

# REPORT ON ELEVENTH SESSION OF HIGH-LEVEL BREAKFAST DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIC THINKING ON THE PEACE PROCESS IN SOUTH SUDAN



EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF SOUTH SUDANESE YOUTH  
IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS THROUGH INCLUSIVE  
PARTICIPATION IN R-ARCSS IMPLEMENTATION

## I - THE FUNCTION AND ATTENDANCE

The Center for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) organized the eleventh **HIGH-LEVEL BREAKFAST DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIC THINKING ON PEACE PROCESS IN SOUTH SUDAN** at Pyramid Continental Hotel in Juba on Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2019. The event brought over 50 youth leaders and activists, political parties' leaders, civil society leaders, private sector leaders, academic experts, research fellows, diplomatic corps and NGOs leaders who are linked directly or indirectly to peace process in South Sudan. The participants arrived at the venue at prime morning time and took breakfast in the main Restaurant (07:35h – 08:35h am) before converging in the Conference Room for the discussion (08:35h to 10:45h am).

## II - THE OBJECTIVES AND DISCUSSION

Session Eleventh of the series of Breakfast Discussion was carefully conceptualized to guide the discussants on the topic. The core aim is to enhance effective participation of South Sudanese Youth in governance and development, including due consideration for gender balance and inclusivity, in the course of implementation of September 2018 **Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)**. The following were the expected outputs:

- 1). Articulating the interest of South Sudanese Youth in the 2018 R-ARCSS based on their inclusive empowerment in peace and development governance.
- 2). Drawing from relevant experiences of constructive youth engagements in sustainable peace and development as demonstrated by African youth in their respective countries, be it bilaterally or multilaterally.
- 3). Inculcating the pertinent universal values for prudent leadership and effective contribution by the Youth for the well-being of South Sudan in its unique diversity, be it at the national or local levels.
- 4). Enhancing the networking advantages of the empowered youth of South Sudan at the local, national, regional and international arenas.
- 5). Paying special attention for repatriation of South Sudanese youth who became refugees and IDPs, especially with regard to affirmative socio-economic benefits.
- 6). Invalidating the traditional cultural practices and taboos that hinder active participation of female youth in public affairs and leadership in South Sudan.

Guided by these objectives and Chatham House Rule, the lead expert and moderator steered the deliberations cordially with frank conversation. **Ms. Mary Ajith** (BA of Communication from Daystar University, Nairobi, 2015; Advanced Certificate of Project Management from Bright Star College, Nairobi, 2016; and Director of Catholic Radio Network, 2016 to date) welcomed **Ms. Aya Chebbi** and introduced her passionately to the audience—Fulbright Scholar at Georgia Southern University in 2012 and Masters in African Politics at SOAS, University of London; Award Winner of Pan-African Feminists; Renown Blogger during 2010/2011 Tunisian Revolution and First AU Youth Envoy to date.

**Ms. Aya Chebbi** was impressed by her first time visit to South Sudan and witnessed directly for herself what she has been hearing about the status of this new country on the world's map. She lamented how most African youth are portrayed negatively as a force used for destruction of their nations. Also she detested how innovative creativity of the youth is not usually acknowledged in this bad narrative, which has often sent out dangerous message of victimization of young people. She wanted this narrative changed and replaced with objectively constructive connotations. She urged for implementation of the theme of the African Union for 2017, which required the continent to invest in demographic dividends of the youth by offering them sufficient space of opportunities.

According to her, it is not practical to stick merely at 35-year threshold as the definitive age of the youth while failing to offer them economic, social and political benefits to enable them build their future meaningfully. Such stagnated thinking has led to marginalization of the African youth as they got deprived from their deserved rights. It has made the African youth to get rewarded with violence for destruction rather than dialogue for development. The inequality and injustices meted against the youth have so often obstructed them from enjoying dignified livelihoods, especially when governments failed to secure employment opportunities for them or to inculcate entrepreneurship spirit in this vibrant sector of society.

The civil space and inclusivity of the youth in public decision-making positions have usually not been prioritized in Africa. Most of the youth have been kept illiterate and less-informed so that they could be mobilized easily without critical thinking against the bad actions required from them by the elders. The institutions of the government that are tasked with youth, sports and cultural affairs have usually been underfunded with pretext that these are cross-cutting endeavors. That is why the youth ministries or commissions have had been yielding low impact on the youth who should be influencing the well-being of their societies with strong civic activism. Other justification for restricting youth engagements in nation and state building is that the youth are too emotional with undeveloped intelligence. They are still raw to be tasked with heavy public leadership responsibility.

