

PRESS STATEMENT

RESPONSE TO APPOINTMENT AS MEMBER IN THE RECONSTITUTED STEERING COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE

On April 25, 2017, a friend who was watching SSBC called me on cell phone and informed me about the announcement of my appointment to a Reconstituted Steering Committee of the National Dialogue President Kiir had announced and launched in December, 2016. I had never been consulted on the matter beforehand. Neither have I received any formal intimation from Juba to date.

Since then I had checked around with my colleagues, members of SPLM Leaders (Former Political Detainees) and ascertained that no consultation had ever been made even with those colleagues in Juba. I have therefore decided to treat the matter and put out this statement as an individual. This is my position and does not necessarily reflect the position of my group.

The idea of convening a national dialogue to address a crisis that is tearing the country apart, in my view, is noble and should be commended if done in good faith. As a member of SPLM Leaders, I can go on record and attest that in November, 2016, we had called for an "All Inclusive Roundtable Conference" to address the crisis in our country. That is a similar forum like the National Dialogue being called by President Kiir.

I note however, that the decree of 25 April, 2017 reconstituting the Steering Committee is silent on its terms of reference. I would assume therefore that its terms of reference remain as was spelt out in President Kiir's earlier decrees of December 2016 and/or January 2017. This Steering Committee is therefore not the body to debate, negotiate, design and draft the document for adoption by the National dialogue conference, with or without amendments when it convenes. It is merely a body whose task is to provide technical, professional and logistical support to the process.

As a group, we have positions and definite ideas, including proposals as to what needs to be done in order to get the country out of the current morass. I want to see myself as a participant in the dialogue if my group chooses me to represent them and when the dialogue does materialize, rather than a technical operative that must of necessity be neutral and impartial or who at least should keep his ideas, positions and beliefs to himself/herself.

I therefore decline to take up the appointment.

I urge President Kiir to assign a small team from his side to engage with other stakeholders on designing the mechanics of the proposed national dialogue including carrying out consultation with a view to developing agenda, rules of procedure, code of conduct, determine size of participation, how to create conducive environment for free and genuine dialogue, among others. There is plenty of literature on best practices in this field that can be drawn on.



Kosti Manibe

28/04/2017