLM/A, then the right of self-determination amounting to independence was the obvious alternative. This is what led to the independence of South Sudan.

4. The Legacy of Independence

The legacy and indeed the challenge of South Sudan's struggle are to build on the ideals for which the people fought and sacrificed so much for half a century and even longer. This means guarding against the causes of conflict that had torn Sudan apart. It is obvious that South Sudan does not have the elements of diversity that were

at the core of Sudan's conflict of identities, since South Sudanese are not divided by race, ethnicity, culture or intolerant approach to religion. But identity can also be relative and can be reflected in various social configuration, including tribe, lineage, or family. These factors must also be put into consideration in managing diversity constructively. As the President stated in his address to the nation, "All my colleagues and I fought for this country, not to tear it apart, but to preserve its unity, guarantee its economic viability, and ensure enduring freedom and equality for its people."

It also requires designing a system of governance that is based on the indigenous cultural values and institutions of the people of South Sudan. The indigenous societies of South Sudan are among the most studied by anthropologists in the world. These societies are widely recognized as segmentary, acephalous, decentralized, self-governing and fiercely antagonistic to centralized authoritarian rule. Every group is exceedingly proud and resistant to domination. It is a society in which dictatorship cannot succeed.

5. The Challenge of Endogenous Governance

Given these fundamental principles of endogenous governance, the choice the people of South Sudan must make is whether to build their nation on the governance and constitutional Eurocentric principles that have been applied by African countries, with varying degrees of successes and failures, or to design an original system that is founded on the realities of the South Sudanese societies. Either choice will require creativity and hard work to make it effective and sustainable. It is also possible to build a hybrid system that is based on integrating elements of both, tailored to the particular needs of South Sudan.

6. Guidelines for Implementation

On the assumption that the current conflicts in the country are based on real or perceived grievances of the people of South Sudan at various levels of national governance, the proposed National Dialogue must design a strategy of implementation that will entail gathering and processing information from targeted groups at all levels, from the grass roots

up the governmental hierarchy to the national level. As the President outlined in both the Concept Note and the address to the nation, National Dialogue will be conducted at three interrelated levels, stages, or phases. The first phase will entail grassroots consultations aimed at mapping out and addressing grievances that are particular to each community or group. The second phase will be at the regional level to address and resolve inter-communal conflicts. The third and final phase will involve convening a national conference to tackle national issues not addressed and resolved at the first two levels. The implementation process should entail the following steps:

- Identifying grievance-bearing or interest groups whose views are to be solicited;
- Selecting resource people who will conduct focused group discussions;
- Deploying the resource people to conduct the field investigations at the various levels of the governance structure, from local to national;

- Submitting the reports of the resource people to the Steering Committee for consideration;
- Preparing the reports of the Steering Committee with recommendations for submission to the National Conference, which then get submitted to the President;
- Finalizing the report of the Presidency for submission to the Parliament for endorsement;
- Launching a national campaign to explain the process and the outcome to the people of South Sudan; and
- Embarking on a diplomatic initiative to explain the National Dialogue process and its outcomes to regional and international partners.

7. Prioritizing the Goals and Objectives

While the above measures are generic to the implementation of the National Dialogue in general, the overriding goals and specific objectives of the National Dialogue should be prioritized and placed at the top of the agenda to resolve the current violence that is tearing the

country apart. This requires engaging the key parties to the conflict, in particular the Government, the opposition in its various configurations, and those communities most affected by the conflict. The second order of priority would be engagement with the wider South Sudanese populace in its more inclusive configuration at all levels to broaden the basis of peace. The third order of priority would be a longer term search for a system of governance and constitutionalism that promotes an inclusive national identity framework, durable peace, unity and harmony, social cohesiveness, solidarity in nation building, and the pursuit of socio-economic development as a process of self-enhancement from within.

To summarize the process, the Steering Committee will need to employ teams of resource people who will go to all the States, Counties, Payams and Bomas to organize meetings with representatives of the relevant groups to seek their views on the grievances held by their people. These alleged grievances could be classified into those that are reasonably well founded and need to be effectively addressed, and those that are based on perceptions and misinformation that

should be corrected. The results of these discussion groups would then be reported to the Steering Committee, which will then filter and summarize them for presentation and discussion by the larger National Dialogue conference. The process will end with recommendations that will be presented to the National Leadership, under the Presidency and Parliament, for final adoption.

8. External Outreach

Although the proposed strategy is essentially domestic, it is important to bear in mind that foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy. This means that reaching out to regional and international actors or partners should build on representing and promoting a positive domestic agenda as a basis for gaining support and cooperation from regional and international actors.

South Sudan was a major beneficiary of regional and international support for its independence and cooperation in addressing the security and development needs of the new country. However, since the outbreak of hostilities in 2013, and the

renewed hostilities in 2016, South Sudan is being scrutinized and criticized for the conflict and its devastating humanitarian and human rights consequences. This has resulted in tensions and confrontations that threaten to turn former allies and friends into foes.

But South Sudan has nothing to gain from hostile relations with regional and international actors and much to gain from cooperation and partnership. As the President noted in his address to the nation, we should remember that “the International Community always stood by us. Therefore, we cannot turn our own frustrations into hatred against them. As friends, we must work together with them in the spirit of building our nation.” The President also appealed to the International Community to support the Government, National Dialogue efforts, and the entire peace implementation process.

The first challenge for South Sudan is to acknowledge that despite the partitioning of the Sudan, South Sudan and Sudan remain bound together in various ways. One of these are the historical ties that cannot be totally obliterated. Another is that there are unresolved issues that

relate to the sharing of long borders, and internal conflicts that spill over these borders and involve support for each other's rebel groups. The ongoing confrontation and conflict between the two countries need to be reversed in favor of cooperation and some form of close association.

South Sudan also needs to improve relations with its neighbors and the international community generally. Building foreign relations on the basis of domestic policies means that strategies aimed at promoting peace, security, stability and development should reverse the negative attitude and foster regional and international support and partnership. The National Dialogue process and its positive outcomes should provide a basis for restoring confidence in the country and promoting cooperation and partnership with regional and international actors.

9. Concluding Comments

As indicated in the President's statement to the nation, National Dialogue is not only a forum with specific objectives and outcomes that can be acted upon immediately, but also an ongoing process aimed at continuously fostering peace,

security, stability and prosperity for the people of South Sudan.

These reflections present opportunities for discussion by those involved in organizing and directing the National Dialogue process. They are broad principles that can be debated, reformulated or changed, as appropriate, to serve the fundamental goals of the National Dialogue process. While the debate continues, the following recommendations could be used to innovate the process.

- Commit to undertaking the National Dialogue as an opportunity to genuinely address the root causes of the crises afflicting the country and to consider with sincerity and credibility its recommendations;

- Undertake to fully implement the recommendations of the National Dialogue that make a legitimate and credible case for reforms and transformation of the system toward a more appropriate, contextualized and effective form of governance that might require major changes in the current system;

- Embark on a national campaign aimed at:
 - informing the public to ensure inclusivity, credibility, and transparency of the National Dialogue process and the commitment of the Government to consider its implications with the clear objective of serving the overriding interest of the nation;
 - challenging communities to serve as agents of the required transformation, by owning the resolutions of the National Dialogue, and assisting in their implementation, and
 - identifying creative ways to harness internal resources, as part of a collective responsibility, to rescue their country and set it upon a new path of socio-economic recovery and development;

- Engage and impress upon the international community the sincere commitment of the Government to the principles of inclusivity, credibility, and transparency of the National

Dialogue process and its determination to give its recommendations serious consideration for credible implementation, and evidencing that commitment through a methodology of outreach, data collection and analysis that fully engages the public, and unlocks their whole participation.

Two

National Dialogue: A Policy Framework

Summary

This policy paper frames the National Dialogue around a number of critical issues that provide a clear conceptual framework that is both comprehensive and simple enough to be easily understood by the public. The themes of the paper are outlined in a series of introductory questions.

The logic of these questions is to relate the current crises in the country to the unfulfilled dreams of the liberation struggle that should have provided guidance to the leadership in developing an appropriate system of governance for South Sudan. Such a system should not only have corrected the wrongs of the Old Sudan against which our people rebelled, but should have also provided the inspiration and guidelines for pursuing a more idealistic system that should have been a model to be admired and emulated by other countries. Instead, South Sudan is now widely perceived as a failed state whose crises are seen as threatening the peace and security of the region and endangering the wider international order.

The questions to be addressed must credibly investigate the sources of the crises: What went wrong? Why did we fail to realize the dreams of our long struggle for which our people sacrificed so much for so long? What obstacles stood in the way of pursuing and fulfilling those dreams? What can now be done to overcome those obstacles? What vision for our nation can we reconstruct and pursue in earnest? What role has the international community played both positively and negatively to influence developments and peacebuilding in our country? And what can we now do to regain and promote cooperation with the international community which has been negatively affected by our current crises? These are only some of the questions that we need to pose and address

We must take the National Dialogue as an opportunity forum to diagnose our ills, pose these questions candidly, and seek answers with an open mind and with a determination to respond credibly to the challenge of building a better future for our country. All those in positions of responsibility must commit to implementing the recommendations of the National Dialogue for a major reform and transformation of the system in the collective interest of the nation and a better life for future generations. The following policy

suggestions are presented.

- *Engage the Leadership of the SPLM/A in a sincere review of the ideals and principles of the liberation struggle and why the independent South Sudan has failed to honor the fundamental values of the struggle;*
- *Identify the challenges and obstacles that now stand in the way of radically reforming the system to revive the ideals and principles of the liberation struggle and how they can be acted upon to inspire and guide corrective measures to improve future performance;*
- *Undertake an objective and credible review of the history of the support South Sudan received from the international community in its liberation struggle and in its post-independence development efforts, why the country has lost international goodwill, and what can be done to regain it and promote international partnership in addressing the challenges facing South Sudan; and*
- *Develop and sustain a culture of Dialogue as a strategy for preventing, managing, and resolving*

internal conflicts and for constructively engaging the international community in a mutually beneficial partnership to address the security and development challenges facing the country.

1. Overview of the Challenge

As stipulated by the President of the Republic, Salva Kiir Mayardit, the key objective of the National Dialogue that he first announced on December 14, 2016 and officially launched on May 22, 2017, is the pursuit of peace and national unity. This implies bringing an end to the proliferating conflicts that are devastating our country. Ending violence and consolidating peace and unity in turn require addressing the root causes of the conflicts. These sets of objectives pose a number of critical questions that need to be urgently addressed.

First, what are the overriding principles of the South Sudanese liberation struggle that should guide our national deliberations on the crises tearing our country apart? Second, what factors in the turbulent peace process that ended the North-South war and post war legacies account for some of the crises that are afflicting the country? Third, as these guiding principles were a source of

inspiration and aspirations in the struggle of the South Sudanese for decades, what prevented their realization after independence? Fourth, what now needs to be done to correct the situation and renew the pursuit of these erstwhile objectives and founding principles? Fifth, what are the predictable obstacles to achieving these objectives and fundamental principles? Sixth, what should be done to overcome these predictable obstacles? Seven, how can South Sudanese diplomacy contribute to effectively reactivating and vigorously mobilizing international partnerships in support of national endeavors?

In this paper, I elaborate on these questions and try to offer answers that might help provide a basis for addressing the issues tabled for the National Dialogue. I conclude with a summary of the issues and their implications for policy making and pertinent action.

2. Principles of the Struggle

It should be remembered that South Sudanese struggled for over half a century in pursuit of overriding objectives and principles. Among these

were freedom from domination, recognition for their distinctive racial, cultural and religious identity, inclusivity and full equality in the governance of their country, and enjoyment of all the rights due to them as citizens without discrimination on any ground.

Associated with these overriding goals and objectives are the related principles of democratic participation in their government, respect for their political and civil rights and fundamental liberties, and the enjoyment of all the rights inherent in universal human dignity. With the guarantee of these basic rights, South Sudanese confidently expected to exploit their vast natural resources to promote the socio-economic development and prosperity which they had been denied by both colonial and post-colonial governments of the Sudan.

The liberation struggle of South Sudan took two phases. The first war, which lasted from 1955 to 1972, under the leadership of South Sudan Liberation Movement and its military wing, the Anyanya, was essentially a secessionist movement, but compromised in 1972 for regional autonomy. The unilateral abrogation of that agreement

triggered the second war, 1983-2005, under the leadership of Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army, SPLM/A, whose declared objective was no longer the independence of Southern Sudan, but the liberation of the whole country.

Whether for pragmatic or idealistic reasons, the cause of South Sudan had become entangled in the SPLM/A Vision of a New Sudan of full equality for all the peoples of the Sudan, South and North, without discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, culture or gender.

Apart from the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, who were annexed to the North by the British in 1905, but whom everybody recognizes as South Sudanese and had in any case been always an integral part of the Southern Sudanese struggle, the vision of the New Sudan had inspired the non-Arab groups in the Northern Sudanese states of Southern Kordofan (the Nuba) and Blue Nile (the Angasana or Funj), to join the South Sudanese in the struggle. The Darfurians to the West staged their own armed struggle. The Beja to the East and even the Nubians of the far North remained

uneasy, although they did not join the armed struggle.

While the people of South Sudan ostensibly accepted the vision of the SPLM/A as a tactical means of counter-acting African and international resistance to secession, the fighting men were popularly known to say, "We know what we are fighting for", which essentially meant independence.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, CPA, that ended the war in 2005, gave the people of South Sudan the right to decide by a referendum to be exercised after a six-year interim period whether to remain in a United Sudan or become independent. South Sudanese decided overwhelmingly in favor of independence, which was formally declared on 9 July, 2011.

The Abyei Protocol of the CPA gave the Ngok Dinka of Abyei the right to decide through a referendum whether to remain in North Sudan or rejoin the South, but Khartoum blocked the exercise of that right. The CPA also gave the people of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states the right to decide through a vague concept of popular consultation how they were to be

governed within a United Sudan. The Darfurians were not included in the peace agreement and were pursuing their own armed struggle. Although the Beja and the Nubians remained dormant, they were no longer comfortable within the normative framework of the Old Sudan.

Independence came as a joyous surprise for the South Sudanese, as they had prepared themselves for a prolonged struggle in pursuit of the vision of a New Sudan and for the full and unqualified freedom from domination by the North. Nevertheless, they expected to at last enjoy all the rights and freedoms for which they had fought so hard for so long.

