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SSHURSA WELCOMES ROADMAP PEACE AGREEMENT AND URGES PARTIES TO PUT SOUTH SUDAN ABOVE SELF

The South Sudan Human Rights society for Advocacy (SSHURSA) welcomes the roadmap agreement of 1 February 2015, signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; between the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement or Army-In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO).

The agreement is intended to chart the way forward for the establishment of the Transitional Government of National Unity. Though the parties are yet to be seen true to their words, this agreement is hoped to shape the new political and social dispensation for peace among South Sudanese people. SSHURSA, thus, congratulates South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and SPLM/A-IO leader Dr Riek Machar, for taking such a courageous move to sign the roadmap agreement. SSHURSA urges the two leaders and their supporters to continue putting South Sudan and the interests of its people above personal grievances and interests. It is hoped that such document could set up a clearer way nearing to signing of a negotiated final peace deal that may restore peace, harmony and needed reforms in South Sudan which may heal the wounded and embittered South Sudanese society.

SSHURSA takes cognisance of the following main issues being the highlights of the signed agreement:

- (i) establishment and mandate of the anticipated Transitional Government of National Unity
- (ii) power sharing between the principal parties and other political forces.
- (iii) role of the National Assembly in the implementation of expected peace agreement and reforms
- (iv) federalism
- (v) transitiounal security arrangements
- (vi) justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing

Much as the agreement highlights issues that would give guidance to the discussion for the final agreement by the parties, SSHURSA however, warns that parties should not be carried away by external pressure but rather make real commitment and avoid mere sweeping statements which have no basis in addressing the root causes and fundamental reforms that South Sudanese people need. The respective leadership of the parties to conflict, should discuss issues that have been affecting South Sudanese people especially matters on governance, human rights and rule of law. This would largely require sincere direct efforts of President Salva Kiir and the leader of SPLM/A-IO Dr Riek Machar, to humbly discuss fundamental reforms without preferences to personal interests but that of South Sudanese people, for whom peace is meant to hold.

SSHURSA also specifically welcomes the provision on justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing. This should come with establishment of truth and reconciliation commission whose main function should be to expose the truth of the past and ongoing human rights violations. The commission should be a forum to avail both victims and perpetrators an opportunity to face each other in exposing the truth of violations which may devise ways of reconciliation. This can ensure long term healing from the continued bitterness among South Sudanese communities. This process of truth telling, combined with reforms in the governance and service delivery sector, and traditional justice mechanisms, may ensure long-term stability in South Sudan.

Much as SSHURSA welcomes formation of hybrid judicial body, however, it warns that given the composition of current justice sector in South Sudan, with personnel being submissive to the executive armed of government amidst incompetence, the prospects of justice without reforms in the sector, risk being manipulated and project a significant failing from start.

SSHURSA also warns that a hybrid judicial body that would target prosecuting only low ranking officers among the parties, leaving the big fish who could possibly have been the main commanding perpetrators and ordering authorities; and plus the usual controversial effects of prosecution in postconflict society such as South Sudan, also risks throwing South Sudan into further perpetual instability.

SSHURSA further warns that any advocacy for justice, truth and reconciliation that does not centre itself on the traditional justice mechanisms and centred on victims' interests, risks being seen as a forum meant for international and regional employment which is likely to be detached from the victim-based approach. This shall have missed the much needed meaningful exposure of truth that may provide closure among the victims and pave way for reconciliation and healing among the postconflict South Sudanese communities. This approach, a scenario absence of which posits a significant challenge to the future stability of South Sudan.

SSHURSA appeals to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, African Union and other international actors on South Sudan's conflict resolution initiatives, to rethink their strategies. They should instead, further encourage South Sudanese parties to the conflict and other involved actors, to meaningfully discuss root causes of the conflict and reach consented compromises which would bring about meaningful stability back to South Sudan.

Finally, SSHURSA urges the parties to conflict to adhere to the spirit of cessation of hostilities which they had long signed but failed to respect. Neither side nor foreign support base, would win the war militarily and the parties, should instead, listen to the voices of the suffering South Sudanese people in South Sudan and refugee camps in neighbouring countries. SSHURSA continues to warn neighbouring states to reconsider their military support that has been fueling conflict in South Sudan hence subjecting the country to more human rights abuses by the warring parties. These countries should know that, a collapsed and instable South Sudan could be an apple of regional instability in the long run, thus, concerted efforts needed now than later to work for stable South Sudan.

Signed: SSHURSA Executive Director

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About SSHURSA:

SSHURSA is an incorporated non-political and non-profit making national human rights organisation, founded by South Sudanese lawyers and Law Students on 5 June 2007 at Law Development Centre (LDC), Makerere, Kampala, Uganda. In South Sudan, its operations started since 2009 with its headquarters in Juba and coordination offices in other states. Its vision: a democratic and human rights abiding South Sudan. Its mission is to monitor, document and publish human rights status in the country. SSHURSA also trains general public on human rights, constitution, rule of law, transitional justice and international humanitarian law. All geared towards creating an informed citizenry that ensures justice and good governance oriented South Sudan. Visit us at: www.sshursa.org