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SUDESA: PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHMENT

FOR A DIGITAL AND INCLUSIVE SOUTH SUDAN

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Proposal for the Establishment of the South Sudan Development and Social Equity Agency

Under the Framework of the European Social Label

1. Executive Summary

This proposal outlines the establishment of the South Sudan Development and Social Equity Agency (SUDESA) under the institutional framework of the European Union for Social Leadership (EUSL). SUDESA is conceived as a strategic, semi-autonomous agency mandated to coordinate and accelerate South Sudan's transformation across digital, agricultural, social, and gender sectors. It draws inspiration from successful regional coordination bodies such as ACTESA under COMESA, while expanding its scope to meet the unique developmental and institutional needs of South Sudan.

The creation of SUDESA responds to critical gaps in South Sudan's institutional architecture, particularly in the areas of digital governance, inclusive economic development, and multi-sectoral coordination. It is designed to serve as a neutral, technically competent, and politically independent platform for aligning national priorities with regional and global development agendas.

SUDESA will serve as the primary implementation vehicle for the Agenda for Social Equity 2074, a long-term strategic framework developed by EUSL and its affiliated institutions. Agenda 2074 articulates a vision for equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development across the Global South, with South Sudan positioned as a flagship country for its operationalisation. The greatest impact of Agenda 2074 is expected to be realised through SUDESA's integrated programming, institutional partnerships, and policy innovation.

The proposed agency will operate under a tripartite governance model involving EUSL, the Government of South Sudan, and regional stakeholders. It will coordinate flagship initiatives in digital transformation, agricultural modernisation, social development, and gender equity, while also serving as a platform for donor alignment, private sector engagement, and civil society participation. Its establishment will be formalised through a legal instrument jointly endorsed by EUSL and the Government of South Sudan, ensuring compliance with national and regional regulatory frameworks.

SUDESA is envisioned not merely as a coordination unit, but as a transformative institution capable of catalysing long-term structural change. Its operationalisation will be phased, beginning with foundational capacity-building and pilot programming, and scaling into a fully-fledged regional agency with diplomatic privileges, sustainable financing mechanisms, and embedded monitoring and learning systems.

2. Background and Justification

The establishment of the South Sudan Development and Social Equity Agency (SUDESA) emerges from a critical need to address persistent structural gaps in South Sudan's institutional landscape, while simultaneously aligning the country with regional and global development trajectories. The proposal draws on lessons from existing regional coordination bodies, most notably the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) under COMESA, which has demonstrated the value of semi-autonomous, technically driven institutions in catalysing sectoral transformation.



However, unlike ACTESA, which is primarily focused on agricultural trade facilitation, SUDESA is designed as a multi-sectoral coordination and implementation agency. It will integrate digital transformation, agricultural development, social equity, and gender inclusion into a unified institutional framework. This broader mandate reflects the complex and interdependent challenges facing South Sudan, including weak public service delivery, fragmented development programming, and limited absorptive capacity for donor and private sector investments.

South Sudan currently lacks a centralised, politically neutral institution capable of coordinating cross-sectoral development efforts at scale. Ministries and agencies often operate in silos, with limited interoperability, data sharing, or strategic alignment. This fragmentation undermines both national planning and international cooperation. SUDESA is intended to fill this void by serving as a strategic coordination platform, a technical implementation body, and a policy innovation hub.

The agency will be anchored in the Agenda for Social Equity 2074, a long-term strategic framework developed by EUSL and its affiliated institutions. Agenda 2074 articulates a vision for equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development across the Global South, with a particular emphasis on digital sovereignty, social justice, and institutional resilience. South Sudan has been identified as a flagship country for the operationalisation of this agenda, and SUDESA will serve as its primary vehicle for implementation.

Furthermore, the establishment of SUDESA is justified by the growing interest of international development partners in supporting country-led, institutionally sound, and impact-driven mechanisms. By creating a credible, transparent, and technically competent agency, South Sudan will be better positioned to attract and coordinate support from bilateral donors (e.g., SIDA, Swedfund), multilateral institutions (e.g., AfDB, UN agencies), and private sector actors.

In sum, SUDESA is not merely a response to institutional gaps, but a forward-looking investment in South Sudan's capacity to lead its own development trajectory, grounded in principles of equity, innovation, and long-term sustainability.

3. Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Vision

A digitally empowered, socially inclusive, and economically resilient South Sudan, where institutions serve the people equitably, innovation drives development, and national progress is anchored in long-term strategic foresight.

Mission

To coordinate and accelerate multi-sectoral development in South Sudan through strategic partnerships, digital innovation, and policy alignment, guided by the principles and goals of the Agenda for Social Equity 2074, and implemented through a transparent, inclusive, and technically competent institutional framework.

