

**Gen. Salva Kiir Mayardit, First Vice President of the Republic of the Sudan and
President of the Government of Southern Sudan, October 13, 2010**

**Opening Address on the Occasion of the Meeting of ‘All Southern Sudanese
Political Parties and Leaders Conference’
Juba, Southern Sudan, Wednesday 13th - 15th October, 2010**

- Your Excellencies former Heads of State and Government, Presidents Daniel
- Toroitich Arap Moi of Kenya,
- Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania,
- Thabo Mbeki of Republic of South Africa,
- Distinguished Leaders and Delegates of Political Parties,
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Representatives of our Development Partners,
- Religious Leaders,
- Representatives of Civil Society,
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to see all of you in this hall this morning and you are welcome as a family of leaders of Southern Sudan and as friends close to the heart of this part of the country. For those of you who may have come to Juba for the first time, feel at home and for those who have frequented us you are always most welcome!

This gathering today is a rare one but critical because of current developments in our country. The Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which was signed on January 9th, 2005, is coming to conclusion in a few months. According to this historical Accord, on January 9th, 2011 the people of Southern Sudan and Abyei will vote in referenda to exercise their right to self-determination. The people of Abyei will be voting to join Southern Sudan while Southern Sudan itself will be making the choice of either remaining part of the Sudan or opt to secede and become an independent entity. This is clearly provided for in the CPA and it is not a matter of interpretation.

Distinguished participants, allow me to point out that this august gathering should be a reminder to us that we are members of one family, Southern Sudanese irrespective of political affiliation, creed, ethnicity, or geographical location. Our destiny is one as a people and we must together work to achieve our common goals. We are all cognizant that throughout our struggle, each and every family has lost a soul if not souls, to whom we must always register our loyalty because without their selfless sacrifices we would not be where we are now.

Distinguished Leaders, you must have heard from the media that I just returned from a long trip to the United States of America, in which I met with various

leaders from the US Administration, neighbouring countries and other World leaders. I was invited by the United Nations Secretary General in New York, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon and the Security Council, to attend a UN High-Level Meeting on Sudan which was organized at the brink of the UN General Assembly. All the meetings went on well and as you must have already heard and read from the media and press, the full implementation of the CPA up to the timely conduct of the referenda on January 9th, 2011 received international overwhelming support.

This has been due to clarity of our message: we want peace and no more to war! The right to self-determination of the people of Southern Sudan and Abyei must be honored in a referendum to take place on January 9th, 2011. This is the bottom line and a hard won right whose ultimate price is more than 4 million lives lost during the long two civil wars since independence in 1956.

This was my message everywhere during the visit and I also expressed words of gratitude to all the friends without whose altruistic support the CPA could not have become a reality. Remember it is the pressures from far away that also contributed immensely to the signing of the CPA. **Thus, as we gather here today, we should not lose sight of the much needed support of the region, the international community, civil society organizations, the Churches and all people of goodwill. Such continued interest and support remains critical more than ever in the testing months ahead.**

Distinguished Leaders, the CPA remains the vital foundation of peace today, and will remain so in the months ahead. When we met in Nairobi for the first time in early 2005 we all pledged to support and protect the CPA by signing the covenant. We recommitted ourselves here in Juba in 2008 to abide by the rules and we are coming to its conclusion in a period less than one year. During this period we shall be faced with the challenge of organizing the referenda, that of Southern Sudan and Abyei, and to also press for the implementation of the Popular Consultations for the people of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. The challenges ahead should constitute the agenda for discussions in the next three days. Therefore, I would like **to point out the following:**

1. This meeting is about the future of Southern Sudan, which is greater than the interest of each and every one of us as individuals and as political parties. We want to build consensus in order to guarantee a free, fair, transparent and peaceful referendum exercise throughout Southern Sudan and Abyei. This is our collective responsibility as a people and Southern Sudan belongs to all of us.
2. We want to enlighten Southern Sudanese eligible voters to fully understand the process and the decision they will make in the exercise of the right to self-determination. Thus, there is need to stand together as Southern Sudanese to educate our people fully about the importance of this event because unlike elections that constitutionally occurs on term basis this exercise is once and for all in a life time. **It is a golden opportunity that must not be wasted for history will not only honour us but this generation of leaders will never be forgiven by future generations.**
3. It is such deep thought and understanding that brought me and brother Dr Lam Akol together last Saturday 09/10/2010 as you saw it in the media and press. Political differences should not become obstacle to the general public

good and interest.

