**Applying to the Arab League as the observer is recommendable but wrong time.**

By Gatdiet Peter

On 5 March 2018, a report from the Egyptian official news agency, MENA has flooded the media and captured a sharp attention of wider South Sudanese people that the Republic of South Sudan has tendered an application to join Arab league, an organization which consists of twenty-two (22) member states and five(5) observers. It is for and/or by Arab people, people of Arab descent, and almost the larger Arabic speaking population, where the Arabic language is an official working language in the resident country. The news of the application was reportedly said to have been communicated by a senior Egyptian diplomat that has quickly painted a belief of credibility on the issue among South Sudanese and the people of Arab League member states.

But before I can go straight towards the focus of this opinion paper, I want to highlight a quick review of the implications that have been brought in by the news of joining the Arab League. This has, anyway, set a blame on the regime in Juba and it is responsible.
• From the psychological point of view, the news of application that was later denied by South Sudan’s ministry of foreign affairs official has, however, inflicted some mental stress on South Sudanese people which have neither been to an Arabic speaking country nor speaking the Arabic language. This category of people believes that joining the Arab League will create the chance of declaring the Arabic language as the official working language in South Sudan, which will subsequently foster limit access to the labor market. Because they cannot even greet in Arabic. This, in turn, will draw considerable setbacks in the nation-state building. Afterwards once the Arabic language became officially spoken in public offices, perhaps Sharia law would take roots in South Sudan. There are Muslims in South Sudan! Arabic language and Sharia law are by far the key preconditions in the framework of Arab league’s working paper, although a different interpretation will always exist.
• From the discursive conflict narrative, the news of application has rebranded the fact that those(the elites) in Juba who represent and manage state affairs in public institutions of our country are just a cling of self-interest attachés who does not in any way respect the rights and democratic values of South Sudanese people. I thought the best manner to garner for applying to an organization such as Arab League that can lead to a grand statement of disapproval would have been through a referendum to seek and assess the opinion of the people.

South Sudan’s ministry of foreign affairs official spokesperson has on several accounts denied the allegation of joining AL organization instead, the spokesperson has declared to the public the correct application letter to the AL. It is an application for the observer status and said no, it is hard-far reaching to a full membership. As I bolded from the title of this paper, tendering an application as an observer is highly recommendable for South Sudan but the time of the application is not matching due to the conflict situation of South Sudan and many more political upheavals against the ethnocentric regime of president Salva Kiir (I will elaborate on this in the coming paragraphs). I wish to justify this recommendation to the reader in series of points because I believe the observer status, if granted to South Sudan in the AL, would strengthen better diplomatic environment, commercial trade, education, science, and technology, among others, for the benefit of our people. Our people have been lagged behind in many modern-age aspects.

First, on the ground of diplomatic environment and commercial trade, the presence of South Sudan at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo as an observer will cascade smooth and better diplomatic ties between the entity and the Republic of South Sudan, though efficiency will have to be enacted by the individual state. But this will generate a firm-mutual understanding between South Sudan and each of the member state .If it’s time to apply but not at all, the observer status will allow free trade between each member state and South Sudan with yellow-to-green light influence from the AL secretariat in Cairo. It will also help the government of the Republic of South Sudan (if legitimate!) to exchange opinion, especially on the issues of terrorism and counterterrorism because as the matter of fact, most of the terrorists are and/or originate from the AL member states. This is to ensure trans-border security and safety management. Via Sudan, for instance. Again, the observer status will capacitate moderate Muslims of South Sudan to advise fellow Muslims in the AL member states to at least reduce the course of extreme radicalization which has been leading to series of atrocities and terror acts in many of the AL nations, even against fellow Muslims. They will also give their opinions on matters of concern in the larger Muslim community, of course through the AL.

Second, the observer status of South Sudan in the AL will help our government (if legitimate!) to lobby for more extensive cooperation and assistance in transforming our education, science, and technology system. This is due to the very reason that the standard of the education system of our country is at NO standard in the world’s contemporary history. School buildings are at NO stake comparison. When exist, classes are given under trees and pupils sit on the bare ground in the current age of rapid technology and renovation. From the historical perspective, the evolution of Science and the best system of education originated from the Middle East, where many of the AL nations comes from. Therefore, I believe a closer association with AL nations will add if not much but at least little to South Sudan nation-state building once the ongoing brutal conflict is resolved, especially in the ‘service delivery cluster’.

Third, as a nation, having an observer status in the AL like the Americas. i.e. Brazil, Venezuela, and India will, for example, create social and intercultural linkages with our friends in the AL nations in the areas of arts, sports, and recreation. This can help South Sudan to promptly prosper and renovate in a faster rate in order to catch the tail of development like the rest of the developing world although corruption, tribalism, and lack of commitment, if not vigorously combated, will always eat us on the road.

Fourth, the timing of applying to the AL as the observer is inappropriate. South Sudan is currently and deeply plunged into the unpredictable conflict of interest. There are millions of refugees in the neighboring countries and beyond. Hundreds of thousands of people are internally displaced. Every effort by the peace brokers to reach a binding agreement is almost paralyzed by the ethnic-elitist groups. Specifically, those in Juba’s regime thinks once having peace and peaceful South Sudan will detach them from looting spree of the state resources and the enrichment-on-blood paradigm at the expense of innocent people will fade away. Thus, I believe we first need to have peace in our country and heart before applying to such grand organizations. One of the preconditions of the AL is a peace which our country is lacking!