She wanted the youth to get engaged in governance activities, which are solely aimed at providing services to the people in transparent and accountable manner. The youth should keep the presidents and other top political leaders of their countries always reminded of their responsibility to protect and safeguard the nation on a dignified path with the practical parameters of honest guidance. They should demand affirmative action to uplift the space of their opportunities and participation in the governance. This is what happened in Egypt and



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Tunisia during “the Arab Spring” though deviations occurred after change was effected, even though the military came to the side of the youth to support them for change of the uncaring old guards. The renowned liberation movements in Africa, like the SPLM/A and others, should never forget the contribution of the youth during the struggle and for realizing the vision after the victory. They should always reflect the over 70% of the youth population when it comes to distribution of power and resources, especially in top leadership positions of the government like what Ethiopia has done recently under Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed.

In a special appeal, Ms Aya Chebbi urged the youth of South Sudan to work for realization of transnational identity based on Pan-Africanism, which is envisioned to create borderless continent through integration of geographical directions of Africa. This will become easily possible with open markets and inspiration of youth to emulate good contributions made by their counterparts in other African states. She cited what a Nigerian leader said during the formation of the OAU inaugural summit in May 1963: **“I came here as a Nigerian but I am now going back as an African”**.

She regarded education of the youth and critical thinking as best tool for challenging false ideologies and traditional practices, especially the bad ideas that promote violence and encourage corruption. This has to encompass psychosocial support and extracurricular activities. It has to prioritize skills training for the youth and prepare them for good leadership as demonstrated in public service in Rwanda, Mauritius, Tunisia and Nigeria under the slogan of **“Not too Young to Lead”**. To bridge the



40-year intergenerational gaps of generations in South Sudan, Ms Aya Chebbi recommended for promotion of intergenerational co-leadership by the youth and elders and with gender balance. She objected to generalization of collective punishment for the youth. However, she expressed optimism with the manner that the Youth of South Sudan inspired her via various campaigns for peace—“**South Sudan is Watching**”, “**Youth Web**”, “**Salaam Junub**”, “**Women for Peace**”, “**Promise Land**”.

She relayed her story of how she emerged as one of the youth who steered the Arab Spring in Tunisia where they pressed on the government to allow the youth decide the future of their country. According to her, such team work and coalition became eye-opener, particularly learning the importance of working with those she didn’t agree with initially. Also she commended the role played by the Civil Society of Tunisia, which was organized in form of trade unions and NGOs coalitions. This experience gave her a strong believe that nothing is impossible with collective work that put the country first above narrow interests. It made a big difference for change of the undesired status quo. Given the overwhelming youth population, Ms Aya Chebbi expressed optimism that South Sudan could become a model in Africa as its youth are good in voluntary initiatives, including being teachers in rural and most needy areas in the countryside where they have been contributing to nation building by putting their country first. This is so unique and a source of consolation for humanity.

**Mr. Simon Marot** commended the discussion on youth in South Sudan and considered this as instrumental for the good of the nation, especially when the environment of peace is realized sustainably. Given the population of 8.9 million young people under age of 35 in South Sudan, it



will be impossible to build the state and the nation without involving this vibrant demography in positive progress (including the youth in the cattle camps, farming fields and fishing locations). Youth of South Sudan should get unified in order to converse practically on their aspirations in public and private sector, both in urban and rural settings. This must be pursued based on non-violence approach. Also it should bridge the widened and unhelpful mistrust that has been implanted in the youth by the older generation.

According to Mr. Simon, it is very important for the youth to develop a common vision with joint agenda of what they want to achieve constructively for South Sudan. The slogan of 'Beledna Awal' and establishment of Youth Development Strategic Plan is a good move in the right direction for achieving this dream. Addressing of the root causes of the problems that have been encountered in South Sudan should also form the basic focus of the youth and their correspondences, exchanges and joint ventures. He looks forward to see the youth of Uror coming together with the youth of Bor to jointly clean their respective towns. Such contributory common practices are crucial for enhancing unity of the people of South Sudan and for creating a better future for all without divisions but mutual care for each other's well-being. This positive joint practice should be encouraged in the IDPs camps inside South Sudan and also in the refugee settlements so that the displaced could come back with changed attitude for rebuilding the post-conflict South Sudan successfully.

