

Agok Declaration

Resolutions of the Ngok of Abyei People's Conference
Abyei County, Bahr el Ghazal Region, Southern Sudan
June 2 – 7, 2003

Preface:

The Ngok of Abyei People's Conference was organized at the request of the people of Abyei County, and was sponsored by the Sudan Peace Fund of the United States Government, which is implemented through a consortium of international and indigenous non-governmental organizations. The contribution of the local people of Abyei was central to the success of the Conference, which brought together over 700 participants in a democratic and popular forum that addressed fundamental issues facing the area and the country. It should be noted that the GOS acted with hostility at the last moment by denying the participation of over 100 invited delegates from the government controlled areas, including representatives from their Missiriya Arab neighbors to the North, the United States Government and the United Nations. This obstruction, which runs counter to the spirit of the broader peace process, was an unfortunate development in light of the escalating process of dialogue between Missiriya and Ngok and the increasingly supportive position of the USG and UN for peace-building and development in the Abyei area. Despite this fact, the Conference was a resounding success, as distinguished invitees, other international delegates, including the official Italian observer to the IGAD peace forum, and over 700 sons and daughters of Abyei were present. The following are the major resolutions of the Conference, which were adopted in plenary at 8:30 pm on June 7, 2003, after 6 days of intense deliberation.

I. Preamble:

- A. We, the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, recalling the suffering and scattering of our people as a result of a conflict that has spanned 40 years and killed millions in the popular search for a Sudan that is based on Justice, Freedom, and Equality;
- B. Drawing strength from our unique sense of attachment to our land and each other that has emerged due to constant exposure to threats along our common border with neighboring Arab tribes to the North;
- C. Honoring the sons and daughters whose lives were lost in the course of this just and legitimate struggle;
- D. Encouraged by the growing interest of the world in a just and lasting peace in our country, and by the presence of distinguished guests and international observers at the conference;
- E. Affirmed by the unity with our kith and kin from the Southern Sudan that is cemented by history, blood, and struggle;
- F. Cherishing our Culture and Identity as Africans that have kept, guided and strengthened our people through the ages in the face of all challenges;
- G. Inspired by the historical resolve of our people to prevail in the face of extreme hardship and adversity;
- H. Knowing that complete liberation is our fundamental, indivisible and God-given right, and must include political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions;

Gathered for 6 days (June 2-7, 2003) at Agok, Abyei County, New Sudan, in a democratic, participative, and amicable mass forum, do solemnly, resolutely and collectively announce to the Sudanese people, the world community of nations, and all people of good will the following resolutions:

II. On the Peace Process

A. The Ngok Dinka of Abyei assert that we are part and parcel of Southern Sudan, and demand the immediate restoration of the land and people to Bahr el Ghazal in accordance with the historic ceremony of reunification that was conducted by the spiritual leaders of Bahr el Ghazal during the course of the Conference.

B. Fully mandate the SPLM/A as the legitimate representative of our just cause in all national, regional, and international fora and to negotiate on our behalf with the government of the day in Khartoum.

C. Assert that we will continue to defend our land, identity and cultural values, which link us unequivocally to our African kith and kin in the Southern Sudan.

D. Affirm that we are united in the common cause for a just and lasting peace in the Sudan and will not be separated from this struggle until a comprehensive solution to the conflict is found.

E. Call upon our representatives to appreciate the esteemed position of our traditional and spiritual leaders, and to seek their guidance in all matters of our representation.

F. Affirm that the Sudan draws from a rich history and cultural diversities that must be recognized and respected as a fundamental step in the resolution of the national conflict.

G. Affirm that we are a peace loving people, who have historically welcomed our neighbours to have seasonal access to water and grazing lands on the soil of Abyei, and give specific assurance to the Missiriya that this existing understanding will prevail even when Abyei is restored to Bahr el Ghazal.

H. Applaud the recent efforts by the Missiriya to improve relations along the border through the deployment of a peace delegation across the river Kir, and encourage further dialogue in a spirit of peace and good neighbourliness.

I. Call upon the international community to prevail on the Government of the Sudan to cease the exploration of oil until a resolution to the national conflict is found and the rights of the local people is guaranteed.

J. Prevail upon the good will of our international friends to guarantee the security of our people against the callous aggression and violations of human rights that are routinely committed against them.

