

Sudan faith forum urges final peace: "The momentum must be continued"

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Delegates of the Sudan Ecumenical Forum (SEF) from Africa, Europe and North America have hailed recent peace protocols signed between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the government of Sudan, but they would like to see a final agreement clinched.

SEF chairperson Bishop Kevin Dowling, a South African Catholic, said the forum, meeting June 13-16 in Nairobi, was delighted that there is now a chance for a just and sustainable peace in southern Sudan. "We are concerned the momentum must be continued," Dowling said after the forum's assembly. He urged the protagonists to sign a final and full peace agreement in addition to the protocols signed May 26 in order to end Africa's longest war.

Dowling warned of other regional conflicts which could upset the fragile peace in southern Sudan, particularly in Darfur in the west of the country, and another in northern Uganda. He also cited Sudan's Shilluk Kingdom, where earlier in June the aid agency World Vision warned of an urgent need for humanitarian access.

Declared Archbishop Joseph Marona of the Episcopal Church of Sudan on June 14: "We cannot celebrate peace with a crisis looming in Darfur where so many families have lost everything and are now at great risk of starvation."

Likewise, Melaku Kifle, representing the World Council of Churches, said at a news conference that the voice of the churches and politicians is missing on Darfur. "Ten years after Rwanda, churches said enough is enough, but we are witnessing a genocide in Darfur," said Kifle. "What is important is to challenge our leaders and churches to stand up and express their views. If we don't wake up, we will have another disaster."

Dowling had told delegates he had witnessed a profound lack of trust in the government, particularly among the people of the south. "They fear the agreement will be undermined," he said. —*Ecumenical News International*