

## **BISHOP EMERITUS TABAN PARIDE KENYI'S ACCEPTANCE SPEECH**

**FOR THE 2013 SERGIO VIEIRA DE MELLO AWARD, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 1 MARCH 2013**

Your Excellency Secretary General of the United Nations and Mrs. Ban Ki Moon,  
Mr. Laurent Vieira de Mello, President of the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation  
Mr. Anne Willem Bijleveld, Chairman of the Board of the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation  
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps and the international community in Geneva  
Ladies and Gentlemen

This is a special day for me and for my country, the Republic of South Sudan, the world's newest nation, ably represented by his Excellency Ambassador Riek Puok at the United Nations in Geneva. A few years back when the Sudan was then still consumed by one of the longest and most vicious civil wars in the history of mankind, in which South Sudan lost over one and half million of its people, it would have been unthinkable for me as the humble servant of God, to stand on this podium and receive this prestigious award and priceless honor on behalf of my country, on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD- Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda) and on behalf of all peace-loving people world-wide.

For decades, the Sudan and now South Sudan have been known to the world for civil wars, for bloodshed, for massive displacement of populations and for refugees. Tonight the world is welcoming South Sudan in a truly unique way as a champion of dialogue, reconciliation and peace-making. We will remain eternally indebted to the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation for making this happen. In this regard, I am hopeful the on-going negotiations on the outstanding post-independence issues between the Democratic Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan will lead to a peaceful resolution and a lasting agreement that will allow the two neighboring sovereign states to live side by side in peace and harmony. We have known the pains of war and now value the benefits of peace.

In our long struggle for self-determination and ceaseless search for a life of dignity and respect, we experienced a ten-year window of peace, stability and self-government with the advent of the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972. Sergio Vieira de Mello then a young UNHCR Program Officer in Juba, stood shoulder to shoulder with us as we received the thousands of returnees coming back home after years in exile. He served the returnees with dedication and compassion and they loved him dearly. So by the unforeseen twist of history, it is indeed befitting that a Foundation dedicated to Sergio's memory and work should on the 10th Anniversary of his tragic death, choose to honor a son of the now sovereign state of the Republic of South Sudan. In this regard I bring to you the warm greetings of the people of South Sudan and its President, his Excellency Mr. Salva Kiir Mayardit.

We have in our modest way shown that it is possible through dialogue to achieve reconciliation among tribes and communities in conflict to resolve their differences peacefully and live together in peace and harmony. Today in a remote part of Eastern Equatoria State of the Republic of South Sudan, several pastoral tribes who were once bitter enemies now live together in peace and harmony in the Holy Trinity Peace Village, Kuron enjoying the dividends of peace and stability. This successful approach will serve as a model in reconciliation that will be applied in other parts of South Sudan in conflict and replicated even beyond our borders, to give credence globally to the laudable concept and principle of resolving conflicts peacefully through dialogue. Sergio dedicated his life to the very end pursuing this lofty enduring goal.

But whatever we have achieved together would not have been possible without a strong faith in God and a blind trust in the ability of the most helpless victims of conflict including even children and women to summon courage and persevere to survive and live for another day. It is they who give us the courage to look fear, disaster and conflict in the eye and to stop it in its track. I am glad that the Church, the UN and the humanitarian community continue to play a significant role in identifying with the victims and giving them a helping hand. The biggest challenge for all of us is, when will this helping hand turn into a stronger arm to prevent conflict?

It is most appropriate that the City of Geneva which has been associated historically over the ages with the humanitarian concerns for relieving suffering and saving lives and the protection of civilians caught in conflict, should continue to be the platform for the World Humanitarian Day, the Annual Sergio Vieira de Mello Memorial Lecture and the Sergio Vieira de Mello Award. We compliment and wish the Mayor of Geneva, the Government of Switzerland and the peace loving Swiss people all success in continuing this noble cause and tradition that will contribute towards creating a truly compassionate world.

Tonight is also the opportunity for us all to pause and give due recognition to Madame Annie Vieira de Mello, Vice-President of the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation and her two sons, Laurent and Adrien, and a number of devoted family friends who strived to establish the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation in the memory of her late husband's legacy and to continue his unfinished mission part of which we are commemorating now. May the Foundation continue to be the beacon of hope and champion of advocacy for dialogue as the preferred path to resolving conflicts peacefully.

Mr. Secretary-General, you have tonight, graced this event by your presence amongst us. It is an eloquent expression of your commitment to the recognition of the efforts, sacrifices and significant contributions of thousands of humanitarian workers worldwide in relieving suffering and saving lives. It is also a befitting tribute to many fallen heroes like Sergio Vieira de Mello who paid the ultimate price in serving mankind and trying to make this a better world for us and the coming generations to live in. May the message go out from here to the rest of the world that the United Nations under your able leadership will achieve a new milestone in global peace, security, stability and prosperity.

Ladies and Gentlemen, although my name, "Taban", in Arabic means "Tired", I wish to assure you all that I am strong and active and will continue to dedicate the rest of my life to advocating for and promoting dialogue as the key to the peaceful reconciliation of parties in conflict.

Finally, I am humbled and I feel greatly honored to be selected as the Laureate for the 2013 Sergio Vieira de Mello Award and accept the Award on behalf of my country, on behalf of the IGAD counties and on behalf of all peace-loving people world-wide, knowing fully well that it will encourage and inspire many other worthy men and women out there who are sacrificing day and night to reconcile parties, communities and countries in conflict to carry these efforts to even greater heights.

Thank you and God Bless you all