The independent South Sudan was expected to build a nation that would correct the ills of the Old Sudan and become a model that would live up to the ideals for which its people had fought. To safeguard this new nation, three areas of reform were high in the order of priority. The first was to reorganize and modernize the SPLA to be a national army, well trained and equipped to be an effective force to defend the independence, integrity and sovereignty of the new country. The second was to reorganize the SPLM to be a national political party capable of

running a democratic modern nation state. The third was to establish a government that would guarantee the peace and security of the country, protect all its citizens without discrimination, provide peace dividends, and generate a robust equitable program of socio-economic development that would effectively exploit the vast natural resources of the country and promote the prosperity of its people, which had been frustrated by decades of warfare. In other words, South Sudan was to be the realization of dreams and ideals to which the people had aspired for decades.

Reality would however set in to create a contrastingly disappointing picture. Perhaps the most obvious contradiction which should have been foreseen but was surprisingly overlooked was that South Sudan would remain connected to the Sudan through the unresolved conflicts in the North that had become an integral part of the Southern struggle. While most South Sudanese did not seem to worry about the plight of fellow Northern Sudanese who had been comrades in arms, but were now left in the Old Sudan against which they had fought together with the South, the leadership of the SPLM/A did not forget

them. Indeed, President Salva Kiir Mayardit stated in his independence speech that they would not abandon them, but would instead support their cause through peaceful means. That peaceful means would prove to be a coded language for what Sudan and the international community would continue to see as unwarranted support for the rebels of the Sudan and an interference in the internal affairs of the Sudan. Sudan would retaliate by continuing to support old and new rebels against the leadership in South Sudan. In other words, the two countries would remain bound by conflict.

3. Turbulent Road to Independence

To be sure, many people around the world had opposed the independence of South Sudan with doomsday predictions. Sudan, supported by many inside and outside Africa, argued that South Sudanese were acutely divided by tribalism, that the only thing that united them was their common opposition to the North, that without that uniting factor and the control of the central government from the North, the country would be torn apart by inter-tribal conflicts. An independent South Sudan was destined to be a

failed state, or worse, would collapse. The crises of an independent South Sudan would destabilize the entire region and endanger international peace and security.

Furthermore, Sudan argued that the independence of South Sudan would set a bad example for the whole of Africa, where racial, ethnic, tribal and other sources of diversity posed a pervasive threat to national unity in virtually all the countries. This was indeed a concern that was shared by many in Africa and internationally.

Questions should have been asked as to what would cause an independent South Sudan to fail or collapse, whether the reasons would be internal or external, and what, if any, could be done to prevent that predicted outcome. But these questions were never posed. Instead, the Southern Sudanese leadership emphatically asserted that their country would not fail or collapse. How so was also not explained. For South Sudanese, their path to independence was a preordained destiny which no doomsday predictions could block.

The sub-regional countries of the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development,

IGAD, who first initiated the peace process in the early 1990s, stipulated in their Declaration of Principles, DoPs, a more nuanced approach than the blanket opposition to secession which the Sudan advocated. They stated quite emphatically that the people of South Sudan were entitled to the right of self-determination, including independence, which they had never exercised, that the unity of the Sudan should be given priority, but that the Government of the Sudan must create the necessary conditions for unity, stipulated to include separation of state and religion. Failing that, the right of the people of South Sudan to secede must be accepted.

Although the Government of the Sudan indicated from the start that it was not prepared to compromise on its Islamization agenda, including the application of Sharia to the whole country, the issue of self-determination for the South remained quite controversial until the very end, both in Africa and internationally.

The leadership of a few countries and some key individuals was pivotal to the eventual change of positions on the issue, among them the Troika of Norway, United Kingdom, and the United States,

and specifically President Barack Obama of the United States, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and leaders from the sub-region.

It is obvious from this brief overview of the peace process that there were misgivings about the independence of South Sudan that would continue to haunt the country and that needed to be addressed for South Sudan to be truly secure in its independence.

4. Independence with Strings

As South Sudanese joyously celebrated their independence in a blazing African sun, it should have been obvious that while the independence of the South was a monumental achievement, there were some elements of unfinished business. The referendum of Abyei had been blocked by Khartoum and despite the promise of support declared by President Salva Kiir Mayardit, the Nuba and the Angassana were still under the yoke of Khartoum. Furthermore, the South Sudanese militias whom Khartoum had recruited, trained, armed, and unleashed against the South, remained under the command of Khartoum's loyal allies.

The SPLM/A had lost its founding leader, Dr. John Garang de Mabior, only two weeks into the implementation of the CPA. His successor was about to inherit an independent South Sudan that had been utterly destroyed by half a century of war. Dr. John Garang had declared two principles that he said would guide his government: taking towns to the people in the rural areas, and investing oil revenues in agriculture as an engine of economic growth. He was also reported to have responded to a question about his priorities for development by repeating: 'roads, roads, roads', three times. These declared policies are now often mentioned only as relics of unfulfilled dreams.

As President Salva Kiir Mayardit embarked on the leadership of a country that had been acutely divided by a long devastating and fragmenting war, he correctly made the unity of the country his top priority. Toward that end, he began to absorb the armed militias. This was highly applauded, but it was to prove paradoxically a source of on-going disunity and chronic violence as ambitious commanders saw rebellion as a rewarding adventure.

The unresolved issues between Sudan and South Sudan, in particular the mutual allegation that they were continuing to support each other's rebels, means that the two countries remained entangled in conflict. Unless they cooperated in resolving each other's internal conflicts, their bilateral relations would continue to be confrontational. Conversely, cooperating on ending their internal conflicts would contribute to normalizing their bilateral relations and fostering cooperation between them. That dilemma continues to haunt the relations between the two countries.

5. Obstacles to Nationhood

The rampant violence, disunity, and crisis of nationhood that continue to afflict the country can be said to be both internally based and externally connected, if not generated. It must be remembered that South Sudan became independent as a country in ruin, physically, socially, culturally, economically and environmentally. It was a country in which the overwhelming portion of the population knew nothing but war. The vast majority of the adult population of South Sudan grew up from childhood to middle age, and on to becoming

elders, with nothing but the pride of their struggle for freedom and dignity. The overwhelming majority of the people for whom they fought had also been impoverished by war and the deprivations of state mismanagement.

So, when freedom came, with dividends accruing only to the leadership, embellished by the unexpectedly abundant oil revenues, the impulse to make up for lost opportunities became apparently irresistible.

Corruption has largely been attributed to greed, but it is also fueled by need. When a senior government official or military officer is seen by his impoverished people as a potential benefactor in providing for their essential needs, and he has access to public resources, temptation can become difficult to resist. The line between wrong and right becomes quite thin. Not very many people have the moral fortitude to resist crossing that thin line.

How else can the magnitude of the corruption that squandered billions of US dollars of public funds, with nothing to show for them, be explained? And how can such a magnitude of

corruption be criminally or financially accounted for or remedied?

The predicaments of South Sudan are however far more serious than material; the social fabric of the country, including its cultural values and institutions, has been destroyed, not only by external domination over many decades, but ironically also by the war of liberation. Warlords not only enriched themselves, but usurped the role of traditional leadership. In some cases, they humiliated and even dismissed legitimate traditional leaders and replaced them with their own puppets.

Traditionally, Chiefs and elders were the peacemakers who controlled the youth warrior age sets. In modern terms, this meant civilian control of the military. In the militarized society of today, elders become the warriors in the positions of generals and commanders, instead of the peacemakers they traditionally were. The traditional age set system, which not only regimented males and females into defined roles throughout life, but also mobilized youth to perform public functions that required physical strength beyond warfare, have for all intents and

purposes, disappeared. The war ethics that strictly prevented children and women from being targeted or harmed in any way are no longer respected. The practice of child soldiers has become the norm. Rape, which traditionally condemned and ostracized the culprit to the point of being banished from the society and forced into exile, has become a weapon of war. Civilians, including women, children and the elderly, are now the primary victims of warfare.

A major problem of African constitutionalism and system of governance is that they are not based on indigenous cultural values and institutions. During the European colonial rule, the governance system that prevailed was one of authoritarianism, dictatorship, centralized control and domination. At independence, the colonial rulers reversed themselves and bequeathed their European models of constitutionalism with their ideals that they did not adhere to during their rule. Their concepts and institutions of democracy, human rights, civil liberties, and fundamental freedoms were foreign organs transplanted in the African body politics. No wonder they were soon rejected, overthrown, and discarded without tears being shed.

In the context of South Sudan, the anthropologically well documented segmentary lineage system, which ensured autonomous self-government for groups down to the family, has been replaced by a centralized system of governance. The colonial use of the traditional leaders through indirect rule, which was an effective economical means of maintaining law and order, has been severely weakened. The traditional justice system, which rested on persuasion and consensus building, is now replaced by coercion, guaranteed by police and even military force. While the security agents perform an important public service, some of them engage in excessive practices that threaten the freedoms and civil liberties of ordinary citizens. This is in sharp contrast with what anthropologists have described as the statelessness or ordered anarchy of our indigenous societies, where discipline and security prevailed without military or police force.

Socio-economically, instead of traditional self-reliance in the construction of homes, agricultural production, and animal husbandry that reinforced independence and self-sufficiency in our indigenous societies, the control of

resources, employment opportunities, and projects for socio-economic development are now virtually the monopoly of central government. This makes the stakes in the central government and the correlated struggle for power very high. Being in Government provides access to public goods; being out of power means deprivation and impoverishment. No wonder, many strive to have their hands in the pie. The outcome of all this is that the ordinary people of South Sudan are being systematically disempowered and impoverished.

South Sudanese need to look at themselves to see the state of their country and ask some tough questions about what went wrong and how it can be remedied with a sense of urgency.

6. Internal Way Forward

The solution to a problem begins with understanding the origins and causes of the problem. The foregoing description and analysis of the situation in South Sudan indicates that the crises in the country must be traced to the long struggle of the people, its impact on the country

as a whole, and the persistent legacy of the decade's long war with the North.

The first step in the way forward is to recall the objectives of the struggle which have been derailed and compromised by the intervening exigencies that have occupied the leadership since independence.

Foremost of the principles the people of South Sudan struggled for was freedom from domination and the enjoyment of political, social and cultural rights. This requires creating a conducive climate of peace and security. Such a climate can only be created and consolidated through policies of inclusivity and equality for all groups without discrimination or distinction. This calls for constructive management of diversity.

Diversity itself is a relative concept which exists in all countries and societies and at all levels, from global to local, down to individuals. Even Somalia, one of the most homogeneous countries in the world, whose people are united by ethnicity, religion, language and culture, has been torn apart by clan differences.

What causes conflict is not the mere differences, but the implications of those differences in the shaping of power, sharing of wealth, and overall position in society. In countries marked by racial, ethnic, religious and cultural diversities, some people are considered members of an in-group who enjoy the full rights of belonging, while others are marginalized, discriminated, and excluded as members of an out-group.

In the Old Sudan, the division was clear-cut between the privileged ruling Arab-Islamic minority and the non-Arab, non-Muslim groups, who were marginalized, discriminated against, and excluded from the full enjoyment of citizenship rights. The vision of the New Sudan was in essence aimed at correcting this gross inequality. In South Sudan, such stark differences and discrimination do not exist, since all South Sudanese recognize themselves as racially and culturally African, and accept their religious differences on equal footing. But South Sudan is composed of some 64 ethnic groups, which, given the relativity of diversity, is not an insignificant source of potential tensions and conflict, rooted in real or perceived inequality in the shaping and sharing of values. Although the tensions and

conflicts that have afflicted the SPLM/A since its inception have primarily been due to ideological and political differences, they have also been linked to ethnic divisions. The 1991 abortive coup of Riek Machar and Lam Akol started as an ideological and political difference with their leader, John Garang, but soon became an almost genocidal Dinka-Nuer conflict. The 2013 violence first erupted as a power struggle within the SPLM/A between Riek Machar and President Salva Kiir Mayardit, but soon developed into an ethnic conflict that is seen as primarily pitting the Nuer against the Dinka. Since then, many groups, generally identified on ethnic bases, have joined the opposition against the government which is increasingly perceived as Dinka dominated.

In this polarized and polarizing conflict, perceptions can overshadow reality, and whatever the equations of the power structures, the Dinka are being seen as having replaced the Arabs as the rulers in an ethnically unjust system. As the various ethnic groups converge against what they perceive as Dinka domination, the Dinka in turn begin to perceive themselves as targeted and paradoxically as in imminent danger of a

genocidal onslaught. They therefore strive to mobilize themselves in self-defense. The ethnic confrontation that Khartoum had warned the international community against has tragically become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In this context of perceived ethnic polarization and stratification, the quest for a New Sudan is no longer a relic of the past, but a call for a reform agenda that has become increasingly pertinent to South Sudan. Since the overriding goal of full equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or culture cannot be disputed, people should be united behind it as a desired objective. Any unjustified allegations of inequality can then be empirically questioned, objectively tested, and verified by the facts on the ground.

As President Salva Kiir Mayardit has stated in his Concept Note and various statements on the National Dialogue, echoed by the opening statements of the Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee, the Dialogue must be based on inclusivity, integrity, and transparency. By the same token, achieving and sustaining peace in

South Sudan must be both a top down and a bottom up strategy.

The need for negotiating and resolving the conflict between and among the various warring parties is well recognized as a challenge at the national level. Equally pressing are the conflicts at the regional level which pit communities against one another. And at the grassroots level, there are conflicts which are essentially intra-communal, but must also be of concern to the nation as a whole.

What is often overlooked is the importance of the traditional authorities to the maintenance of peace and security at the grassroots. As noted earlier, it is these authorities who managed through the indirect rule policy to supplement the meager human and material resources of British colonial administration to establish and maintain peace and security throughout the vast country of one million square miles. As also already noted, the role of traditional leaders has been eroded, weakened, and grossly undermined by the post-independence developments in the Sudan, including the North-South civil war. These

traditional institutions and related cultural values must now be restored, strengthened and reformed to play an effective role in the modern South Sudanese context.

7. International Outreach

The paradox of the South Sudanese crisis is that it has eroded the enormous goodwill which the international community demonstrated toward the new country at independence. South Sudan is now quite isolated from the international community and even former friends and allies are turning into adversaries. What is ironic about this turn of events is that these former friends and allies, who are now critical of South Sudan, are driven by concern over the plight of our people, whom they see as victims of power-thirsty leaders who seem to care less about their own people. What is particularly painful is the perception that the international community cares more about the people of South Sudan than do their own leaders.

