

PLACE

Juba

DATE

18 November 2020

UNHCR praises inclusion of refugee and internally displaced voices in South Sudan's milestone National Dialogue peace conference

On Tuesday, the National Dialogue Conference on Peace concluded in Juba, South Sudan with the release of a communique aimed at identifying a way forward for the revitalized agreement on the resolution of the conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). Recommendations covered a host of topics ranging from the economy to safety and security, to governance and social cohesion. In a historic step, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees also brought their unique perspectives to the deliberations.

The Dialogue provided a platform for a frank and earnest exchange of views among over 500 participants from all walks of life. In light of the global pandemic, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, assisted a dozen participants to connect virtually from five asylum countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. In addition, 26 IDPs and returnees across South Sudan connected to the proceedings online, in close coordination with the National Dialogue Conference's organizers. Many more watched the livestreamed discussions.

Refugee, IDP and returnee recommendations were included in the final report, which largely focused on displacement solutions. Concretely, they called for security sector reform and strengthening the rule of law, improvements in essential services in their home location, inclusion of women, youth and persons with disabilities in governance; reforms that respect women's rights to own, inherit and transfer land; housing, land and property restitution; economic stability and creation of employment opportunities.

Reflecting the gravity of the occasion, President H.E. Salva Kiir Mayardit addressed the Conference on the final day, along with members of the diplomatic community in Juba. In his concluding remarks, the Honourable Angelo Beda, co-chairperson of the National Dialogue, recognised that continued momentum following the dialogue is crucial, and urged the full realisation of the recommendations. Participants also echoed the call for progress. "What sets great nations apart is the implementation of policies", said Zacharia Friday in Yambio, Western Equatoria State on behalf of internally displaced persons in South Sudan.

With nearly 2.2 million South Sudanese refugees hosted in neighbouring countries and another 1.6 million persons displaced within the country, UNHCR stresses for their voice to be heard at all stages, including in consultations which are shaping the path to peace.

"Peace is not complete until the nation is complete, and the nation is not complete until all of its citizens have a meaningful role to play in that," said Arafat Jamal, UNHCR Representative speaking at the closing ceremony. "Thank you to the National Dialogue for welcoming the virtual participation of conflict affected communities."

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