Core Values

- **Equity:** Ensuring fair access to opportunities, services, and resources for all citizens, with particular attention to historically marginalised groups.
- **Transparency:** Upholding accountability and openness in all institutional processes, partnerships, and decision-making.



- **Innovation:** Promoting the use of technology, data, and creative problem-solving to address complex development challenges.
- **Sustainability:** Embedding environmental, financial, and institutional sustainability into all programs and operations.
- **Inclusion:** Actively engaging women, youth, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable communities in the design and implementation of development initiatives.

4. Strategic Mandate and Focus Areas

SUDESA is mandated to serve as South Sudan's central coordination and implementation agency for integrated development, with a focus on digital transformation, agricultural modernisation, social development, and gender equity. Its strategic mandate is derived from the Agenda for Social Equity 2074 and aligned with national development priorities, regional integration frameworks, and global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A. Digital Transformation

SUDESA will lead the coordination of South Sudan's digital infrastructure and public sector innovation agenda. Its digital mandate includes:

- **National Digital Infrastructure Coordination:** Supporting the design, financing, and rollout of foundational digital infrastructure, including connectivity, data centers, and identity systems.
- **E-Government and Digital Public Services:** Facilitating the digitalisation of government services, administrative systems, and citizen engagement platforms.
- **Youth and Education Technology Programs:** Promoting digital literacy, coding academies, and innovation hubs targeting youth, in partnership with academic institutions and the private sector.

B. Agricultural Development

Recognising agriculture as a cornerstone of livelihoods and economic resilience, SUDESA will:

- **Develop Digital Agriculture Platforms:** Integrate ICT tools for extension services, market information, and climate advisory systems.
- **Enhance Market Access and Value Chain Integration:** Support aggregation, processing, and logistics systems to connect producers to regional and international markets.
- **Promote Climate-Smart Agriculture and Food Security:** Coordinate programs that build resilience to climate shocks and improve food systems governance.

C. Social Development

SUDESA will serve as a catalyst for inclusive social development, with a focus on:

- **Community Resilience and Livelihoods:** Supporting local development initiatives, social protection systems, and employment generation.
- **Health and Education Systems Strengthening:** Facilitating investments in infrastructure, human resources, and service delivery innovation.

- **Urban-Rural Development Balance:** Promoting spatial equity through integrated planning and decentralised service delivery.

D. Gender and Inclusion

SUDESA will mainstream gender and inclusion across all its programs and institutional practices:

- **Women's Rights and Economic Empowerment:** Advancing women's participation in leadership, entrepreneurship, and decision-making.
- **Gender-Responsive Policy and Programming:** Ensuring all initiatives are designed and evaluated through a gender lens.
- **Protection and Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups:** Addressing the needs of persons with disabilities, displaced populations, and other marginalised communities.

5. Institutional Structure

SUDESA will be established as a semi-autonomous agency under the framework of the European Union for Social Leadership (EUSL), co-owned with the Government of the Republic of South Sudan. Its institutional structure is designed to ensure operational independence, technical integrity, and strategic alignment with national, regional, and global development frameworks.

Governance Model

SUDESA will operate under a tripartite governance structure comprising:

- **Governing Board:** The highest decision-making body, composed of representatives from EUSL, the Government of South Sudan, regional economic communities (RECs), and selected development partners. The Board will provide strategic oversight, approve annual plans and budgets, and ensure alignment with Agenda for Social Equity 2074 and national priorities.
- **Executive Secretariat:** The operational arm of the agency, led by a Director-General appointed jointly by EUSL and the Government of South Sudan. The Secretariat will be responsible for day-to-day management, program implementation, stakeholder coordination, and institutional development.
- **Technical Units:** Specialised departments aligned with SUDESA's four strategic pillars—Digital Transformation, Agricultural Development, Social Development, and Gender & Inclusion. Each unit will be staffed with sectoral experts and supported by cross-cutting functions such as research, policy, legal affairs, and communications.

Institutional Relationships

SUDESA will maintain formalised institutional linkages with:

- **EUSL:** As the founding and co-governing entity, EUSL will provide strategic guidance, technical assistance, and access to global networks and resources.
- **Government Ministries and Agencies:** SUDESA will coordinate closely with relevant line ministries (e.g., ICT, Agriculture, Gender, Education, Health) through memoranda of understanding and joint programming frameworks.



- **Regional and Continental Bodies:** The agency will seek observer or affiliate status with IGAD, COMESA, and the African Union, enabling it to participate in regional policy dialogues and access continental platforms.