In this international condemnation, those countries who supported the independence of South Sudan are now being blamed by those who

were opposed to Southern Sudanese independence who see them as responsible for the post-independence crisis in the country. The attitude of these critics appears to be, "We told you so". Particularly ironic is that by supporting South Sudan against international scrutiny, these countries are now posing as our friends and we applaud them in appreciation.

What this situation calls for is a serious reassessment of South Sudan's diplomacy to broaden our global outreach and increase our partners without losing old friends. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy and that winning support internationally is not so much a function of being well spoken or clever, but of having a credible and winning message to convey. Putting one's house in order is a critical first step to reaching out externally.

It is also important to cultivate a common ground of cooperation on the basis of shared interests and concerns. In this connection, it is worth remembering that our former friends and allies, who are now among our most vocal critics, are motivated by their concern about the

plight of our country and our people, whose independence they had supported against many opponents. In a sense, they feel that we have failed them. Their concern should also be our concern. This should provide a common ground for cooperation rather than confrontation. Instead of being defensive, in denial, or angry against their allegations, we should appreciate their concern as primarily in our national interest and therefore providing a basis for working together to bring a speedy end to our crises. Where they are factually wrong in their allegations against us, we should engage them and correct them objectively and constructively instead of antagonizing them. While we welcome new friends and should work to win more, we must strive to restore and maintain our old friends instead of turning them into foes.

Our overriding goal must be to develop a positive domestic agenda which we can proudly promote as a basis for winning friendships and partnerships internationally. Defensiveness and denials only generate cynicism, more accusations and greater condemnation. Ultimately, cooperation rather than confrontation is a more winning diplomatic strategy.

8. Dialogue in Perspective

National Dialogue is a noble principle and an overriding goal which no reasonable person can oppose. Differences can only arise on the details of implementation, in particular, the extent to which it respects inclusivity, integrity, and transparency.

If the National Dialogue is to achieve its stated objectives, then it must adhere to these principles or face certain failure. That would defeat its very purpose. It is therefore in the overriding national interest not only to support the National Dialogue, but to be actively involved in its implementation and strive to ensure its adherence to the stipulated principles.

While the urgent quest for peace makes it imperative that the National Dialogue produces results within the shortest possible period, the very concept of dialogue implies a process that continues as part of human interaction in all situations and at all levels.

In terms of the order of priority, while the cause of peace and unity is a comprehensive national

aspiration, top on the priority list must be to end the armed conflict that is tearing the nation apart. Related to the conflict at the national level are regionally based inter-communal conflicts that are also threatening national peace and security. Then there are conflicts at the grassroots level, which though internal to the community, are nonetheless destabilizing too many communities and ultimately to the nation.

Finally, a related issue on the agenda of the national dialogue must be restoring, strengthening and reforming our traditional governance systems to complement the state in maintaining peace and security at the grassroots, which is cumulatively pivotal to the maintenance of national peace and security. To restate by way of emphasis a point made in the President's Concept Note and various statements, National Dialogue is not an event, but a process that is ongoing as a means of preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts that arise as an inherent aspect of normal human relations, but become heightened at moments of crises. It is my firm belief that crises often create opportunities, and while pessimism leads to a dead end, optimism, if not blind, generates constructive action. National Dialogue offers an optimistic opportunity to end

bloodshed and ensure lasting peace, unity, security, stability and prosperity that our country so badly needs and rightly deserves. The following policy suggestions are presented.

- Engage the Leadership of the SPLM/A in a sincere review of the ideals and principles of the liberation struggle and why the independent South Sudan has failed to honor the fundamental values of the struggle;
- Identify the challenges and obstacles that now stand in the way of radically reforming the system to revive the ideals and principles of the liberation struggle and how they can be acted upon to inspire and guide corrective measures to improve future performance;
- Undertake an objective and credible review of the history of the support South Sudan received from the international community in its liberation struggle and in its post-independence development efforts, why the country has lost international goodwill, and what can be done to regain it and promote international partnership in

addressing the challenges facing South Sudan; and

- Develop and sustain a culture of Dialogue as a strategy for preventing, managing, and resolving internal conflicts and for constructively engaging the international community in a mutually beneficial partnership to address the security and development challenges facing the country.

Three

National Dialogue: A Critical Perspective

Is the National Dialogue in South Sudan turning out to be a nice surprise to those who wanted it but feared that it would not succeed, or a disappointment to those who opposed it or predicted its failure?

When President Salva Kiir Mayardit announced the National Dialogue Initiative on December 14, 2016, and then launched it officially on May 22, 2017, there were a variety of responses, whether openly or privately voiced. Some people thought it was a noble and indeed timely initiative, and others pessimistically feared that it would not amount to much. The cynics thought it was another delay tactic or even a distraction from serious efforts to implement the 2015 IGAD-negotiated agreement to resolve the conflict in South Sudan; they also predicted that it was doomed to fail. Probably only a minority felt positively that it was an opportunity to be taken seriously to end the proliferating violence that is devastating the country.

Barely two months since it was officially launched, has the National Dialogue initiative

appeared to be turning out quite nicely. In response to critical reactions, the President repeatedly revised the composition of the National Dialogue Steering Committee to ensure inclusivity, credibility and transparency. The first week of the plenary debates by the Steering Committee demonstrated that the members were taking their responsibility very seriously. The debates were open, free, heated, frank, critical and transparent. There was no sign of harassment or intimidation from any security operatives or government agents.

The composition of the Sub-Committees that will conduct regional and grass roots consultations was by choice. The Steering Committee agreed on fifteen Sub-Committees based on the Ten Old States for logistical reasons, to which were added five additional Sub-Committees on Abyei, pibor, the National Capital, Security, and International Outreach to Refugees and the Diaspora. The Chairpersons of the Sub-Committees were agreed upon and the rest of the membership was determined by personal choice, provided that the number of each Sub-Committee did not exceed five, including the chairperson.

Following the selection of the Sub-Committees, seminars were organized in which experts were

invited to offer expertise on how to conduct consultations and share the lessons learned from other National Dialogues. These seminars also proved very useful in preparing the Sub-Committees for their field mission and reinforcing the fundamental principles to be observed to ensure success of the process. The Sub-Committees are now set to embark on their regional and grass roots consultations, which are expected to last about two months.

Meanwhile, the Leadership of the Steering Committee has initiated consultations with the leaders of the opposition abroad, with the objective of making the process more inclusive, and to engage as many parties to the conflict as possible to promote the comprehensiveness of the peace process.

In June, 2017, a delegation of the National Dialogue Leadership visited South Africa in an attempt to meet with Dr. Riek Machar and although he declined the request, the delegation held constructive discussions with the Deputy President of South Africa, H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa. The Deputy President reaffirmed the strong support of his country to the National Dialogue and offered to share the experience of

South Africa that is pertinent to the challenges facing South Sudan. He also undertook to continue to exert efforts to persuade Riek Machar to join the National Dialogue and to meet with the delegation of its leadership. The same delegation later visited Nairobi and had constructive discussions with representatives of the Former Detainees on issues ranging from what is ideally desirable from their perspective, to what is negotiable, and what is doable by mutual agreement.

Another delegation of the National Dialogue visited Khartoum and Addis Ababa to consult with Dr. Lam Akol and other opposition leaders. Yet another delegation is to visit Addis Ababa to consult with the leaders of the African Union, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), and the Government of Ethiopia. More delegations will reach out to those in refugee camps and the diaspora in different parts of the world.

Meanwhile, the Sub-Committees of the National Dialogue are set to go to the field beginning with several areas for a pilot project to conduct consultations at the regional and grassroots level and one international center. The

recommendations of these field missions, and from other outreach consultations, will eventually provide the basis for preparing the agenda on issues for the consideration of the National Dialogue Conference that will make the final recommendations of the National Dialogue.

The objective is to engage as many South Sudanese as possible, inside the country and abroad, in a determined effort to end the violence that is devastating the country and turning its social fabric apart. The longer-term objective is not only to end the war, but also to promote a culture of peaceful engagement through dialogue to address the structural sources of conflict at all levels and to institutionalize the process of restoring sustainable peace, security, stability, and development in a beleaguered country.

If the National Dialogue process continues in the way it has so far been conducted, observing the principles of inclusivity, credibility, and transparency which have been widely advocated as crucial to the success of any National Dialogue, then the prospects of success are quite promising. If the momentum and integrity which the process has so far demonstrated are maintained through the regional and grassroots consultations, and

continue on to the National Conference that will formulate the final recommendations, then the only remaining challenge will be one of implementation.

It is not as yet clear what mechanism will be charged with the responsibility of implementation. Wherever the responsibility will ultimately lie, if the process maintains its integrity up to that point, then the weight of the moral pressure, both domestically and internationally, to ensure a credible, recognized, and respected implementation of the recommendations will be difficult to resist. Failure to live up to this challenge is bound to have serious consequences for the authority responsible for implementation. It is one to be wisely avoided.

If what I have outlined in this brief note is valid, then those who had predicted or favored the failure of the process have reason to be disappointed, while those who had anticipated or hoped for its success can be at least guardedly optimistic. For those of us who are engaged in this process, strategic optimism, especially if well grounded, is part of our motivation. I trust that our optimism is reasonably well grounded.

Four

Abyei Dialogue: Bottom Up and Top Down

Summary

This report on the case of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei provides a model for the National Dialogue that substantiates the Bottom-Up-Top-Down approach, which the President has stipulated in his various statements, and in his Concept Note. The experience documented in this report is particularly remarkable in that it started as a personal problem between leading individuals, extended to regional relations between neighboring communities, became incrementally connected to the responsibility of the national government for addressing the Abyei crisis, and ended with the challenges facing Sudan and South Sudan over the case of Abyei.

The starting point is a conflict that persisted for years between Bona Malual and leading Ngok Dinka individuals in the SPLM/A and the Government of South Sudan. As is well known, Bona Malual's leadership extends from his base in the Twic Dinka community, to the Greater Bahr el Ghazal region, on to the level of South Sudan, with connections to the leaders of the Sudan, and outreach extending to the

international community. The Ngok leaders with whom Bona Malual has been in conflict are individuals who contributed enormously to the South Sudanese struggle and continue to play crucial roles in the post-independence Government of South Sudan.

Considering Bona Malual's influence at the leadership levels of both South Sudan and Sudan, his adversity toward Ngok Dinka leaders inevitably impacted negatively on his approach to the case of Abyei. It not only deprived the area of the constructive role he could have played in the search for a solution to the Abyei crisis, but also reflected a negative attitude to the area by association. Reconciling Bona Malual with Ngok Leaders, therefore, became an urgent imperative.

Years of efforts by the author eventually achieved the reconciliation and the unification of cooperative efforts between Bona Malual and his Ngok Dinka adversaries, followed by the unification of efforts to address the Abyei problem. Throughout reconciliation talks, the leadership of South Sudan was kept informed and in full support of the process.

Following the reconciliation, Bona Malual and the author proceeded to Khartoum to dialogue with the leaders of the Sudan. On their return, they visited Abyei to brief the community and solicit local support

for their efforts. That occasion demonstrated that the reconciliation had extended to the neighboring Twic community whose Chiefs and elders attended the Abyei gathering and discussions. The Governors of Twic and Gogrial States also attended. All demonstrated their solidarity with the Ngok Dinka people.

The challenge now is how to sustain this spirit of reconciliation and the unified approach to the Abyei problem. This will entail addressing the crises at all levels, including the urgent need for the stabilization of the area which requires providing security, encouraging the return of the displaced populations to their areas of origin, delivering essential services, generating socio-economic development projects, fostering peaceful and cooperative relations with neighbors to the North and South, and intensifying the dialogue with the Sudan to expedite the search for a final solution to the Abyei problem. Provided is a detailed menu of recommendations for pursuing this goal.

- *Undertake a serious review of the case of Abyei in light of the impasse that has stalled progress in the search for a final solution of the status of Abyei problem and consider seriously the options now available for a practical approach to the problem, the time frame for realizing these*

options, the security and development needs of the people of Abyei, how they can be met during the interim period, pending a final solution to the Abyei problem, and availing the percentage of the oil revenues allocated to the area by the Abyei Protocol, including settling the arrears;

- *Explore ways of promoting peaceful and cooperative relations between and among the Sudanese and South Sudanese neighbors at the borders, to reassure the nomadic tribes, especially the Missiriya Arab, of their seasonal access to grazing lands and sources of water, and to strengthen the current joint peace and development committees for managing inter-communal relations, building on the customary arrangements that managed seasonal migrations in the past;*
- *Engage Khartoum in an earnest and sincere dialogue on possible approaches to the Abyei issue with the objective of serving the mutual interest of the communities at the borders of Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the national interests of both countries, such as through cross border infrastructure and expansion of regional trade; and*

- *Engage the international community, in particular the United States, which championed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and its Abyei Protocol, the African Union and the United Nations in reactivating mediation between Sudan and South Sudan over the Abyei issue, and supporting security and socio-economic development arrangements and activities as urgent components of the interim stabilization of the area, including a renewed commitment to UNISFA's role in securing the entire "box" (i.e. map) determined by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA).*

1. The Concept

The National Dialogue, which President Salva Kiir Mayardit first announced in December 2016, and which continues to be a subject of on-going debate, should be seen as creating a conceptual framework for a multi-faceted process of preventing and managing differences that could generate conflicts of varying magnitude. In that sense, the Dialogue should be viewed as a pervasive feature of human interaction and relations. While this process can be more

formalized in aggravated specific situations, it is in fact an aspect of everyday life, which I have underscored in two publications, a book entitled 'Talking It Out: Stories in Negotiating Human Relations', and an article that has received considerable attention, 'What Is Not Said Is What Divides'. It is in this context that I share a recent experience in a personal and inter-communal dialogue pertaining to Abyei of the Ngok Dinka that has implications nationally within South Sudan and internationally in the relations between Sudan and South Sudan.

2. The Problem

For years now, I have been very much concerned by a conflict between my good friend and colleague, Bona Malual, and several members of the Abyei Ngok Dinka leadership in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army, SPLM/A, and in the Government of South Sudan, all of whom happen to be my close relatives. As is well known, Bona Malual is not only a prominent figure in South Sudan and Sudan, but is also well connected to the leadership in both countries. He is a leading member of the Twic Dinka, which neighbors the

Ngok Dinka of Abyei, and is also a leader of Greater Bahr el Ghazal.