**Ms. Mary Ajith** summarized the following main points that emerged from the High-Level Breakfast Discussion on effective ways to engage youth in peace-building and nation-building process in South Sudan:

- (i). The negative narrative and perception towards the Youth should be changed. Most of the young people in Africa are perceived as violence promoters. Their positive creativity and innovation is mostly ignored. This attitude endangers and victimizes the youth. It denies them to have a space for exercising their creative innovativeness.
- (ii). The African Union has rated the youth as the majority across Africa who deserve demographic dividend. However, serious actions are never taken regarding what young people can contribute to the continent as far as economic, social and political development are concerned.
- (iii). Young people have been marginalized and made insecure by many governments in Africa, which have failed to invest in the youth but only rewarded them with violence as they are told to wait for adulthood.
- (iv). Injustice against the youth should be addressed so that their dignity and equality are safeguarded accordingly. The job creation should be geared towards youth signification. Most of the youth-led activities are not well funded. This makes most of the youth redundant and manipulated. If you go around in Africa, it won't be a surprise to find that the Ministry of Youth is the least funded and with no attachment to development. It is usually lumped together as Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. Also you will hear that Youth issues are cross-cutting but with less attention to address them. This must change.

- (v). The civic space for the discussion of issues pertaining to youth have been shrinking in Africa. The youth have been considered as good for nothing constructive except carrying arms in the frontlines of opposition or government rather than being peace and development agents for their continent.
- (vi). As far as good governance is concerned, the Youth have been leading in the demands for timely, transparent and accountable service delivery to the people. They have set the question of opening up the government activities for the welfare of the people.
- (vii). Young people are demanding more participation and representation in the government to reflect the reality of being the largest population through democratization.
- (viii). There is a need to instill a Pan-Africanist identity of the Youth. This should involve discussion on the borderless Africa and connectivity of the youth, both online and offline, for them to look beyond their confines. African youth should be involved in activities that can bring them together. The AU is willing to support South Sudanese youth in this area.
- (ix). Since only 25% of the South Sudanese population is literate while 75% is illiterate, access to education is the key to eliminate this vice. There has to be continuation of education that is related to Pan-Africanism and with continental pride instilled in the young people.
- (x). There is a great need to bridge the intergenerational gap with recognition of the following youth and civil society initiatives—South Sudan is Watching Campaign, E-delegates, Taking Tea Together (TTT), Women March for Peace, and Nadafa Le Beledna.

### III– THE PILLARS OF ACTION POINTS AND WAY FORWARD

Session Eleventh of the **HIGH-LEVEL BREAKFAST DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIC THINKING ON THE PEACE PROCESS IN SOUTH SUDAN** was successful in its timing and level of objective deliberations on the topic. The presentation by lead speaker, the contribution by the participants and the summary by moderator were all geared towards making sense of the required effective engagement of South Sudanese youth in public and private sectors through inclusive participation in R-ARCSS implementation. The outcome of the Breakfast Discussion on the Youth is summarized into these key pillars:

- (i). Virtuous mentorship for South Sudanese youth on the path of peace and sustainable development across the country, including in the IDPs' camps and also abroad in refugee camps or Diaspora.
- (ii). Creation of opportunities and space for youth contributory engagement in nation and state building of South Sudan in context of Pan-Africanism.
- (iii). Reaching out to the youth at the grassroots level to engage and link them up with the youth initiatives at the national level and vice versa.
- (iv). Re-organization of the youth with focused coordination of their activities and easing of funding for practical skills training.

- (v). Establishment of Youth National Council that takes well-researched policy decisions on youth issues, putting into consideration the importance of inclusive unity in diversity without discriminatory politicization.

Based on these pillars and building on the recommended way forward by the lead expert and the discussants during the High-level engagement on “EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF SOUTH SUDANESE YOUTH IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS THROUGH INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION IN R-ARCSS IMPLEMENTATION”, the following analytical policy action points were identified for consolidation of September 2018 R-ARCSS implementation in the interest of peace and development to be enjoyed by the citizens of South Sudan:

