



South Sudan Civil Society Forum

South Sudan Civil Society Forum Urges Immediate Steps for Democratic Transition Following Election Postponement and R-ARCSS Extension

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Juba, South Sudan – (20 September 2024) – The South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) expresses profound concern regarding the recent decision to postpone elections and extend the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). We are outraged that an extension decision has again been reached without considering views of citizens or building inclusive national consensus. While acknowledging the practical realities that make credible elections unfeasible within the remaining period of the R-ARCSS, this extension starkly underscores the government's failure to allocate adequate resources for implementation and the lack of commitment and genuine political will since the previous extension.

The two years of the previous extension have only resulted in increased suffering, economic decline, high living costs, rampant corruption, and the constriction of civic and political space, leading to widespread fear and despair. Besides, the recently endorsed extension by the R-JMEC offers no new assurance to citizens and international partners that implementation will succeed over the next two years. It neglects to confront the critical factors that perpetuate stagnation: a chronic absence of political commitment and insufficient resource allocation. Alarming, even when resources are earmarked for implementation, they have been diverted for other purposes. This raises serious questions about whether the government prioritizes the implementation of the agreement as a genuine commitment to the welfare of its citizens.

The continuous cycle of extensions is tantamount to holding the nation hostage, undermining the trust of the South Sudanese people. Such inaction conveys a troubling message: that the interests of citizens are secondary to political maneuvering.

In this context, the SSCSF firmly advocates for the Tumaini Initiative as the viable pathway toward building genuine national consensus towards accelerating implementation of the outstanding provisions of the R-ARCSS and a meaningful political transition, culminating in credible and transparent elections. The draft Tumaini Consensus encompasses important provisions that can expedite implementation. Notably, it introduces innovative frameworks absent from the R-ARCSS, including Protocols on Trust and Confidence Building, Communal Conflicts, Armed Civilians, and Land Disputes, along with new institutional structures specifically designed to enhance the effectiveness of implementation. Therefore, we urge the government to urgently send its delegation back to Nairobi to finalize the outstanding elements of the Tumaini Consensus. We also call on the broader community to continue offering diplomatic and political support for the Tumaini process as it moves into its final phase of negotiations.

We strongly urge the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU), along with all parties and stakeholders involved in the Tumaini Initiative, to collaboratively develop a comprehensive implementation matrix. This matrix should include clear timelines and prioritize the following essential tasks to advance the nation toward credible elections:

1. First, the inclusive development and adoption of a permanent constitution that establishes a framework for an elected government, embedding democratic principles at the core of governance.
2. Second, the integration, training, and deployment of unified security forces, ensuring these personnel are adequately prepared and strategically positioned to maintain stability during the transition period and beyond.
3. Third, conducting a comprehensive national census to inform electoral processes and guide national development planning.
4. Fourth, creating an enabling environment for elections involving the implementation of measures that facilitates peaceful, inclusive, and credible electoral processes, ensuring all citizens can participate in democracy without fear or obstruction.
5. Finally, enhancing civic and political space to foster a vibrant democratic culture including. Measures to protect and promote civic engagement and political participation, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and respected within the political landscape.

Moving forward, we implore the South Sudan government to demonstrate a genuine commitment and political will by allocating meaningful domestic resources for implementation and clearly exhibit responsible stewardship of national revenues through accountable and transparent revenue collection, and management to facilitate implementation of the critical tasks to ensure peaceful, inclusive and credible elections. Honest dedication to these tasks is essential for promoting trust among the populace and encouraging international partners to extend their support.

It is time for our leaders to act differently, to break the cycle of stagnation, endless transition and to reaffirm their commitment to democratic transition and the progress and prosperity of South Sudan. The SSCSF remains resolute in advocating for the rights and aspirations of our people, and we call on all stakeholders to join us in this critical endeavor.

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ABOUT THE SSCSF

The South Sudan Civic Society Forum (SSCSF) is a coalition of over 200 independent civic groups, including civil society organizations, women and youth groups, academic institutions, community-based organizations, and faith-based entities from across South Sudan. Established in December 2017, the SSCSF plays a vital role in connecting civil society contributions to peace processes by facilitating unified engagement, and advocating for the meaningful participation of the South Sudanese population in shaping their country's future. This coalition amplifies diverse voices, ensuring a wide range of perspectives is represented in discussions on peace and governance. Through its efforts, the SSCSF aims to empower citizens and promote a more inclusive and democratic society.

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