What appeared to be a personal conflict between Bona Malual and individual Ngok Dinka leaders incrementally evolved into an inter-communal conflict between significant elements of the Ngok and the Twic, affecting indeed the relations between the two communities in the region. Given Bona Malual's connection to the leadership of both Sudan and South Sudan, this otherwise personal and inter-communal conflict was adversely affecting the political cause of the Ngok Dinka at the national level in both countries.

3. The Context

The cause of the Ngok Dinka concerns the status of their area, Abyei, between Sudan and South Sudan. The Ngok Dinka and the neighboring Twic and Ruweng Dinka were annexed to the then Kordofan Province in Northern Sudan in 1905 by the British colonial administration for administrative convenience and to enhance their protection against slave raiders from the North. The Twic and the Ruweng were later returned to

their original Southern provinces of Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile, respectively, while the Ngok remained in Kordofan. The British subsequently gave the Ngok Dinka the option to join the South, but their leaders opted to remain in the North for a variety of reasons, foremost among which was to safeguard their land from predictable Arab occupational claims to the land, should the Ngok Dinka join the South.

It should be recalled that even before colonial intervention, the Ngok Dinka had established close ties with the neighboring nomadic Missiriya Arab tribes to the North who enter the area seasonally with their herds in search of water and pastures. Their respective leaders had indeed concluded friendship pacts that reinforced cordial and cooperative relations between their peoples. Being members of the same administration reinforced ties of good neighborliness. Joining the South would have made the Missiriya feel insecure about their seasonal access to sources of water and grazing lands and turned them from appreciative guests to invaders and possible usurpers of the land.

The British colonial rulers and their evenhanded policies and administrative practices reinforced

the cordial relations between the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya Arabs. Independence and the dominance of the Arab North tilted the balance in favor of the Missiriya against the Ngok Dinka. The Ngok Dinka increasingly began to identify themselves with their Southern kith and kin rather than with the Northerners. Abyei became part and parcel of Southern political consciousness and eventual rebellion against the Arab Islamic domination of the North. The youth of the area, most of whom had been educated in the South, joined the South in the two liberation wars, the first from 1955 to 1972 under the leadership of Southern Sudan Liberation Movement and its military wing, the Anya-Nya, which ended in the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972, and the second from 1983 to 2005, championed by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and its Army, SPLM/A, which was ended by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, CPA, in 2005

4. The Issues

The 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement that ended the first war granted the South regional autonomy and gave Abyei the right to decide

through a plebiscite whether to remain in the North or join the South. President Jaafar Mohamed Nimeiri, who made the Addis Ababa Agreement possible, refused to implement the provision on Abyei. Following my appointment as Ambassador shortly after the Addis Ababa Agreement, I became convinced that Nimeiri would not implement the provision on Abyei and that the South was no longer prepared to go to war with the North over Abyei. I therefore proposed an alternative approach in a concept note that sought to turn Abyei from a contested area to a model of peace and unity by granting the Ngok Dinka ‘mini autonomy’ to be self-governing directly under the presidency and be provided with services and socio-economic development. The people of the area would then see their position at the border as beneficial and play a bridging role between the North and the South as a peaceful meeting ground and a model for national unity and integration.

I first shared the proposal with Bona Malual in the United States. We had just been appointed in Nimeiri's Government, he as Minister of Information and Culture and I as Ambassador to the Nordic Countries of Denmark, Finland,

Norway and Sweden. Bona agreed that under the circumstances, that was the best thing to do. I then presented the proposal to President Nimeiri and key members of his Government, including Abel Alier, President of the Regional Government of South Sudan, Dr. Mansour Khalid, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Jaafar Mohamed Ali Bakheit, the Minister of Local Government. The proposal was enthusiastically endorsed by the Government both at the center and in the Southern Region. I secured funding from USAID and invited the Harvard Institute for International Development, HIID, to assist with its implementation. After I was transferred as Ambassador to Washington and later promoted as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, I continued to monitor and promote the implementation of the project. We secured the transfer of Ngok Dinka government officials from both the center and the South to go to Abyei and serve in the administration, education, police and other civil service positions in the area.

The Project, however, proved quite controversial. Many among the educated Ngok Dinka saw it as compromising the cause of the people of Abyei in

favor of joining the South. In fact, when Nimeiri first went to Abyei to introduce the Project to the people, accompanied by Bona Malual, although he was popularly very well received, he was confronted with such an extremely hostile demand for joining the South that he decided not to announce the Project and chose not to deliver the benefits he had taken to start its implementation. Indeed, he was about to leave Abyei abruptly when Bona intervened to persuade him to calm down and honor the hospitality that had been prepared for them. Unfortunately, I was just opening the embassy in Stockholm and was not able to prepare the ground by explaining the thinking behind the proposal that generated the Project. Bona had arranged for an advance team to go to Abyei to prepare for the President's visit, but they had not seen my proposal and did not fully understand the objective of the visit. It would take considerable amount of time to regain Nimeiri's support and put the Project back on course. Persuaded by Dr. Mansour Khalid and myself, Nimeiri later delivered a statement at the Unity Day celebration in Kadugli which included a passage I had prepared in which he strongly endorsed the Project. In the statement, he added

a reference to Abyei as a meeting ground for what he called 'the great Dinka and Missiriya tribes' and pledged to oversee the implementation of the Project himself. Abyei would, therefore, be autonomously administered under the Presidency.

The Project, however, remained controversial and was particularly opposed by the Missiriya and the authorities of Kordofan. The Missiriya saw it as favoring the Ngok Dinka and a ploy to make Abyei incrementally join the South. The authorities of Kordofan saw it as an imposition by the center without the approval of the Provincial Government. So, the relative success in the implementation of the Project, which the Central Government strongly supported and even formed a Ministerial Committee for its implementation, was persistently undermined by the Kordofan authorities, who continued their repressive practices in Abyei.

The unresolved situation in Abyei and the resulting agitation of the politicized youth of the area eventually resulted in a local rebellion that triggered the return to North-South violence, escalating into a full scale war in 1983. The Abyei

Protocol of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, CPA, which granted the South the right of self-determination, exercised in favor of independence on July 9, 2011, gave the Ngok Dinka the right to decide by a referendum whether to remain in the Sudan or join South Sudan. The Abyei referendum was obstructed by the Sudan and numerous efforts to resolve the impasse were to no avail. It was indeed a case of history repeating itself.

Again, I came up with a proposal for the interim stabilization of Abyei under the international protection provided by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, UNISFA. The proposal aimed at establishing an autonomous self-administration of the area, delivering essential services, generating socio-economic development, and promoting peace and reconciliation with the neighboring tribes, especially the Missiriya Arabs of the North. It was in many ways a repeat of our 1972 proposal on the development of Abyei as a model of peace, unity and integration in the country. I presented the proposal in two documents, a paper entitled 'Abyei as a Gulf or a Bridge' and 'Proposals for the Interim Stabilization of the Crisis Situation in

Abyei Area', which I submitted to the Security Council on May, 19 2014, when I was the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations.

The proposal was well received by the people of Abyei generally, but suspected and even openly opposed by elements of the political elite, some of whom saw it as a return to the old policies of unity with the North associated with our father as the Paramount chief, and with our family generally. Others genuinely saw it as undermining the cause of joining South Sudan. Again, as was the case with my proposal in response to the stalled implementation of the provision on Abyei in the Addis Ababa accord, Bona agreed with my proposal, although he later adjusted his position in favor of prioritizing the implementation of the Abyei Protocol, fearing that Khartoum might use the interim stabilization of the area as a ground for not moving forward with the implementation of the Protocol. Bona's support for the cause of Abyei was however impacted negatively by his conflict with individual leaders from the area. He even withdrew from actively engaging with the issue of Abyei, one of the reasons I persisted in my efforts to end the conflict.

5. The Conflict

Bona Malual's grievance with Ngok Dinka leaders in the SPLM/A focused on three individuals, Deng Alor, Pieng Deng and Luka Biong Deng. Deng Alor is my cousin, while Pieng and Luka are my brothers from the same father. All three played a prominent role in the Southern liberation struggle and became leading members of the SPLM/A and the post-independence Government of South Sudan. Bona Malual not only had personal grievances against them, but also accused them of having fostered a militant attitude toward the Sudan Government in the Government and Army of South Sudan, which he said was adversely affecting the cause of their Ngok Dinka people.

Bona Malual is a close friend and ally of President Salva Kiir Mayardit and in addition to having been a cabinet Minister in the Government of President Nimeiri, was Advisor to President Omar Hassan el Bashir of the Sudan during the interim period leading to the independence of South Sudan. He has therefore been in a pivotal position to influence both leaders in their approach to the issue of Abyei. While President Kiir has been a staunch

supporter of the cause of the Ngok Dinka, recent developments indicate a rift between him and key Ngok leaders in his Government and the Army. This led to the increasing marginalization of the Ngok Dinka in the Government of South Sudan, in which Bona has been implicated as having played a role.

Both for personal and political reasons, Bona's animosity with key members of my family who are leaders of our people became untenable for me. Bona has been a very close friend and a partner in both personal and political matters. In addition to having both served as ministers in Nimeiri's Government, we cooperated over the years in promoting the cause of South Sudan at home and abroad and played a prominent role in the peace processes leading to both the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 and the 2005 CPA.

6. Bona's Antagonists

As noted earlier, the three individuals with whom Bona was in conflict are both close relatives and leaders of the Ngok community, with a striking commitment to the cause of both Abyei and South Sudan.

Deng Alor, after graduating from Cairo University, was recruited in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was serving at the Headquarters when he joined the struggle. For many years, he was the manager of the office of the SPLM/A leader, Dr. John Garang de Mabior. He was later appointed the Governor of Bahr el Ghazal during the struggle. He then assumed the position of Minister of Regional Cooperation during the Interim Period, after which he became Minister of Cabinet Affairs, and currently Minister of Foreign Affairs and International cooperation in the Government of National Unity. Deng Alor not only played a crucial role in promoting the cause of South Sudan in Africa and around the world, but was also a key member of the SPLM negotiating team in all the talks that led to the CPA. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, he occupies a position allotted the Former Detainees (FDs) by the 2015 Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Since some of the FDs are still active members of the opposition outside the country, this makes him vulnerable to critics, including Bona Malual, who see him as an ambivalent member of the opposition inside the Government.

Pieng, after graduating from the prestigious Hantoub Secondary School at the top of his class, joined the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Khartoum where he also led his class. He was in his third year when he joined the struggle and soon rose to important commands. After independence, having risen to the rank of General, he became Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations in the SPLA and then Inspector General of Police, from which he was relieved three years later. Over the years, I have heard of Pieng's popularity within the SPLA, both during and long after the war and even after his release as Inspector General of Police. When I was Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations, I heard raving praise for Pieng's performance as Inspector General of Police from visitors to the country who did not know my relationship with him. His sudden removal from that post for mysterious reasons is widely believed to be part of the trend to remove the Ngok Dinka from positions of responsibility in the Government of South Sudan, which Bona Malual is alleged to have influenced and, judging from his later book on Abyei, seems plausible.

Luka Biong graduated with a degree in economics from the University of Khartoum, where he was first in his class. He was appointed on the Faculty of Economics of Gezira University and then sent abroad for post graduate studies. He was doing a Ph.D. course in economics in Brussels, Belgium, when he decided to join the struggle. He later obtained his Ph.D. degree from the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. Luka held a number of senior positions in the struggle and played a key role in the peace talks and constitution drafting for both the interim government of national unity and the government of South Sudan. He established the South Sudanese Center for Documentation and Statistics, now the National Bureau of Statistics, which became a major state institution in independent South Sudan. Luka held the position of Minister in the Office of the President of South Sudan and Minister for Cabinet Affairs of the Government of National Unity in Khartoum. After leaving the Government, he was appointed Professor of Economics at Juba University, where he became the Center for Peace and Development Studies Director, until he was abruptly compelled to leave the country by political intrigues, again believed to be part of the

increasing marginalization of the Ngok Dinka in the institutions of the Government of South Sudan.

7. Bona's Grievances

Bona's grievances against these three Ngok Dinka leaders focused on a number of allegations. He claimed that Deng Alor, as Governor of Bahr el Ghazal Province, and Pieng Deng, as SPLA Commander in the area, plotted to assassinate him on the expressed or tacit instructions of Dr. John Garang de Mabior, with whom Bona had serious political differences. He also alleged that Pieng rigged the 2010 elections in the Twic constituency, which he had always won, in favor of the SPLM candidate. Bona also alleged that Luka accused him of having sold the cause of the Ngok Dinka to the North for political favors, having been allegedly promised the position of the first South Sudanese to be Prime Minister of the Sudan, if he made sure that Abyei remained in the North.

It is ironic that although Bona Malual's conflict with these Ngok Dinka leaders impacted negatively on the relations between the Ngok and

his people from the Kuac branch of the Twic Dinka, his father, Madut Ring, the Chief of Kuac, and our father, Deng Majok, Paramount Chief of the Ngok Dinka, were very close friends. Indeed, the Kuac and the Ngok are not only very close and were both annexed to the North until the Kuac were later returned to the South, but were considered initially one people. Our father's ambition throughout his leadership as Paramount Chief was to restore the unity of the Ngok and the Kuac. Bona Malual himself was close to our father and in his last days, he advised us to maintain close relations and cooperation with Bona Malual. So, trying to resolve the conflict between my friend Bona and my relatives was not only a matter of personal interest for me, but was also a fulfillment of what our father had ordained and therefore a sacred obligation.

8. The Dialogue Initiative

For a number of years, I strove to fulfill this obligation and even convened a number of informal meetings toward that end. But, despite courteous response to my overtures, there was considerable resistance on both sides to attain a sustainable reconciliation. Eventually, I began to

sense a more serious desire on both sides to end the feud. Although pride and the need for face saving remained obstacles in the way forward, encouraging indications led to a tentative agreement on fixing a date for talks. Bona and I agreed to converge in Juba around the first week of January, 2017. It was not easy to find a mutually convenient date for such busy individuals, but we eventually agreed to convene on January 27, 2017. Bona's brother, Wundit Madut, the Chief of their Twic tribe, came with numerous members of his community. The Ngok Dinka were also well represented. And prominent South Sudanese personalities were invited to play a mediating role. Overall, the attendance was impressive.

