

COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED BY A DELEGATION OF POLITICAL, CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, OPINION LEADERS AND ELDERS FROM THE GREATER NORTH.

Following the failed signing of the Final Peace Agreement by the LRA leader Joseph Kony on 10th April 2008, the Lawirwodi of Acholi, Rwot David Onen Achana II spoke to Joseph Kony, on phone. Joseph Kony informed the Lawirwodi that he would receive a delegation from Uganda within a month in order to get clarification on some aspects of the Final Peace Agreement relating to Accountability, Justice and Reconciliation. In consultation with the office of the Chief Mediator Dr. Riek Machar and President Joachim Chissano, it was agreed with the consent of Joseph Kony that the proposed meeting would take place at Ri-Kwangba between 10th -13th May 2008.

In preparation for the meeting, Rwot Achana convened two workshops. The first one was with the support of the Peace Secretariat and GoSS from 17th to 18th April 2008 at Juba Bridge Hotel in Juba. The second one was with the support of the Royal Netherlands Embassy attended by key stakeholders at Fairway Hotel, Kampala on the 6th and 7th May, 2008 to discuss the concerns of the LRA leader over the relationship between the traditional justice mechanisms and the Special Division of the High Court, as agreed upon in Juba. Both the LRA and Government of Uganda Delegations were represented at the meeting.

The next day Thursday, 8th May 2008 key people, including political, cultural, religious and opinion leaders; elders and relatives of LRA leader Joseph Kony travelled to Juba. On Friday 9th. May 2008 the group travelled to Nabanga. In the evening of that day the group held a consultative meeting where the leader of the LRA delegation Dr. James Obita reported that the LRA delegation would travel to Ri-Kwangba to meet with the LRA leadership after which the entire group would meet with Joseph Kony and his top commanders.

On Friday 9th May 2008 the LRA delegation travelled to Ri-Kwangba to meet their principals. When they returned they reported that they met Capt. Ladere and some LRA commanders. They did not meet Joseph Kony. They only spoke to him on phone.

In the phone conversation Kony did not speak about the planned meeting with community leaders. Instead, he raised other unrelated issues. He then told the LRA Delegation to come back to Nabanga and await his programme for the scheduled meeting.

For the next three days Joseph Kony did not communicate with the delegation waiting at Nabanga. One Capt. Ladere who heads the LRA troops at Ri-Kwangba also reportedly said that they had orders not to allow anyone into the Assembly area including the SPLA officers who wanted to go there to collect clean water. This caused serious water problem.

Consequently, Rwot Achana convened a consultative meeting at the camp in Nabanga on Tuesday 13th May 2008. Besides the stakeholders from Uganda and the LRA Delegation, the meeting was also attended by some members of the Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team (CHMT).

After a lengthy discussion, a consensus was reached as follows:

1. The stakeholders expressed their concern and displeasure over the conduct of the LRA, especially its Leader Joseph Kony, for calling a meeting at Ri-Kwangba and then failing to show up or even communicate with his guests.
2. That the peace process should not be abandoned despite the setback occasioned by the non-responsiveness of the LRA. In particular, the LRA and Uganda government are urged to be tolerant and to relentlessly continue to pursue the path of peace as is the desire of the long suffering people of the Greater North.
3. That the Chief Mediator, Dr. Riek Machar be commended for his patience, tolerance and forbearance and urged to continue to steer the process.
4. That, as the representatives of the people of the Greater North, we do not support those sounding the drums of war on both sides. In particular, any threat of military action from either side would be counterproductive as it would

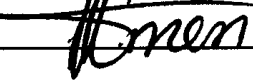
victimise many innocent women and children who are helpless pawns in this conflict.

5. We recognise that the peace process has achieved many breakthroughs such as relative peace in the Greater North for the last two years. It has led to the signing of all agenda items. All that is left is the formality of signing the Final Peace Agreement.
6. That the stakeholders/community leaders, though disappointed by the non-appearance of the LRA leader, would nonetheless persevere on the path of peace.
7. That the LRA leader is urged to sign the Final Peace Agreement as soon as possible since there is nothing in the agreement that jeopardises his security and welfare. The speedy implementation of the agreement would secure a better future for LRA combatants and pave the way for the reconstruction of the Greater North.
8. The stakeholders/Community Leaders undertake to ensure that some aspects of the Agreements are implemented to the satisfaction of all parties and the community.
9. We would like to sound a strong warning to spoilers in the Diaspora and within Uganda who are sending wrong signals to the LRA leaders to immediately abandon their selfish schemes. Spoilers will be exposed, isolated and subjected to the wrath of the community. Those who see the conflict as an opportunity to profiteer should have pity on the suffering multitudes and give peace a chance.
10. We appreciate the role of the international community which has invested a lot of time, expertise and resources in the peace process. We urge them to continue supporting the process to its logical conclusion. It is understandable if their patience is wearing thin but, we have all gone too far to turn back. They should join the community in persuading the LRA Leader to sign the Final Peace Agreement.


11. The stakeholders/community leaders assembled at Nabanga reiterate their commitment to peace and will continue to support the peace process despite any setback. The path to peace is difficult, but ultimately peace will be achieved.


Issued at Nabanga, Southern Sudan this 13th day of May 2008.

Lawirwodi of Acholi, Rwot David Onen Achana II

:  (For Cultural Leaders)

Hon. Okello-Okello Livingstone : 
(For Political Leaders)

His Grace John Baptist Odama : 
(For Religious Leaders)

Mr. Alekua Jafaar : 
(For Opinion Leaders)

Mr. James Otto : 
(For Elders)

(For

(For Elders)