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South Sudan Women Use Platform to Collectively Urge Government towards Policies of Peace and Reconciliation in Forum Sponsored by Japan

13 December 2017, Juba — Over 60 women gathered from 21 states to make comprehensive recommendations to the National Dialogue Steering Committee as part of a grassroots consultation on dialogue, peace and reconciliation in South Sudan organized this week by South Sudan Women General Association (SSWGA).

During the closing ceremony of the two-day summit, the women shared their collective analysis of the root causes of the conflict and problems plaguing South Sudan. Over 50 recommendations addressed political problems, security concerns, economic development and changes to social/cultural practices.

Among the top recommendations: the need to follow the Constitution and importance of leaders to uphold nationalism over tribalism. The women also called on leaders to re-commit to good governance and to separate the military from politics. The women further urged that appointment of women to ministerial positions, as well as establishing other posts in consultation with the women. SSWGA also called for a comprehensive plan to address gender based violence committed by members of the organized forces.

The Ambassador of Japan H.E. Seiji Okada expressed appreciation for the women sharing their views and urged increasing the role of women in addressing these issues. He also shared Japan's support for vocational training for women and youth in Aweil, Nimule and Yambio, hoping that the future of South Sudan is in peace and reconciliation.

"A good economy is important to establish and maintain peace," said H.E. Okada. "Japan has no natural resources, yet we've developed our economy by emphasizing education for the people. People are the most important assets in any society."

The chairperson of the SSWGA underscored the importance of addressing violence against women, noting impunity and the lack of accountability on rape cases.

UNDP Country Director Kamil Kamaluddeen underscored the concept of inclusive dialogue by involving all stakeholders in the process, particularly advocating for women to be provided the space to voice their opinions across the country.

"If we have all our meetings in Juba, then that is not a credible dialogue," said Dr. Kamaluddeen, further adding that when there is a crisis, women bear the brunt of the burden, not just in the physical sense but also emotional and psychological warfare. "It is therefore important for women to participate actively in the dialogue process so that they can share the weight of this burden," he said.

Dr. Kamaluddeen thanked the Government and people of Japan for the current partnership which has facilitated and funded the inclusion of women and grassroots communities from all over South Sudan to have a voice in the National Dialogue.

"Our responsibility is to make sure that the voices of women are always taken into account," he said, concluding that "if development is not engendered, it is endangered."

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