Both Bona and I kept President Salva Kiir Mayardit and First Vice President Taban Deng Gai and other national figures in the picture about our plans and they were all very supportive. Everyone seemed to agree that Bona's conflict with Ngok leaders was not only harmful to the cause of Abyei, but was also not in anybody's interest.

Just before the meeting convened, Bona gave me a copy of his latest book, 'Abyei of the Ngok

Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan'. I knew that he was writing a book on Abyei and that he did not want to share the manuscript with me because he did not want me to influence what he wanted to say. And, indeed, had he shared the manuscript with me, I would have advised against his publishing it as it was. The book had just come out of the press and the copy he shared with me was, according to him, the first, given to him at the airport as he was leaving for Juba. I could not find the time to read it before the meeting, but I browsed through it and found it extremely provocative. I did not want the targeted individuals to read it as that would certainly jeopardize the reconciliation talks. But I did not also want them to be in the dark about the contents of the book, as that would imply that I had connived with Bona and misled them into reconciling with a man whose book still reflected uncompromising enmity.

I chose to balance the conflicting considerations by giving them the gist of what the book contained, including specific examples of Bona's allegations against them. That was the first conclusive evidence that our people had resolved to end the conflict, for while some of the allegations obviously offended them, they decided

to transcend them in favor of reconciliation. I also knew that unless some unexpected developments dictated otherwise, Bona was intent on ending the conflict if his antagonists apologetically admitted that they had wronged him. While I suspected that they would not go that far, I was confident that they would be constructive in their engagement with Bona. But, of course, nothing could be taken for granted on either side. After all, it was possible that they were only being courteous to me and that the talks might trigger a disruptive provocation on either side, in which case we would be even worse off than before the attempted reconciliation. But the risk was certainly worth taking.

9. The Talks

The venue of the meeting was a subject of some controversy. Bona favored having it in my own premises, which meant the hotel. But given the expected size of the meeting, and the need for hospitality, that was not a convenient option. The house of General Pieng, which was spacious and more suitable, was also not an appropriate option, since Pieng was a party to the conflict. The house of General Kwol Deng Abot, also

known as Kwol bi Ting, though a cousin, was also spacious and suitable. When I told Bona about this option, he was not happy, since he identified Kwol with his adversaries, but he was willing to go along, since I had already made the arrangements. That venue proved very suitable. The physical arrangements were thoughtfully structured, with the leadership of the two sides and their affiliates seated in comfortable sofas and chairs facing one another, Bona and I were seated in a sofa in front of the gathering, and a large group of community members and spectators sat at the back between the two groups.

General Kwol Deim, another cousin, and a counterpart from Bona Malual'side, molana Anyier Ring conducted the discussions with impressive efficiency. After Christian and Muslim prayers by a bishop and an Islamic cleric, I was called upon to make the opening statement. I began by giving the essential background to the meeting: my personal relationship with Bona, the close ties between our respective families and communities, the conflict between Bona and key members of our family and community, the adverse effect the conflict not only had on the relations between our respective communities,

but also on the cause of our area of Abyei, and my efforts to mediate a resolution of the conflict and to unify our struggle behind the cause of our area. I then called on Bona to state his case to which the concerned individuals from our side would then respond.

Characteristic of Bona, he presented his case very frankly and forcefully, reflecting in almost exact words the allegations he made more extensively and forcefully in his book. He simply made his case without any indication that he wanted to reconcile, except perhaps for the mere fact that he had accepted the reconciliation talks that were underway. He did however distinguish between his conflict with individual members and his commitment to the cause of the Ngok Dinka.

Deng Alor and Pieng responded with equal candor, not accepting or apologizing for the allegations, but giving detailed explanations that refuted the allegations and indicated that there was in fact no personal grudge against Bona. In some cases, some of the alleged behaviors, such as Pieng's conduct in the 2010 elections, or Deng Alor's political stance with Dr. John Garang in his differences with Bona, were explained as reflecting adherence to the policy of the

movement and not personal prejudice against Bona. Overall, the differences that existed were therefore political between conflicting parties and positions, and not personal animosity.

Luka Biong was not there to respond, but he was fully in the picture about the talks and had given his acceptance and blessing. He also sent his response to the anticipated and indeed well-known allegations by Bona against him in a message that was read by Justice Deng Biong, another cousin and file holder on the case of Abyei in the Government of South Sudan. Luka's response was also an explanation, with the added tone of apology that it had not been his intention to offend Bona. In fact, he called Bona later and offered a more explicit apology for his allegation against Bona having sold the cause of Abyei to the North. He said that his angry utterance only reflected his disappointment on the expectation that Bona, as a leader for our people, should unambiguously support their cause for joining South Sudan. It was in no way intended as disrespect for Bona.

Bona's brother, Wundit, the Chief of his tribe, responded to explain the view point of his

community, specifically their resentment of the negative campaign he said was waged against Bona as their leader. He also addressed the way the conflict was affecting relations between Ngok and Twic communities back home. His tone was somewhat antagonistic and generated a strong response from one of the mediators and even from Bona himself. But it also indicated the extent to which Bona's personal conflict with individual Ngok leaders had become a conflict between their respective communities.

After a seemingly exhaustive exchange of views, the talks adjourned for lunch and the atmosphere was already friendly enough for both sides to share the food. But Bona surprisingly refused, insisting that he would not eat because, as he put it, "We are not yet reconciled". People tried to persuade him, but he would not budge. I worried somewhat that perhaps the positive trend in the talks might be misleading, and that there was still more hidden persistence to the conflict than was apparent.

After lunch a number of the attending national figures spoke in a way that reinforced the trend toward reconciliation and the need for unity

behind the common cause of Abyei. The speeches were powerful and effective in bridging the differences and reconciling the parties. I felt relaxed and assured that our efforts were succeeding.

Bona gave the concluding remarks that sealed the deal. The conflict had ended; he was fully reconciled with his former antagonists. Enthusiastic applause followed. Bona embraced Deng Alor and Pieng Deng. Women ululated. The atmosphere was suddenly very jubilant. Traditional rituals of reconciliation were conducted. Dinka hymns were sung as we were escorted to stand around a lamb that was to be sacrificed. Traditional prayers were said by elders calling on God and the ancestors to bless the reconciliation. The assembled group chanted the traditional response to the prayers. At the end, we were sprayed with consecrated water as the lamb was slaughtered. Blood sprayed onto the pants of my safari suit, which the elder who was conducting the prayers told me was a blessing and that I should treasure the suit as sacred. We stepped over the lamb in accordance with tradition. All these rituals imply that the reconciliation was complete and binding and that

anyone who would violate the oath of reconciliation risked a dangerous curse that could manifest itself in serious harm, amounting to illness and perhaps death

10. United Approach

The following day, Bona and I met with his former adversaries and other Ngok Dinka elders to discuss a joint strategy for pursuing the cause of Abyei. The reconciliation the day before was reaffirmed and discussions of a joint approach continued in earnest. Although Bona had been in favor of my approach for the interim stabilization of the Abyei situation, he was now more inclined to support the position of the Ngok leaders which prioritized the implementation of the Abyei Protocol of the CPA and was less supportive of my stabilization proposal which, though urgently needed, he feared might weaken the pressure on Khartoum in favor of immediate implementing of the Protocol. Despite some persistent differences on emphasis, we all agreed that our respective positions are indeed complementary.

It was now quite clear that the parties were unwaveringly committed to the reconciliation

agreement. People particularly appreciated the fact that Bona, the initially aggrieved party, consistently demonstrated his commitment in all that he said and did. We continued to hold strategy meetings with the core leaders of the Abyei community in which the new unity of purpose was consistently reaffirmed.

Perhaps the most significant point in the agreed approach, one with which Bona was particularly concerned and with which I also strongly concurred, is that no solution is possible on Abyei without the cooperation of the two governments. In fact, all the resolutions of the Security Council on Abyei call for such cooperation. The belief that a solution can be imposed on the Sudan by the African Union or the United Nations is wishful thinking, and indeed naive. Of course, the international community can use various methods of persuasion, including positive and negative pressure, but in the end, the best method is to explore a common ground in the mutual interest of the concerned parties toward a win-win solution.

In pursuit of that objective, it was agreed that Bona and I should proceed to Khartoum to engage the leadership on the way forward on both the implementation of the Abyei Protocol and the urgent need for interim stabilization. After the visit to Khartoum, we would then go to Abyei to brief the community on the reconciliation agreement and the result of our visit to Khartoum.

Throughout the process, we briefed President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Taban Deng on the result of the reconciliation talks and discussed with them our plans for the visit to Khartoum. They continued to be very supportive and offered ideas on what to discuss with the leadership in Khartoum.

The issue of Bona's book continued to be a matter of concern for me personally. As yet, I was the only person from our community who had read the book. But the book was out and comments were being made in the social media. Comments from the Ngok Dinka in the social media were particularly angry. I still feared that negative reaction might impact on the important achievement we had made. In particular, I was

concerned that the Ngok leaders might conclude that I had misled them into reconciling with someone whom I knew had written a very hostile book against them, one that could also harm the cause of our people. I decided to keep them informed about the contents of the book as I was reading it.

Remarkably, they all demonstrated a very sober and mature response to the book. They said that they would eventually respond to the book, hut objectively and constructively, and not in a way that would endanger the reconciliation that had been achieved. I reported that to Bona and emphasized that I expected their response to be constructive and that I would myself write my own response that I hoped would set the tone and create the framework for such a constructive response from the others.

Bona's reaction was very positive and reassuring. He said he would encourage and welcome any response, even if it was not constructive. He, however, hoped that people would bear in mind that the book was written before the reconciliation and that they would consider that people had now reconciled as they respond. He

particularly stressed that nothing anyone would say in response would change his position on reconciliation. I asked him whether he would be prepared to put that down in a couple of paragraphs that could be used as a preface to any responses that might be written. He said he would first wait for any responses that might be written and then write his response to the responses along the lines he had just shared with me.

Although I did not tell Bona at the time, I began writing my own response to the book as soon as I finished reading it. And whenever Bona came to see me in my hotel room, or where I was residing in Khartoum, he must have seen his book lying on the table and must have realized that I was probably writing a response, although we never spoke about that. Interestingly enough, when copies of his book arrived to him while we were still in Juba, Bona gave autographed copies to Deng Alor, Pieng Deng, and our cousin Kwol Alor, the Chief Administrator in Abyei. He also gave copies to a number of eminent persons in Juba in my presence and I always remarked, "This is an explosive book; read it with caution". Bona always responded to my comment with laughter

and sometimes quoted my response. On receiving the book from Bona and reading the title, Abel Alier asked whether I had read it, and before I responded both Bona and I laughed as we both realized that I would give my usual warning. I can only hope that my written response and any other responses that Abyei leaders might write will be appropriately received by Bona as part of an ongoing dialogue that should not harm our unity, solidarity, and unified pursuit of the cause of our people.

One thing is unquestionable. Bona's commitment to the reconciliation and the cause of the Ngok Dinka remains unshakeable and was very well reflected in our discussion with the leaders of the Sudan during our visit to Khartoum.

11. Mission to Khartoum

Although we informed the Sudanese Ambassador in Juba of our decision to visit Khartoum, we arranged our plans and appointments for meetings quite independently. The visit turned out to be quite challenging. Apart from a number of pleasant social events with old friends and

colleagues, and with the help of Bona's personal contacts, we met with President Omar el Bashir, First Vice President and Prime Minister, Bakri Hassan Saleh, Foreign Minister, Professor Ibrahim Ahmed Ghandour, and other Government officials.

The meeting with President Bashir set the tone for the official position. Bona began by stating the purpose of our visit, associated with the need to implement all the remaining provisions of the CPA, with a special emphasis on the Abyei Protocol, to allow the Ngok Dinka to exercise the right granted them by the agreement to decide whether to join South Sudan or remain in the Sudan. Meanwhile, there was also an urgent need to provide the area with essential services. My statement reinforced what Bona said with emphasis on the urgent need for interim stabilization of the area, including Khartoum's endorsement of an autonomous self-administration of the Ngok Dinka, the delivery of social services, the generation of development, and the promotion of reconciliation and cooperation between the Ngok Dinka and their Missiriya Arab neighbors. Bashir's response was quite animated. He recounted the way he had

supported the wishes of the people of South Sudan for independence against the public opinion in the North, how he had expected an independent South Sudan to be a friendly neighbor with which Sudan would have the closest ties, but how he had been deeply disappointed by the hostile attitude of South Sudan toward the Sudan, how agreements reached on the withdrawal of troops from the borders had not been honored, that South Sudan was continuing to support Sudan's rebels, and that even the continued use of the name Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army indicated a hostile attitude toward the Sudan. He said he was no longer inclined to cooperate with South Sudan, including on the issue of Abyei. In fact, it was clear that he was shifting toward confrontation.

On Abyei, he claimed that the Missiriya spend nine months a year in the area and were therefore entitled to vote in the referendum and participate fully in the interim administration of the area. He, however, stated that he was prepared to have Abyei be a state whose members would participate in all the organs of both Sudan and South Sudan, executive, legislative, and, by

implication, judicial, and in the end, choose whether to be in the Sudan, in South Sudan, or retain their special status between the two countries.

I responded with equal fervor to explain that as we grew up, we knew that there was Dar el Denka, Land of the Dinka, and Dar el Missiriya, Land of the Missiriya, that the Missiriya would come to Dinkaland during the dry season to water and graze their herds and sell their commodities, particularly their millet, which the Dinka craved, and return to their area with the early rains to cultivate. I also argued that the Missiriya and the Dinka each governed themselves and only shared arrangements for managing their bilateral relations. I added that during the period the Missiriya spent in Dinkaland, their Paramount Chief, Babo Nimir, told them that once they entered Dinkaland, their Chief was Deng Majok. There was absolutely no justification for suggesting that the Arabs administer themselves without Dinka involvement and then share the administration of the Ngok Dinka. Each should be autonomous and then both can agree on institutions, committees or councils, to deal with matters of

mutual concern. I told him that I was, however, interested in his third option, which, if endorsed by the parties and credibly implemented, I would personally vote for in a referendum.