III. On Repatriation and Return

A. Welcome all genuine efforts to facilitate the process of repatriation and return of our displaced people, and commit to actively supporting those processes as they progress further.

B. Express concern over our lack of involvement to date in these noble efforts, and over the continued exposure of our people to insecurity and restrictions on their free movement in the process of repatriation and return by the GOS.

C. Call for consultation and active participation in the process of repatriation and return through representative bodies chosen by the Ngok people of Abyei.

D. Express outrage at the sub-human conditions under which our displaced people in the North are living as refugees in their own country, and demand recognition of their full citizenship and dignity irrespective of where they happen to reside.

E. Call upon the SPLM/A, the GOS and the International Community to develop a normative agreement framing the peaceful return of our displaced people, including necessary elements of monitoring and evaluation.

F. Call upon the international community to guarantee free movement, adequate protection and security for the repatriation and return of our people in the face of aggression by the Sudan Defense Forces and the militias they sponsor.

G. Call upon the Operation Lifeline Sudan and the wider international humanitarian community to provide much needed services to ensure the successful repatriation and return of our people.

H. Request support in reinforcing our local capacities to receive and reintegrate our people upon their return.

IV. On Good Governance

A. The Ngok people of Abyei affirm the principles of consultation, participation, tolerance, accommodation, inclusiveness, and adaptability, which have throughout our history formed a sound basis for managing our society.

B. Suggest that a unique system of governance can be developed which builds upon and reinforces our cultural values and identity, and which can also inspire others around Africa and the world who seek solutions that build on their cultural heritage.

C. Appreciate the existing incorporation of traditional structures in the local administration of the area, and propose that they be further integrated as the administration continues evolve.

D. Propose that principles of separation of powers, clarity of governance structures, and clear delineation of roles and responsibilities should guide the continuing evolution of local administration.

E. Recognise the need for the full emancipation of women at all levels of decision making and commit to their further empowerment within our system of local governance.

F. State the need for the local administration to improve security, police, judiciary, and revenue management in our area.

G. Call upon the SPLM/A to establish cooperatives for the rehabilitation of the wounded heroes, widows and orphans of the liberation struggle.

V. On Unity amongst Ngok and Relations with Neighbors

A. The Ngok of Abyei affirm that our strong culture, which has made us to survive throughout history, is a deep reservoir and resource from which to draw in confronting all of the challenges facing our land and people.

B. Uphold the need to stand together in a common identity and cultural heritage, and to respect the wise traditional leadership of our people.

C. Recognize that like in any other society, we have internal challenges that we must continue to manage by positively adapting traditional mechanisms to modern challenges of conflict prevention, resolution, and transformation.

D. Propose the revival of age-sets and the promotion of other positive cultural practices to further cement the unity of our people.

E. Commit to building our local capacities, knowledge and skills for self-reliance and self-sufficiency as a means of development as a process of self-enhancement from within.

On the Way Forward:

We the Ngok of Abyei, in furthering these resolutions propose that:

1. A fund managed by representatives of the people should be created to support peace-building and development in the area that can be supported by all peoples of good will.
2. The specific donors and organizers of this conference should support follow-up activities to this historic event, specifically through provision of water, health and educational services to the people of the area.
3. Two task forces, one locally-based and one based in Nairobi, should be established to oversee the way forward, with the Abyei Community Action for Development (ACAD) serving as an interlocutor between the two.
 - a. The local taskforce should disseminate these resolutions at the grassroots level and draw up a program of follow-up actions based on the expressed priority needs of the people.
 - b. The international taskforce should disseminate these resolutions internationally, coordinate with donors for follow-up support, carry out broader fundraising efforts; and strategize for engagement with the repatriation and return process.
 - c. Both bodies should collaborate in drawing up a specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound program of action in the spirit of these resolutions, and organize a meeting within 6 months to review progress of these suggested actions and report back to key stakeholders.

We, the Ngok of Abyei, resoundingly endorse these resolutions and call upon our friends everywhere to exercise their good will and actively promote efforts towards a just and lasting peace in Sudan.

This communiqué was presented to the full plenary on the closing day of the Ngok of Abyei People's Conference where it was unanimously endorsed and popularly adopted at 8:30 in the evening on June 7th, 2003, after 6 days of deliberation.