4. Similarly, I also declared amnesty for all those who took up arms after the elections like Gen George Athor and also for members of Other Armed Groups (OAGs) of Gen Gordon Koang Chol and Gen Gabriel Tangginya. They should all lay down their arms and join Southern Sudanese in this historical event so that together we collectively determine our destiny.

5. Politically, we are a democratic system of government embedded in our Interim Constitution. No one should ever be mistaken to contemplate that we may be gathering here to abolish political parties. No! Even attempts to merge political parties should be discouraged save for legitimate alliances that are based on synergy. The main objective for gathering here together as Southern Sudanese leaders from various political parties is to build the much needed consensus about the future of Southern Sudan.

6. Following the UN High-Level Meeting on Sudan in New York, there has been meeting of minds worldwide as you may have heard from the pronouncements of various leaders about the timely conduct of the referenda in Southern Sudan and Abyei. Now if such consensus has already been built at the international level why would Southern Sudanese leaders opt to contradict the future of their people?

7. I am convinced that you will all agree with me that the destiny of Southern Sudan belongs to all the people of Southern Sudan. **If Southern Sudan secedes in the forthcoming referendum it will not be a nation that belongs to one party, region, ethnic group, or religion but to all of us. If we squandered this opportunity, we will remain in the wrong annals of history and the likelihood of many lives being lost is high because the emotions of the people are charged. This therefore morally demands for responsible leadership and some level of sacrifice.**

8. I would like us all to come up with common principles and together agree to facilitate peaceful, free, fair, timely, efficient and democratic process. This is critical to determine the credibility of the outcome acceptable to all, particularly meeting the standards of the international community. It is in our interest to ensure credible referenda in Southern Sudan and Abyei.

Distinguished Leaders, as I make these statements, I am conscious of the fact that after the elections feelings were hurt because there are those who won and they celebrated and those who lost they agonized and even led to some individuals taking up arms. In the spirit of reconciliation I appeal to all of us to forget the past and let us seize this moment to take the collective responsibility to guarantee the future of our people. At this hour, we must pass the test of unity and nationhood so as to prove many wrong especially those who floated the idea of Southern Sudan becoming a failed state.

Moreover, having differences of opinion does not necessarily disqualify a people from determining their future. **Therefore we should live beyond the petty quarrels for survival. We have an opportunity to show to the world that we are ready and I have pointed it out in the past that Southern Sudan is more prepared than some African countries at independence with the exception of South Africa.**

You will agree with me that no drop of blood should be shed again because of the divisions and disunity amongst us Southern Sudanese. Life is precious and sacred and it should not be sacrificed for the selfish aims of political leaders. I also urge all of us to remain vigilant and guard against war mongers who have not and will not even touch the gun in their life time. I appeal to the gallant armies of the Sudan and all able bodied persons to shun war and value life of their children, women and the old in society. I would like us to honor our distinguished African leaders present here with us today by resolving never to be divided again!

Today, we are left with less than 88 days to reach the vital moment of our history, an extraordinary moment indeed in the history of Africa, January 9th, 2011 the day of the conduct of the referendum in Southern Sudan. We must not let the enemies of peace and spoilers to disrupt the momentous event. As I said, the referendum is a golden opportunity for us and let us work together to let our people make an informed choice of either unity of the Sudan or secession. **A leveled ground should be provided for all options during the campaign for unity and secession. Therefore, I want to urge all of us here that our unity and consensus is very critical for the realization of this goal.**

Distinguished Participants, as we look forward to this historic event, I ask that we work harder to overcome any limitations in order to fulfil the obligation of letting our people to exercise the right to self-determination. The measure of credibility of the vote should be clear and understood beforehand. I have assured the international community that we are working for a vote that will represent fairly the views of the people. This should be the measure of the legitimacy of the process. It is not realistic, however, to demand perfection but it is in our interest that a free, fair and transparent process is put in place.