Although President Bashir punctuated his statements with smiles, jokes and laughter, it was obvious that he was a very angry man. Bona, who had shuttled between Bashir and Kiir over the issue of border withdrawal, told President Bashir that he understood and appreciated his anger, but that as a leader who bore responsibility for both countries, his decisions should not be based on anger. He said that we would, of course, convey his concerns to President Kiir but hoped that a basis for cooperation on addressing the pending issues, especially the Abyei problem, could be found and that we hoped to be back to continue the dialogue. Although the tone and demeanor of First Vice President/Prime Minister Bakri Hassan Saleh was different, his message was essentially the same. In particular, he said that the time for people selecting what was good for them and disregarding what they thought not so good was over, that there would be no more room for selectivity. He, however, spoke warmly about our

initiative and encouraged us to continue our efforts.

Foreign Minister Ghandour was much more cordial, perhaps diplomatic, in our discussion with him. He even appeared receptive to my plea for the interim stabilization of Abyei and welcomed my offer to prepare and send him a note on the proposal, which we agreed would be treated confidentially and not made public at this stage of the discussions.

All in all, although there were significant differences in our perspectives, the visit to Khartoum was a relative success. The fact that the visit was welcome by the authorities in Khartoum with full knowledge of what it was about was itself positive. The door for dialogue was clearly open. And the discussion on issues also confirmed a willingness to engage in a dialogue. Indeed, we were encouraged by all those with whom we met to continue our initiative with expressions of confidence that we could deliver. What all that meant, however, was that Khartoum was now linking any progress on Abyei to developments on addressing the issues pending between Sudan and South Sudan.

As expected, the response of the leadership in Juba to our report on the visit indicated that there were indeed two sides to the story and that South Sudan too had complaints about Sudan's attitude, including support for its rebels. The situation was less clear on the alleged agreements on the withdrawal of troops from the borders that Bona had brokered and the extent to which those parties honored or violated those agreements.

Since the successful reconciliation talks, we kept the Ngok leadership in Juba fully informed of our activities. They too were very supportive of our moves. They even judged our visit to Khartoum a success as it broke the silence that had ensued over Abyei. Before the visit there had been a lull in the engagement between the two countries on Abyei. Nor had there been any public debate on the issues involved. The visit had opened doors and initiated a discussion that should now be pursued and sustained.

12. Visit to Abyei

We then arranged with the United Nations Interim Force for Abyei, UNISFA, to visit the

area. Initially, because of sensitivity about Khartoum's possible objection, UNISFA was inclined to make it a personal visit by me to my home area. But on learning more about the background, they recognized it as an official mission and did all the necessary logistical and security arrangements. Traveling on UN flight to Wau, spending the night in the impressive VIP quarters of the UN Mission in South Sudan, UNMISS, we proceeded the next day by UN helicopter to Abyei.

The reception in Abyei was overwhelming. I had of course visited Abyei on many occasions before, in both personal and official capacities, and had always been very well received. On one occasion, visiting in my official capacity as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs, the USAID Assistant Administrator for Africa, Roger Winter, who accompanied me, described the reception as a 'coronation', while the UN pilot who had flown us to Abyei remarked that he had never seen so many happy people in one place as he witnessed then.

This last visit was however exceptional. The reception at landing, though controlled and limited by the UN security forces, was congested with officials of the local administration, traditional authorities, and community leaders. On landing and at several spots the first day, bulls were slaughtered in sacrifice and over which we jumped in the ritual way of welcoming and honoring distinguished visitors. Uncle Alor Jok, the only surviving son of our Grandfather, Chief Kwol Arop, said very moving prayers in the Dinka spiritual tradition. Over the two days of our visit, five bulls were sacrificed at various stopping points. Seven to eight UNISFA vehicles were always in the convoy that escorted us wherever we went.

The public rally we held the day of our arrival shortly after checking into our accommodation at the UNISFA compound appeared to have been attended by virtually the entire town, men, women, and children. The Governors of the neighboring Twic and Gogrial states, and their tribal Chiefs and representative elders, attended. In the traditional display, which I had not witnessed for a long time, the age sets of the nine sections each entered the dance field booming

with their war songs and performing a variety of dances, some of which were quite acrobatic. They would then move on to leave the scene for members of the next age set to enter the scene, booming with their own songs and dance. After all the nine sections had performed, speech making began.

The formalities began with a Christian prayer and the chanting of Koranic verses. After a welcoming statement by the Chief Administrator of Abyei and the Paramount Chief, I was called upon to speak. I made a brief statement giving the background to the reconciliation we had concluded and our visit to Khartoum, after which I called on Bona to give a more detailed account of the reconciliation and what we had done since then. I then resumed my speech to elaborate on all that I had tried to do over the years for the cause of Abyei and my current proposal for the interim stabilization of the area. More speeches by the Governors and the traditional leaders followed. This went on until night fall when we returned to our accommodation at the very comfortable VIP quarters of UNISFA.

The next day, our program began with a tour of the town and the surrounding areas. The scene was both impressive and depressing. Since my last visit, Abyei appeared to have been transformed by an impressive infrastructural planning, with wide streets, lined up with modern buildings, including a hospital, schools and other structures, all of which indicated significant progress in the development of the town. The depressing aspect was that most of these structures had been destroyed by the invasion of the Sudanese army and were left as empty shells.

We then stopped at the grave site of my father, where several other leading members of the family are also buried. Another bull was sacrificed and Uncle Alor Jok sang ancient hymns and said traditional prayers invoking all the known ancestors in our long line of Ngok Dinka leaders. We then went to the local government headquarters, where we met with a large gathering in which the Chiefs of the nine sections of the Ngok Dinka, each with ten representatives, the Governors of the two neighboring states and their Chiefs, and other local officials and community leaders attended. Apart from Christian and Muslim prayers, the meeting

opened with impressive war songs from each of the nine sections. Each of the nine Chiefs, with one additional representatives from each section, spoke. The visiting Governors and their Chiefs also spoke.

There was overwhelming appreciation of our initiative and a strong endorsement of my Stabilization Proposal, even by those who were known to consistently oppose any ideas emanating from anyone from our family.

The evening before our departure from Abyei, UNISFA Force Commander hosted a working dinner over which we discussed the mandate and operations of the Mission and conveyed the appreciation of the community for the work of the Mission and some of the concerns that needed attention. It was a cordial end to what had been by all criteria a very successful visit.

13. Dialogue in Perspective

One of the issues most debated about the National Dialogue decreed by President Salva Kiir Mayardit is whether it is to be bottom up or top down. A remarkable feature of our initiative and the ensuing dialogue on Abyei is that it was

both. Since the initial idea was to resolve the conflict between Bona Malual and individual Ngok leaders, the initiative was essentially microscopic. But as the individuals concerned represented the wider Ngok and Twic Dinka communities, the involved circles were inherently expansive. Since the ultimate objective was to unify the front in pursuit of the political cause of the Abyei area, the process had to extend not only to the national level within South Sudan, but also bilaterally to the Sudan. As the issue of Abyei is part of the Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that was internationally brokered and guaranteed, the implications of the process inevitably extended to the international level.

Obviously, we had no means of enforcing whatever was proposed and agreed by the parties. Our only mechanism of enforcement was the commitment of the individuals to the reconciliation and the cooperation of the higher authorities who are parties to the Abyei Protocol and the CPA, in particular the leaders of the two Governments, Sudan and South Sudan.

This also implies that the dialogue involved is a continuing process. Apart from the objective of reaching an agreement, the implementation itself would require on-going dialogue and negotiation. Beyond that, continued interaction and relationships among the parties concerned is inherently a process of negotiation and dialogue.

In that sense, what the President has initiated is a concept that requires forging a normative framework and culture of peaceful interaction and negotiation or dialogue. There is no problem that cannot be resolved through peaceful means. Indeed, the traditional approach to resolving conflicts is that a solution is there to be found through exhaustive search and discussion. This is why traditional African conflict resolution method involves lengthy time consuming debates, unlike the Western approach where rights and wrongs are determined through fact finding and strict application of the laws involved. The parties leave with one winning and the other losing. They go their separate ways, perhaps never to meet again.

The African approach is based on the assumption that the individuals in conflict are members of a

community who must go back to live together. This is why the resolution of a conflict ideally involves rituals of atonement and reconciliation in which spiritual powers are invoked to bless and guarantee the deal just concluded.

It is our hope that as the Abyei dialogue initially involved individuals and specific issues concerning one community that extended to other communities and eventually two countries, it might offer some insights that are relevant to the National Dialogue decreed by the President. Apart from the interconnected levels from the bottom up and the top down, there is the additional fact that Dialogue need not resolve all the problems facing the country at once. Addressing problems one at a time may cumulatively reduce the crises and incrementally lessen the tensions in the interconnected contexts of the conflict.

Addressing the problems of Abyei can have a pacifying effect in the neighboring communities to the North and the South, specifically the Missiriya Arabs and the Twic Dinka. It could also lessen the tensions between Sudan and South Sudan and perhaps improve the prospects for

cooperation. That is at least our optimistic view about the implication of what we tried to do in the Abyei Dialogue. Following is a detailed menu of recommendations for pursuing this goal.

- Undertake a serious review of the case of Abyei in light of the impasse that has stalled progress in the search for a final solution of the status of Abyei problem and consider seriously the options now available for a practical approach to the problem, the time frame for realizing these options, the security and development needs of the people of Abyei, how they can be met during the interim period, pending a final solution to the Abyei problem, and availing the percentage of the oil revenues allocated to the area by the Abyei Protocol, including settling the arrears;
- Explore ways of promoting peaceful and cooperative relations between and among the Sudanese and South Sudanese neighbors at the borders, to reassure the nomadic tribes, especially the Missiriya Arab, of their seasonal access to grazing lands and sources of water, and to

strengthen the current joint peace and development committees, for managing inter-communal relations, building on the customary arrangements that managed seasonal migrations in the past;

- Engage Khartoum in an earnest and sincere dialogue on possible approaches to the Abyei issue with the objective of serving the mutual interest of the communities at the borders of Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the national interests of both countries, such as through cross border infrastructure and expansion of regional trade; and
- Engage the international community, in particular the United States, which championed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and its Abyei Protocol, the African Union and the United Nations in reactivating mediation between Sudan and South Sudan over the Abyei issue, and supporting security and socio-economic development arrangements and activities as urgent components of the interim stabilization of the area, including a

renewed commitment to UNISFA's role in securing the entire "box" (i.e. map) determined by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA).

Five
Ten Principles on Negotiations

1. Introductory Note

This paper was initially prepared for a seminar on Negotiations at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University in Washington, DC. which was conducted by Professor I. William Zartman. The principles, as referred to then, were subsequently presented at the peace negotiations in Naivasha, Kenya, that eventually resulted in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). They were also included in a chapter that appeared in two separate books edited by Dr. Kevin Cahill of Fordham University in New York.

The principles are reproduced here because I believe that they are relevant to the current debate on the National Dialogue which was initiated by President Salva Kiir Mayardit in December, 2016, and officially launched in May 2017. The Dialogue is being conducted by a broadly representative Steering Committee of over one hundred people, with a nine-person leadership comprising two co-chairs, a deputy co-

chair, a rapporteur, two deputy rapporteurs, and three members.

The Dialogue is envisaged as a bottom-up and top-down process that will conduct consultations at the grassroots, regional and national levels, culminating in a National Conference that will prepare recommendations for the resolution of the multi-faceted conflicts that have devastated the country. So far, the Dialogue has demonstrated an impressive level of inclusivity, openness, credibility, transparency and freedom of expression, principles that are widely acknowledged as essential to the success of any dialogue. After a month of open debate, the Steering Committee benefitted from a series of seminars which underscored these principles and presented experiences from other dialogue situations from which useful lessons can be drawn.

The Steering Committee has organized itself into 15 Sub-Committees that will conduct consultations in the former ten states chosen for logistical convenience in addition to Abyei and Pibor as special administrative areas. The remaining three committees cover the security

sector, the National Capital and refugees and international outreach. Delegations from the Steering Committee have also carried out consultations that have engaged opposition leaders in specific locations abroad and plan to conduct more consultations in other areas with those who do not want to participate in the Dialogue inside the country.

The objective is to engage inclusively with all South Sudanese.

If the Dialogue process continues to observe the normative principles that are necessary conditions for success, then there is reason to believe that it stands a good chance of achieving its stated objectives. Furthermore, although the Dialogue is by definition National and owned by South Sudanese, the support of the international community is essential to its success. In that regard, constructive criticism that can improve and strengthen the process should be welcomed. A negative attitude that undermines and weakens the process should be avoided and discouraged. It indeed has the effect of playing into plans of the enemies of peace and reconciliation in the country.

Although National Dialogue is not negotiation in the narrow sense, in the broad scheme, it involves reconciling differences in the society which inherently implies negotiating over the issues behind the conflicts. Whether this is an interpersonal dynamic or a process of mediating differences between and among groups, the principles involved are essentially similar. It is in this context that the IGAD initiative to revitalize the 2015 agreement to resolve the conflict in South Sudan should be welcomed. Revitalization and the National Dialogue are therefore complementary and mutually reinforcing. Indeed, one of the opposition leaders argued that while he welcomed the National Dialogue as a means for South Sudanese to discuss their differences, his priority was for a mediated negotiation. But as the Steering Committee has explained, whether the method involved is conceptualized as a Dialogue or mediated negotiations, the shared objective is to bring peace, security, reconciliation and stability to the country. It is in that sense that the principles reproduced here are pertinent to the National Dialogue and the overall objective of bringing peace, security, and stability to the country.

2. Negotiations in Cultural Context

Negotiations with the third-party mediation are the counterpart to violent confrontation. After independence from the Anglo-Egyptian rule, Sudan alternated between devastating violent conflicts and negotiations leading to the peaceful resolution of these conflicts. The seventeen-year war (1955-1972) was ended by the Addis Ababa Agreement and the twenty-two-year war (1983-2005) ended with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the independence of South Sudan on July 9th, 2011. The search for durable peace and the prospects for achieving genuine consensual unity continue to require an ongoing process of negotiations into the foreseeable future. This is true within and between the two Sudan.

I see negotiations and the closely related field of diplomacy as essentially management of human relations involving individuals, groups, or nations. Some people would argue that conflict is the normal state of human interaction and that it is futile to try to prevent or resolve conflicts; the most that can be done is managing conflicts. This can only be valid if it is understood to mean that

grounds for conflict exist in normal human relations and that the occurrence of conflict is therefore normal. If it means that conflict is the normal pattern of life, then I would consider that position both empirically questionable and normatively ambiguous. Far from seeing conflicts as the normal state of human interaction, I believe that people are more apt to cooperate and harmonize their incompatible or potentially conflictual positions, and that conflict is in fact a crisis that signifies a breakdown in the normal pattern of behavior. In this sense, conflict involves a collision of incompatible positions resulting from a failure to regulate, reconcile or harmonize the differences.