S/N	LEADERSHIP	CITIZENS	STAKEHOLDERS	GUARANTORS	PARTNERS
1.	Mentor the youth and train them with virtuous life skills that would enable them to handle the assigned public responsibilities successfully across the country and in different sectors, including in the IDPs and refugee camps.	Take keenly the responsibility of mentoring the youth and training them with virtuous life skills to enable them handle public duties successfully across the country and in different sectors, including in IDPs refugee areas.	Participate in mentoring the youth and training them with virtuous life skills to enable them handle public duties well across the country and in different sectors, IDPs refugee areas included.	Encourage the mentoring of the youth and their training with virtuous life skills to enable them handle public duties well across the country and in different sectors, IDPs refugee areas included.	Facilitate the mentoring of the youth and their training with virtuous life skills to enable them handle public duties well across the country and in different sectors, IDPs refugee areas included.
2.	Create wider space and opportunities for the youth to compete on merits and contribute to nation and state building in a Pan-Africanist spirit, and without discrimination on any unjustified basis.	Demand for more space and opportunities for the youth to compete on merits and contribute to nation and state building in a Pan-Africanist spirit, and without discrimination on any basis.	Advocate for opportunities and space for the youth to compete on merits and contribute to nation and state building in a Pan-Africanist spirit, and without discrimination.	Guarantee the space and opportunities for the youth to compete on merits and contribute to nation and state building in a Pan-Africanist spirit, and without discrimination on any basis.	Support the opportunities and space granted for the youth to compete on merits and contribute to nation and state building in a Pan-Africanist spirit, and without discrimination.
3.	Reorganize the youth in a professional manner based on identification of where and what they can achieve better as results from their practical education with eased funding from the government and developmental partners.	Contribute to reorganization of youth in a professional manner based on identification of where and what they can achieve better as results from their practical education with eased funding from the government and partners.	Take part in reorganization of the youth professionally based on identification of where and what they can achieve better as results from their practical education with eased funding from the government and partners.	Direct the reorganization of the youth professionally based on identification of where and what they can achieve better as results from their practical education with eased funding from the government and partners.	Facilitate the reorganization of the youth professionally based on identification of where and what they can achieve better as results from their practical education with eased funding from the government and donors



4.	Establish a Youth Council to be a forum where the delegates of the young people across the country and within entities would be able to debate, take decisions, design policies, and take actions on issues of peace and development in South Sudan.	Contribute for realization of Youth Council to be a forum where South Sudanese delegates of the young people across the country and within entities debate, take decisions, design policies and act on issues of peace and development.	Get involved in establishment of a Youth Council where South Sudanese delegates of the young people across the country and within entities debate, take decisions, design policies and take actions.	Share good practices of a Youth Council where delegates of the young people across the country and within entities could debate, take decisions, design policies and take actions for peace and development.	Support establishment of a and effective Youth Council delegates where young people across the country and within entities could debate, take decisions, design policies and take actions for peace and development.
5.	Reach out to the biggest possible number of the youth across the country and link up their activities based on practical and mutual effective coordination without any intentional marginalizing of a sector, be it in rural or urban areas.	Mobilize the biggest possible number of the youth across the country and link their activities based on practical and mutual effective coordination without any intentional marginalizing of a sector, be it in rural or urban areas.	Sensitize the biggest population of the youth across the country and link their activities based on mutual and effective coordination without any intentional marginalizing of any sector.	Recognize the biggest population of youth across the country with effective links of their diverse activities based on mutual coordination without any intentional marginalizing of any rural or urban sector.	Assist the biggest population of youth across the country with effective links of their diverse activities based on mutual coordination without any intentional marginalizing of any rural or urban sector.
6.	Bridge the intergenerational gaps by encouraging mutual gauging of interests of the older and younger South Sudanese in a transitional manner and with recognition of the good initiatives taken by civil society in the interest of the welfare of the people.	Support bridging of the widened inter-generational gaps by encouraging mutual gauging of interests of the older and younger South Sudanese in a transitional manner and with recognition of the good initiatives taken by civil society for people.	Bridge the widened inter-generational gaps by encouraging mutual gauging of interests of the older and younger South Sudanese in a transitional manner, which recognizes the good initiatives taken by civil society for people.	Inspire the bridging of widened inter-generational gaps by encouraging mutual gauging of interests of the older and younger South Sudanese in a transitional manner, which recognizes the good initiatives taken by civil society for people.	Appreciate the bridging of widened inter-generational gaps by encouraging mutual gauging of interests of the older and younger South Sudanese in a transitional manner, which recognizes the good initiatives taken by civil society for people.



## ABOUT THE CENTER

South Sudan Center for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) was established in July 2011 with aims of participating in the development of the country through applied research to enhance the debate on governance, nation and state-building in South Sudan, with the purpose of adding objectivity, critical thinking, nurturing strategic thinking, progressive and well-informed leadership.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This report was compiled by Dr. James Okuk, Project coordinator for the High-level Breakfast Discussion and Strategic Thinking on the Peace Process in South Sudan. He is renowned academic and Senior Research Fellow at CSPS.

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