



# UNITY STATE GRADUATES' SOCIETY

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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## For Immediate Release

### **Condemnation of the letter sent by Hon Minister of Transport Simon Mijiok to the Chief Administrator of the Ruweng Administrative Area on the joint declaration on the official opening of the border between South Sudan and Sudan**

The Unity State Graduates Society learned with dismay the minister's letter dated 09 September, which he addressed to the Chief Administrator of Ruweng Administrative Area. The letter that carries the title: *"Joint Official Declaration on the opening of Borders between the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of the Sudan on Cross Border Trade,"* is an affront to the people of Unity State, who have always been silent and analogously ignorant of plethora propaganda machines, including academics and parliamentarians, who have been engaged in writing border-related articles in the recent past. It's surprising to see a national minister follow the road of propagandists when he's supposed to be a cradle for the nation's peaceful cohesion.

For the last eight years, the Unity State Graduates Society has been adamant about responding to indecorous statements of this nature. While it's sometime essential to stand aloof and observe events as they unfold for the sake of peace, this latter utterance from the national minister, who happens to be the son of Ruweng Administrative Area, cannot be ignored as any attempt to do so would be interpreted as an indirect affirmation of the statement. For the sake of peace between the two sisterly entities, the Graduates Society would like to ask the minister to revise the letter and adjust the addressee if he meant Payanggai, which in recent years has been renamed Panakuach by the community of Parieng County of Ruweng Administrative Area.

Payanggai Boma, which the minister refers to as Panakuach is a home to Leek Clan of Rubkona County in Unity State. The area became a border town only after the Heglig war in 2012. Prior to that, it was located in the heart of Leek land as Leek's territory extends up to Keilek before the government of the Sudan adopted a land acquisition policy that pushed South Sudanese southward during the early days of oil exploration and discovery in the late 1970s. Until 2007, the Unity State Government's Revenue Collection border office was located in Kerasana, and it was administered with the consent of Rubkona's local authorities who also contributed county-level tax collectors to serve alongside the state-appointed personnel.

A year ago, the President of the republic adopted a policy of disengagement as he urged the two communities to vacate the area to avoid violent conflict. The border community of Rubkona, as law abiding people, adhered to the directive and withdrew to Roriak Boma - a distance of approximately eight (8) kilometers south of Payanggai. Currently, the area is manned by the National Police Service as directed by the president. In view of this, the minister owes the people of Unity State an explanation about the status of Payanggai Boma of Budang Payam in Rubkona County as to whether it has been annexed to Ruweng Administrative Area without the knowledge of Unity State citizens or he does that simply because he hails from Ruweng Administrative Area. Whatever the case, the letter is unfortunate and deserves all it takes to be condemned and in the strongest term possible.

As a national figure, the minister must serve the nation with utmost integrity and professionalism, and without bias. Regardless of where he comes from, he must resist any attempt from any pressure group to use his position to achieve their interest, to avoid being accused of favoritism and tribalism. He has to remember that the country has just emerged from the bloody Civil War and that all the contested areas are yet to be demarcated by the recently reconstituted Council of States. Public figures ought to be careful and equally calculative of their statements concerning contested areas to avoid fueling inter-communal conflicts.

The Hon. Minister must also understand that just because the Unity State community did not react negatively when the current map of Ruweng Administrative Area, which whimsically connects Abiemnom and Parieng, was prepared on paper, does not mean they approve of the



map. It simply means that the map is on paper, and the peace-loving citizens of Unity State are on the ground, unconcerned with what is on paper as long as it is on paper.

For a very long time, we have been watching the actions of a few individuals, including some academics and parliamentarians from Ruweng Administrative Area, who have been using their clout with some national and international cartographers to act as if they have been licensed to annex other people's land. They've been conducting their territorial expansion campaign using UNOCHA's operational maps, which were designed solely for humanitarian purposes. This perilous pingpong game must come to an end, and we ask the humanitarian organizations to consult with the intelligentsia and state authorities before adopting any map, as they are being abused by those who profit from the confusion. Everybody knows that there is no nexus between Abiemnom and Parieng since time immemorial as Rubkona and Mayom Counties lie between them and stretch all the way to the Sudanese border.

To conclude with, the Unity State Graduate Society would like to urge the Hon. Minister to revise his letter, re-address it to the right authority and copy whoever he deems fit, if he is mindful about the peaceful co-existence between the two sisterly communities of Ruweng Administrative Area and Unity State.

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