In the normal course of events, society is structured around fundamental values and norms that guide behavior and regulate relations so as to avoid destructive collision of interests or positions. If people observe the principles of the normative code, which they generally do, the normal pattern would be one of relative cooperation and mutual accommodation, even in a competitive framework. To call that state one of conflict would be to put a negative value judgment on positive motivations and endeavors,

and on a relatively high degree of success is peaceful interaction.

Even more important than strict empirical interpretation would be the normative implications of holding conflict the normal state of human existence, which would tend to foster a disposition that is fundamentally adversarial, suspicious, and conflictual. The extent to which members in a community or group reflect this disposition may depend in large measure on the culture and its normative code, and beliefs that characterizes national, ethnic, or other groups and orient their behavior.

Culture itself is a product of education, both formal and informal, through which the norms of behavior that a society has developed over a long period of time are inculcated from early childhood and passed on from generation to generation. The family is the institutional foundation of education, and, in particular, of the inculcation of basic cultural values. And yet, despite the pivotal role of the family and the culture in shaping values attitudes, and operational techniques in human relations, individuals differ even within a family in their

understanding, appreciation, and application of the values involved. It is this combination of the collective cultural conditioning and the individual inclination to absorb, accept, and apply what is acquired that gives significance to personal experiences as particular applications of values, customs, and techniques of conflict resolution and diplomacy within a specific cultural framework. As a challenge to grossly inequitable order, conflict may be a positive quest for reform.

It is important to emphasize that the objective is not merely to resolve a conflict, but to resolve it in a mutually satisfactory manner. This means addressing the root causes and observing such fundamental norms as justice and human dignity. In other words, where change is urgently needed, the status quo cannot simply be supported for the sake of harmony and peaceful interaction.

Conflict in this context can be defined as a situation of interaction involving two or more parties in which actions in pursuit of conflicting objectives or interests result in varying degrees of discord. The principal dichotomy is between normally harmonious and cooperative relations

and a disruptive adversarial confrontation, culminating at its worst in high-intensity violence. On the basis of this definition, conflict resolution is a normative concept aimed at reconciling, harmonizing, or managing incompatible interests by fostering a process of institutionalized peaceful interaction. Conflict resolution envisages strategies aimed at restoring or establishing the normal state of affairs and raising the level of peaceful, harmonious, cooperative, constructive, and productive interaction.

The achievement of peace and reconciliation becomes a common objective, but one that is only possible if both sides feel that the solution proposed is indeed in the mutual interest. Since both were prepared to enter into conflict in the first place, it means that each must have a subjective view of right and wrong that gives them some degree of right and places some degree of wrong on the opposing party. These subjective perspectives cannot be ignored when negotiation takes place or when the proposals are made for resolving a conflict, even though they need not and should not be allowed to have too much influence on such processes. Ultimately, while there is indeed a hierarchy of rights and wrongs

in resolving disputes through negotiations, there should be no absolute winner or loser.

If one comes from a culture, a society, or a family in which unity, harmony, and cooperation are highly valued, then the discord of conflict becomes a disruption that is destabilizing not only to the community, but also intrinsically to the individual. And if one assumes further that in any conflict there are contributing factors for which both sides share responsibility, albeit in varying degrees, then the degree of uncertainty involved must create a sense of shared responsibility for properly tutored or nurtured members of the community. The desire to normalize the situation and restore amicable relations therefore becomes as much a societal as it is an individual objective.

3. Expounding the Principles

The prosed principles on negotiation should be seen in the context of the normative framework outlined above. These principles derive from personal experiences and are rooted in values, norms, and mores that emanate from a specific African family and cultural background among

the Dinka the South Sudan. They cover experiences in interpersonal relations, third-party mediation and diplomatic negotiations, with overlaps. Although personal and rooted in the Dinka, South Sudanese, and African cultural contexts, they represent values that can claim universal validity, despite cross-cultural variations on the details and their applicability.

Principle One: Rights and wrongs, though seldom equal, are rarely one-sided. Even when you feel sure that you are in the right, you must not only strive to fit yourself into the shoes of the other side, but must make the other side recognize that you are genuinely interested in his or her point of view.

Principle Two: It is unhealthy to keep grievances “in the stomach” or “in the heart.” Talking it out, the title of a book I wrote on the theme, is not only the best way to resolve differences or grievances, but it is also essential for one’s mental and even physical health. Often “what is not said is what divides,” to use the words of an article I wrote on that theme.

Principle Three: Face-saving is crucial to resolving conflicts. One must avoid saying anything that is humiliating to the other side, and where possible, it is advisable to show deference, even to an adversary, provided it is not cheap flattery.

Principle Four: It is important to listen very attentively and allow the other party to say all that she or he considers, significant or relevant. Resolving differences is not a game of wits or cleverness, but of addressing the genuine concerns of the parties in conflict. In Dinka folktales, the cleverness of the fox eventually turns against the fox. Ideally, resolutions must have an element of give and take, although the distribution should be proportional to the equations of the rights and wrongs involved. In assessing the outcome of a negotiated settlement of a dispute, it is unwise to boast of victory, for that implies defeat for the other side and therefore an unsatisfactory outcome.

Principle five: Historical memory of the relations gives depth to the perspectives of the parties and the issues involved, but one must avoid aggravating the situation with negative recollections and emphases and should instead

reinforce constructive dialogue with the positive recollections or interpretations on events, without of course, distorting the facts.

Principle six: The mediator must be seen to be impartial, but where there is reason to believe that he or she is closer to one side in any capacity, the mediator must reach out to the more distant party. However, this must not be at the cost of fairness to the party close to the mediator. Impartiality does not mean having no position on the issues in dispute, even though voicing opinions should be carefully coached to maximize the bridging roles and promote mutual understanding.

Principle seven: The mediator must listen very patiently to both parties, and even when there are flaws in what is said, the mediator must appear to give due weight to each party's point of view. The popular view that in the indigenous African system of dispute settlement, people sat under the tree and talked until they reached a consensus reflects a broadly shared African normative behavior. Where explaining the opponent's view on a specific issue might facilitate the bridging

process, the mediator should intercede to offer an explanation as part of consensus building.

Principle Eight: While the wisdom of words and ability to persuade are important, leverage is pivotal. This means that the mediator must have or be believed to have, the ability to support the process with incentives or threats of negative consequences, according to the equations of the responsibility for the success or the failure of the negotiations. In the past, in African tradition, spiritual powers of the divine leadership provided the required leverage. In the modern context, influencing the balance of power to create a “mutually hurting stalemate” and help to advance the process of “ripening for resolution”, to borrow the famous words of the renowned scholar of conflict analysis, I. William Zartman, is part of the leverage that can effectively facilitate the mediator’s task.

Principle Nine: Diplomatic negotiations combine elements of both interpersonal relations and third party mediation in the negotiator who represents his /her government and in a sense combines negotiating with mediating between the respective governments involved. Discretion and

creativity in adapting the official position to the dynamics of the situation with a degree of flexibility is critical to the prospects of successful bridging.

Principle Ten: While the tendency of the negotiators is to see the outcome of their efforts in terms of winning or losing, especially for domestic consumption, the desired outcome should be one in which neither side sees itself as a total winner or loser, except where the rights and wrongs involved are incontrovertibly clear. The win-win formula should be the objective and whatever the equations of winning or losing in the mediated or negotiated outcome, as noted in Principle Four, neither side should boast about winning and by implication humiliate the other side as a loser. There must be a degree of parity in both sides winning or losing.

4. Balancing the Universal with the Particular

The principles presented above do not claim a panacea. Quite the contrary, they reflect a particular cultural value system that may be more relative than universal. While I believe that these

reflect shared human values, it would be presumptuous and even hazardous to assume that they are universal, scientifically proven negotiation techniques that are applicable to all situations and cross cultural contexts. A case can of course be made for expert knowledge in negotiation and there is a particular role to be played by individuals with expertise. But to be effective, synergy between universal techniques and culturally specific methods need to be developed.

In tribal societies, chiefs and elders are principal mediators. Indeed, most tribal conflicts, which are pervasive throughout the society, are resolved by the traditional mediators, who are for the most part, illiterate but endowed with indigenous knowledge and wisdom. When one recalls that the number of colonial administrators who controlled that vast country of nearly a million square miles was relatively small, it is easy to see how they made effective use of traditional leaders to maintain law and order, and peace and security throughout the rural areas. Failure to use this indigenous capacity accounts for much of the intertribal warfare and criminal violence that has been the lot of the postcolonial administration in

the Sudan. This must be reversed if South Sudan is to enhance its full capacity for promoting peace, security, and stability throughout the country.

5. Concluding Comments

Two important dimensions of the National Dialogue need to be highlighted in these concluding comments. The first is that the National Dialogue should be approached as a phased process with structured priorities. Highest in the order of priorities must be ending the violence that has already caused much death, suffering and displacement, both internally and into the neighboring countries and farther away to distant lands.

Second on the priority list should be addressing and resolving inter-communal conflicts that are proliferating throughout the country. Third are intra-communal tensions and conflicts which, though local, can feed into conflicts at higher levels.

The third dimension of the National Dialogue is to see the concept as an on-going process of

negotiating human relations, which is inherent in social interaction at all levels, from local to global. In that sense, National Dialogue should be seen as a means of shedding light and focusing attention on what is or should be the societal norm of human existence. The by-product of the process should therefore be to reinforce and revitalize the culture of dialogue as a peaceful means of resolving conflicts or differences and discouraging resort to violence as a means of dealing with conflicts.

It is worth bearing in mind that violent conflicts are symptoms of deeper structural problems that call out for remedy. In that sense, they represent a wake-up call for addressing and curing the root causes. Conflicts therefore ironically offer opportunities in crises, a stimulus or motivation for seeking remedies for serious social ills that could become even more critically threatening to the wellbeing of the community, both as individuals and as a collectivity. That is at least my hope in reproducing these guiding principles for negotiating human relations.

Six

A Framework for International Cooperation

It is now widely recognized that there is an increasing call for regional and international action to end the current crisis in South Sudan. This is a crisis that has inflicted and continues to inflict on the people untold suffering, death, and destruction. Resisting regional and international involvement cannot be in the interest of the Government and people of South Sudan. Nor is it advisable for regional and international actors to take unilateral measures against the will of the Government and people of South Sudan. That would entail a confrontation that would only complicate and aggravate matters, with no real winners. What is needed is a partnership between the Government and the international community to join hands and strengthen collective capacity and ability to bring a speedy end to the suffering of the people and the devastation of the country.

Not only have the South Sudanese people suffered greatly from the current conflict and its dire humanitarian consequences, but so too have international partners and foreign nationals who

are residing in the country. Despite the hardships, these individuals are here to share in the suffering, risking their lives, and striving to make a contribution to the peace, security, stability and development of the country. Even more significant is the role played by the region and the international community to end the long war between North and South Sudan and help the people of South Sudan obtain their independence. The Government and people of South Sudan will remain forever grateful for this historic support. It is also important to recognize that the entire sub-region is adversely affected by the current conflict in South Sudan and stands to benefit from its peaceful resolution.

For these reasons, instead of seeing regional and international involvement negatively as unwarranted interference in internal affairs, it should be positively perceived as a well-intentioned offer to help a country and people in need. What is called for is a constructive engagement that would turn the crisis into an opportunity for the country to receive the needed regional and international support and partnership in addressing the challenges involved. The objective of such partnership is, and should

be, to end the conflict, unify the country, consolidate peace, security and stability, support the speedy delivery of badly needed social services, and initiate a sound program of accelerated economic development.

Three practical considerations are pivotal to the stipulated constructive engagement and cooperation with regional and international partners. First, no regional or international action that is not based on the consent of the Government and the people of South Sudan can succeed, as it is bound to be resisted by a variety of means. This can only aggravate the crisis and increase the suffering of the people.

Second, to circumvent the negative implications of potential confrontation, it is critically important for regional and international actors to win the cooperation of the Government, and to assure the leadership that the sovereignty, security, stability, and territorial integrity of their country can best be guaranteed by regional and international involvement and partnership. Reverse is also true; confrontation with the region and the international community can only lead to animosity, depletion of the capacity to

respond to the crisis, and more suffering for the people. In this connection, whatever collective arrangements are envisaged should prioritize peace as an overriding objective, and delicately balance promoting accountability with ensuring the security and general welfare of the leaders and pivotal stakeholders, whose cooperation is critical to the success of the efforts toward peace and the sustainability of any agreed arrangements.

Third, throughout the long history of internal conflicts, from which the people of South Sudan have suffered for decades, the organizational structures of their traditional societies and their indigenous cultural values have endured and contributed significantly to the resilience and survival of the people. Anthropologists and social scientists claim that the indigenous peoples of South Sudan are well known for their egalitarianism, segmentation, and the autonomous self-administration of ethnic groups, clans, lineages, and families, down to the level of the individual. These are societies that are intensely proud, independent and resistant to the concentration of power and domination by a centralized authority. While these are positive attributes that indicate an inherently democratic

culture, they also make it very difficult to govern the people. They indeed pose major administrative challenges to the rulers and require great sensitivity and respect for the will of the people. South Sudan must therefore develop a constitutional framework and administrative structures that build on these social organizations and related value-systems.

This also means that if regional and international cooperation focuses only on the national leadership level, and ignores connecting to these local communities in ways that assure them that their concerns are being adequately addressed, then the entire program will be put in jeopardy, which will breed further acrimony and mistrust. To bridge the state-society divide, the Government, in partnership with regional, and international actors, will have to be seriously committed to putting the South Sudanese people at the center of their concerns and actions and, through a broad-based community-oriented consultation and dialogue, to enable the rural masses to contribute toward determining the direction for the popular democratic governance of their country.

On a personal note, I must say that cooperation with Governments and national authorities, with relevant responsibilities for their national populations, guided me in discharging my very sensitive United Nations mandates, first as Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) for twelve years, and then as Under-Secretary-General and Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide for five years. The concern of Governments about potential threats to their national sovereignty was central to both mandates. Instead of adopting a strategy of confrontation with Governments to promote human rights and provide protection for populations under the threat of genocidal conflicts and mass atrocities, I focused my efforts, with relative success, on securing the cooperation of Governments on the basis of the fundamental principle of Sovereignty as Responsibility.