As I said several times, to us the timing of the referenda is Devine. We are pleased and welcome the referendum timeline issued by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC). We as Government of Southern Sudan will fulfil our financial obligations to the Commission to enable the process proceed without any further delays.

At this juncture, allow me now to explain to you about our preparations. The Government of Southern Sudan is preparing the referendum process at the same time negotiating the post referendum arrangements. We have approached these negotiations with seriousness and good intentions. We are genuinely willing to negotiate with our brothers in the North, and are prepared to work in a spirit of partnership to create sustainable relations between Northern and Southern Sudan for the long-term.

It is in our interest to see that the North remains a viable state, just as it should be in the interest of the North to see Southern Sudan emerge a viable one too. We have been negotiating fairly and consistent with international law. We will work to preserve and enhance the livelihoods of all Sudanese people, including those depending on traditional migrations across the North/South border. The issues are very clear and should not be made to become obstacles

for the conduct of the referenda. These are issues dealing with Citizenship and nationality; Natural resources and financial matter; Security; and International treaties. They have been elaborated several times in the past and I will not dwell again to belabor myself. What is required is a mutual agreement that is satisfactory to all but with consideration of justice. We believe that there is a very real opportunity to demonstrate how two states can work together cooperatively to bring economic prosperity to both of their nations in the event of secession.

I would like to emphasize about the safety and rights of Southerners in the North and safety and rights of Northerners in the South, as well as for the peoples who have traditionally travelled through the border areas, to be fully protected. On our side, I have reiterated that we are committed to provide and guarantee adequate security for all Sudanese in a manner that respects the rule of law and the rights and freedoms of all individuals, no matter what their tribe, origin, religion, party or ethnicity. We look for a reciprocal commitment from our brothers in the North.

I cannot end my opening remarks without pointing out the issues of **Abyei**, where stability now and in the future depends. I urge our partners to implement the Permanent Court of Arbitration's (PCA) decision. We do not want Abyei to become the potential trigger for conflict again between the South and the North. The SPLM and the NCP met in Addis Ababa in the last few days but failed to agree on the way forward on this issue. **I mentioned it before and I will repeat again that there is no reverse to war because of the lack of implementation of the Abyei Protocol and other Protocol.** Therefore let us all work for peaceful settlement of all issues so as to guarantee mutual respect and good neighborliness. I have repeated it several times that even if the South secedes, it will not relocate from where it is located now.

In conclusion, as the theme of this meeting is to build consensus on the referendum, I hope that my remarks have laid down some basis of building this consensus. **It is my belief that the pillars of this consensus would certainly include:**

- **Respect for each other** - we should respect each other including our political parties, programs and views. Nevertheless the views and ideals of parties should not be those that incite the people or promote hatred and violence.

- **The Spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation** - let us not look backward but rather focus on the future. We should use past mistakes to perfect future vision. This is what will constitute our maturity, which will in turn be the basis for other people to respect us. Let us forgive one another and pursue common goals and interest to better the livelihood of our people.

- **Dialogue** is the other pillar - as social beings we will always pursue interests that clash. The only way out is to manage such individual conflict of interest through dialogue and openness. Never harbour or accumulate differences because they will often explode. Share difficulties and seek counsel from your friends in order to avoid unnecessary conflict.

Finally, we are committed to sustainable peace and stability irrespective of the outcome of the referendum. We have achieved a lot in the past few years since the CPA was signed, but we still have a lot of work before us after the referendum. We are committed to establishing transparent and accountable government consistent with the requirements of statehood. We will uphold democratic principles and guarantee all kinds of freedom for all our diverse communities. I urge you all to work with us to ensure that these ideals and goal are achieved.

As Southern Sudanese, together let us defend the rights of our people and Long live the CPA!

Long live the memories of our martyrs!

We remain committed to freedom and peace for our country, the region and the world!

I now declare this Consensus Conference opened.

Thank you for listening and May God bless us and bless Southern Sudan!