

## South Sudan political parties subscribe to national reconciliation process

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February 7, 2013 (JUBA) – Representatives of various political parties in South Sudan have expressed readiness to participate in the process of healing for national reconciliation across the country.

The government has initiated the healing process to help the nation reconcile itself and allow further development in the 19-month-old country.

There are over 20 political parties in the country which were registered by the former Sudan before the country split in July 2011. A fresh registration for all the parties in the new state, including the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), will take place once the political parties' council is established by a presidential decree.

In a consultative meeting on Thursday between the organising committee on reconciliation and political parties - chaired by vice-president Riek Machar Teny - the parties unanimously endorsed the initiative and vowed to support it to strengthen the unity of the people.

The vice-president's press secretary, James Gatdet Dak, told *Sudan Tribune* that Machar urged the existing political parties to collectively play an active role along with the ruling SPLM party in reconciling communities to forgive the past and resolve present day conflicts.

The communities, he said, have created physical and mental barriers and still fight unnecessary wars in their minds. Inter-tribal marriages among youths aged 45 years and below in the rural setup have also significantly reduced due to the barriers, he added.

Hangovers from past conflicts, including cattle-raiding, village clashes and revenge killings, among others, he lamented remain prevalent as a result of past trauma caused by the decades of war.

Dak said communities were now increasingly separating themselves from their territorial neighbours by up to 100km, urging for the barrier to be broken so that it is not passed on to the next generation.

Without first reconciling the people and changing their mind-set to a peaceful culture, development initiatives will fail because the infrastructure will continue to be destroyed by the ongoing violent conflicts, he added.

The process of reconciliation will be divided into two stages, with phase one to kick off with a conference in Juba from 18-21 April, followed by a two-week awareness creation campaign in all 10 states of the country.

The vice-president, who is also the deputy chairperson of the ruling party, has urged political parties to concentrate on their respective programs and avoid suspicions which can divide the country.

The country must move away from political violence to a fair environment of peaceful democratic politics, he told them.

An inclusive national reconciliation committee will be formed by president Salva Kiir once a report is presented to him regarding ongoing consultative meetings being held with various stakeholders.

In a separate meeting on Thursday, Machar also consulted with representatives of all the media houses in South Sudan, particularly those based in the capital Juba, urging them to serve as a vehicle for the reconciliation process, as well as become active participants among the various sectors of the society.

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