Sovereignty as Responsibility means that the primary responsibility for protecting national populations lies, in the first place, with the Government of the State concerned. The role of the International Community is to assist the State to enhance its capacity to discharge that national

responsibility. However, if the State lacks the political will or the operational capacity to discharge its national responsibility, and does not request or at least welcome outside assistance, with the consequence that its people fall victim of massive suffering and death, the International Community will not stand by and watch without some form of intervention, even at the risk of overriding sovereignty. On the other hand, such intervention is extremely costly in both human and material terms and is therefore unattractive, not only to the countries threatened with intervention, but also to potential interveners. This is why it tends to be avoided as much as possible. Therefore, in the interest of safeguarding their sovereignty, it is advisable for Governments to adopt a more constructive approach. Also, for the international community to be effective in its involvement in the internal affairs of countries, cooperation with the Governments of affected countries is not only the most prudent course of action to take, but is also the most realistic, pragmatic, and practical.

To conclude, national sovereignty can best be guaranteed by Governments discharging their national responsibility to protect and assist their

needy populations. When necessary as a complement to national responsibility, regional and international involvement must be based on the consent of the Government, the leadership, and the people of the country concerned. It must also aim at promoting peace by balancing reconciliation with accountability. Additionally, it should foster building institutions of good governance that make effective use of indigenous values and institutions to create a bottom-up inclusive democratic system.

Also critical is creating professional and accountable armies and police forces that ensure the safety, integrity, and the fundamental rights of all ethnic groups, without discrimination. Finally, and as a matter of urgency, consolidating peace must also entail a robust program of service delivery and socio-economic development that will provide tangible peace dividends to all the peoples of the country, without any discrimination on account of ethnicity or region.

Seven

Lecture on the Challenges of Diplomacy

1. Introductory Remarks.

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to address this impressive gathering of our diplomats at the Headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. I am very impressed not only by the attendance, but also by your punctuality, which is uncharacteristic for our African reputation.

South Sudan is at a critical juncture where diplomacy is called upon to play a crucial role.

I will divide my remarks into four parts:

General remarks on my approach to foreign policy as a normative extension of domestic policy; my personal experience in applying that principle; National Dialogue as an opportunity for addressing the crises in the country; and our need for partnership with the international community as a complement to our national action.

2. Normative Framework of Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy, aimed at promoting the domestic agenda to gain international support and partnership.

Contrary to popular perception about diplomacy, what counts is not lying for the country or being well spoken, but being credible and having a winning case to promote. A positive domestic agenda is essential to making a winning case internationally.

This does not mean that if the news from home is bad, you have to stop doing your work. Of course if you have a message to transmit you have to do so credibly. What this means is that you have to find a constructive basis for engagement.

What it also means is that a diplomat is not just a messenger, but an active participant who must try to influence domestic policy constructively.

If the situation you represent fundamentally conflicts with your own moral principles and you conclude that you cannot influence domestic

policy positively, then you have to choose either to compromise your principles or resign.

An important factor in diplomacy is to bear in mind that it is essentially an art of human relations. This is particularly true of bilateral relations; but it is also true of multilateral diplomacy. Ultimately, we are dealing with individual human beings, even when they represent Governments or organizations.

In this context, the values of persuasion, consensus building, respect for others' points of views, and face saving are crucial. These are not necessarily learned in schools of diplomacy, but are cultural norms inculcated from the social context; I believe that they are indigenously African, but they are also universally valid.

These principles favor constructive dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding, rather than confrontation and acrimony. This does not mean that there is never justification for confrontation. Where factual differences warrant confrontation, the case can be made objectively, dispassionately, and with civility that can

persuade, if not the interlocutors, at least third-party observers or mediators.

Confrontational approach, where justified, should be a last resort that is better left to those who are more professionally suited to that function.

3. Lessons from Personal Experiences.

The circumstances of my appointment as Ambassador to the Nordic Countries indicate the importance of the domestic agenda to a successful diplomatic representation. I was then a Human Rights Officer in the United Nations Secretariat in New York

Initial offers included Deputy Head of Mission in our Embassy in the United Kingdom. Although Nimeiri's policy on the South made a gesture toward peace, the war was still raging. I politely turned down that offer. After the Addis Ababa Agreement, I received three successive offers: to be Province Judge in Kordofan, Ambassador to Scandinavia, or Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

After some hesitation, I told my American wife that I could not turn my country down four times and expect to be ever called upon again to serve the country. I therefore accepted the offer of Ambassador. The basis of my acceptance, which I made clear in a written statement to the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was that I would promote the Addis Ababa Agreement and its positive implications and the need for international support for post war reconstruction and equitable development as the center piece for my diplomatic engagement.

I received full endorsement for that approach and that became the core of my diplomatic work as Ambassador to a number of countries which included Canada and the United States, and as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. My conceptualization of our foreign policy generally and its priorities also centered on this normative framework. I believe it proved very successful, especially in the United States and Europe.

In the United States, I was able to reverse a negative policy toward the Sudan in the aftermath of the assassination of the American Charge d' Affairs by then. The Black September

Palestinians who after being tired and found guilty Palestinian Liberation were handed over to the Plo Organization. The United States almost served relations with the Sudan. That is how bad the relations, and that was what I was assigned to change which I did by projecting the Addis Ababa Agreement as the basis for our diplomacy. Sudan became third to Israel and Egypt as a recipient of US assistance. Nimeiri himself became so popular that there we initiated a move to nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The return to war confronted me with critical choices for my re-assignment, Nimeiri asked me to be first Permanent Representative to the United Nations. That changed and I was instead nominated Ambassador to Ethiopia. Nimeiri urged that Ethiopia seat of the OAU was more important than the UN. But the real issue was that this would have meant working against our brothers and sisters in the SPLM/A, who had taken up arms against the regime. Despite Nimeiri's pressure on me to accept the appointment, and after seriously pondering over the situation, with my relatives and friends opposed to the appointment, I decided against it and submitted my resignation from the Foreign

Service in 1983. John Garang was later to tell me, of course jokingly, that I should have accepted and be Ambassador of both the Government and the SPLM/A.

My appointment as the first Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations came while I was in the United Nations service as Special Advisor of the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide, at the level of Undersecretary General.

My background in the service of the United Nations went back to 1967 when I was first appointed as Human Rights Officer. I left that position to be Ambassador to Scandinavia. After leaving my country's foreign service, I was appointed Representative of the Secretary General on Internally Displaced Persons (1992-2004).

My position on genocide prevention enabled me to follow very closely the developments leading to our independence. I was deeply engaged in the process in New York and Addis Ababa and observed very closely those who stood with us and those who were opposed to our independence.

Unfortunately, the post-independence crisis in South Sudan and the response of the U.N. and the international community generally made our friends become our critics because of their disappointment. This has made them be perceived wrongly by our people as having turned into foes. Those who were not friends are now our supporters in the Security Council and are therefore, being seen as our new friends. As the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations, I responded to international criticism by appreciating the fact that it was motivated by concern about the plight of our people and our country which we, of course, share, and that we should therefore join hands to reinforce our joint capacity and cooperate to be more effective in seeking solutions, which is our common objective.

I consider this as a more constructive approach than one of confrontation. But there are of course, differences in the manner in which we approach the challenges posed by our external relations. There is a major contrast between those who seem to prefer confrontation and those, like me who favor constructive engagement. Perhaps

both may be needed, but should be used prudently to be complementary and strategic.

3. National Dialogue as an Opportunity in Crisis

I have two main guiding principles in my life: the first is that strategic optimism is a motivation for constructive action and pessimism is a path to a dead end. The second is that there are often opportunities in crises situations. I believe these principles are pertinent to the National Dialogue.

The objectives of the National Dialogue as outlined by the President in the Concept Note and in his various statements are to end the violent conflicts that are devastating the country and causing so much suffering to our people and to bring peace, unity, security, stability, development and prosperity to the country.

Given the crises tearing the country apart, there should be no doubt about the President's sincerity of purpose in striving to achieve these national objectives. Skepticism about his intentions is therefore new. There is a widely shared call for inclusivity, credibility, and

transparency. These lofty principles are stipulated as pre-requisites to the success of the National Dialogue and should therefore be seen as inherent in the initiative of the President.

Since the National Dialogue commenced, the President has made a series of adjustments aimed at ensuring that these principles are observed and adhered to. The President relinquished his position as the Patron to make the National Dialogue more independent.

The composition of the Steering Committee has been significantly adjusted to be more inclusive and in tune with these principles. The way the Steering Committee has so far conducted its deliberations, and the issues being debated, all indicate the beginning of an inclusive, credible, transparent and very promising National Dialogue, provided this momentum is maintained to the end.

Fifteen Committees have been formed on the basis of the old ten states, for purely logistical reasons, plus Pibor and Abyei. The Committees will conduct regional and local consultations, making the process top-down and bottom-up.

Seminars have been conducted to make available to the Steering Committee the lessons that can be learned from other National Dialogue experiences.

In addition, efforts are being made to reach out to the opposition leaders outside the country, and although the meeting that was to take place with Riek Machar did not materialize, there has been an exchange of messages with him and other opposition leaders, which indicates that the National Dialogue is indeed underway through a variety of methods and channels.

It is worth emphasizing that a delicate balance should be made between national ownership of the Dialogue and the need for international support and partnership.

Experience so far indicates that as the inclusivity, credibility, and transparency of the process become visible, skepticism begins to wane and the level of support, both internally and externally, increases. But a worrying degree of skepticism still exists both internally and externally, which we should continue to see as a challenge and not a discouragement.

4. The Challenge of International Outreach

Experience from other Dialogue situations emphasizes the importance of national ownership, complemented by international political, technical, and financial support.

The case of South Sudan reflects a degree of ambivalence in the level of the support we can expect from our relations with the international community.

The sources of the ambivalence and the paradox of turning former friends and allies into foes lies in the enormous support South Sudan received in its struggle for independence and the disappointment with the devastating conflicts the country is experiencing.

This requires uncovering the common ground for cooperation toward the shared goal of peace, security, stability and development for South Sudan.

The situation also calls for constructive Dialogue with potential supporters and partners for which our diplomacy should be in the front line.

Concluding Remarks.

I would like to end with the main point of my remarks, that foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy. This requires a two-way process of communication and exchange of views to shape a positive outcome that can provide a sound basis for promoting external bilateral and multilateral relations.

The flow of credible and timely information is critical to the success of diplomacy.

It also implies that the diplomat is well connected to domestic base and therefore has credible influence.

A diplomat can be proactive and active or docile and dormant, especially if there is no domestic support.

Diplomacy is a profession that offers an opportunity to serve one's country, which is a great honor, a noble and gratifying cause. But it needs to be adequately supported to be credible, effective, and sustainable.

Eight

National Dialogue: A Quest for Collaboration

No one can reasonably object to the principle of National Dialogue on its face value. Differences occur only on the methods through which it is pursued. A critical factor often raised in this connection is the extent to which the process is open, inclusive, credible, and transparent. But even when these principles are explicitly avowed, the question can be raised as to whether the endorsement is genuine or a tactical ploy to serve less noble objectives. The real test therefore has to be empirical and the extent to which these principles are observed in practice.

Several articles which I have recently written on the National Dialogue process have generated a variety of reactions, some supportive, even flattering, others welcoming, but skeptical, and yet others critical and dismissive of them as more wishful than realistic. Those skeptical or critical believe that the motivation behind the initiative is merely to buy time and perpetuate the status quo

and that my optimistic analysis is unfounded.

My response to those negative reactions is to pose a number of questions with implicit policy assumptions. Is it reasonable to believe that the leadership of a country that is being torn apart by conflict and whose people are dying and suffering in masses would not want a speedy end to the conflict? And is it possible that such a leadership would resist applying normative principles that are prerequisites to the success of efforts to achieve peace? And even assuming the worse of intentions on the part of the leadership, is it pragmatically prudent to adopt approaches that can only provoke resistance and perhaps even violent confrontation, with increased suffering and death for the innocent populace? Is it wiser to adopt strategies that are based on cooperation toward the shared goal of peace, security, and stability for the country? What alternatives to cooperation can possibly expedite the speedy end to the proliferating and devastating conflicts in the country?

Even if we assume ulterior motives to the

initiative of National Dialogue, would the prospects of success not be enhanced and strengthened by collaboration and partnership among like-minded advocates of peace? Conversely, would opposition or lack of cooperation not have the adverse effect of undermining the peace process, reinforcing the enemies of peace, and prolonging the war and the resulting destruction, suffering and atrocious killings of the innocent? Is it not conceivable that a National Dialogue that is reinforced and strengthened by national, regional and international collaboration and partnership could impose itself on the national decision makers to join the collective domestic and international efforts to restore peace and security to the country?

There are, of course, other pragmatic measures that need to be taken to ensure the cooperation of the controlling national authorities. The framework of an effective and sustainable peace accord must ensure a win-win arrangement that is genuinely conducive to national reconciliation.

Any recommendations that can result in radical reforms and transformation must assure the pivotal authorities of their security, welfare, and dignity within the stipulated framework. Threats of punitive action can only undermine the incentive and motivation for cooperation.

To reiterate what must by now be the obvious conclusion of my argument, only by safeguarding the security, welfare, dignity and honorable legacy for the Founding Leaders, those who achieved the independence of the country through the sacrifice of a prolonged and extremely costly struggle, can they be induced to accept change in an appropriate and timely manner and usher the nation to new heights of peace, unity, security and stability for the present and future generations.

To reiterate a point I have repeatedly made on numerous occasions, the case for international partnership rests on the fact that the search for peace and an early end to human suffering provides a common ground and a shared objective which calls for the unification of efforts

to be mutually reinforcing and more effective in achieving the common goal. It is totally counter-productive to allow differences of the means employed to undermine cooperation toward the overriding objective that should be unifying. Instead, what we need is constructive dialogue to facilitate complementarity and mutual reinforcement. This requires respect for the differences and willingness to compromise for the greater good rather than allow divisive convictions over ideals to become the enemy of the doable good.

Reconciling idealism with pragmatism must be the basis for collaboration among national, regional and international partners through the instrumentality of the National Dialogue.