Staffing and Capacity-Building Plan

SUDESA will adopt a merit-based, inclusive recruitment policy, prioritising national expertise while allowing for international technical assistance where necessary. A comprehensive capacity-building strategy will be developed in partnership with EUSL, Microsoft, and academic institutions under the University for Civic Education (UCE) and University for African Civic Education (UACE) frameworks. This will include:

- Leadership and governance training
- Sector-specific technical training
- Digital skills development
- Institutional exchange programs with peer agencies

6. Operational Strategy

SUDESA's operational strategy is designed to translate its strategic mandate into measurable impact through a structured, phased, and partnership-driven approach. The strategy is anchored in the principles of Agenda for Social Equity 2074 and aligned with South Sudan's national development goals, ensuring coherence, scalability, and sustainability.

Programmatic Pillars and Flagship Initiatives

SUDESA will implement its mandate through four integrated programmatic pillars, each supported by flagship initiatives:

- **Digital Transformation:** Launch of the *National Digital Backbone Initiative*, including e-government platforms, digital identity systems, and public sector interoperability frameworks.
- **Agricultural Development:** Rollout of the *Smart Agriculture and Market Access Program*, integrating digital extension services, climate-resilient farming models, and regional trade facilitation.
- **Social Development:** Implementation of the *Community Resilience and Livelihoods Initiative*, focusing on decentralised service delivery, social protection, and employment generation.
- **Gender and Inclusion:** Establishment of the *Women's Empowerment and Inclusion Platform*, promoting leadership, entrepreneurship, and protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups.

Each initiative will be designed with clear objectives, performance indicators, and implementation modalities, allowing for adaptive management and strategic alignment.

Coordination with Donors, Private Sector, and Civil Society

SUDESA will serve as a coordination hub for development partners, private sector actors, and civil society organisations. Its engagement strategy includes:

- **Donor Alignment Framework:** A structured mechanism for harmonising donor investments with national priorities and Agenda 2074 goals, including joint programming and pooled funding arrangements.



- **Private Sector Engagement Protocol:** Guidelines for public-private partnerships (PPPs), service contracts, and innovation challenges, particularly in digital infrastructure and agribusiness.
- **Civil Society Partnership Charter:** A formalised approach to engaging community-based organisations, advocacy groups, and local development actors in program design and monitoring.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework

SUDESA will embed a robust MEL system across all its operations, ensuring accountability, learning, and continuous improvement. Key components include:

- **Results-Based Management (RBM):** Use of logical frameworks, performance indicators, and outcome mapping to guide implementation.
- **Digital MEL Platforms:** Integration of real-time data collection, dashboarding, and analytics tools to support evidence-based decision-making.
- **Participatory Learning Mechanisms:** Regular stakeholder consultations, feedback loops, and knowledge-sharing forums to ensure responsiveness and inclusivity.

The MEL framework will be aligned with both national reporting systems and international standards, enabling SUDESA to serve as a credible partner in regional and global development dialogues.

7. Legal and Policy Framework

The establishment and operation of the South Sudan Development and Social Equity Agency (SUDESA) will be grounded in a robust legal and policy framework that ensures institutional legitimacy, regulatory compliance, and operational autonomy. This framework will be co-developed by the European Union for Social Leadership (EUSL) and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan, with reference to regional and international legal instruments.

Legal Basis for Establishment

SUDESA will be established through a formal legal instrument, jointly endorsed by EUSL and the Government of South Sudan. The preferred legal pathways include:

- A **Presidential Decree**, providing immediate executive authority for establishment and recognition;
- A **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between EUSL and the Government, outlining governance, operational scope, and co-ownership terms;
- A subsequent **Act of Parliament**, institutionalising SUDESA as a semi-autonomous agency with a defined legal personality, privileges, and immunities.

This layered approach ensures both expediency and long-term legal durability.

Compliance with National and Regional Regulations

SUDESA will operate in full compliance with:

- **National laws and regulatory frameworks**, including public finance management, procurement, data protection, and civil service regulations;
- **Regional protocols and standards**, particularly those of IGAD, COMESA, and the African Union, to facilitate regional recognition and integration;

- **International obligations**, including those under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and relevant UN conventions.

Where necessary, SUDESA will seek exemptions or special provisions to enable efficient and transparent operations, particularly in areas such as recruitment, procurement, and foreign exchange management.

Data Governance and Procurement Standards

Given its digital and multi-sectoral mandate, SUDESA will adopt and enforce high standards in data governance and procurement:

- **Data Governance:** All data systems and platforms developed or coordinated by SUDESA will adhere to principles of data sovereignty, privacy, interoperability, and ethical use. A dedicated Data Governance Policy will be developed in consultation with national ICT authorities and international partners.
- **Procurement Standards:** SUDESA will implement a transparent, competitive, and value-for-money procurement system, aligned with international best practices and donor requirements. An independent Procurement Oversight Committee will be established to ensure integrity and accountability.

8. Funding and Sustainability

The financial sustainability of the South Sudan Development and Social Equity Agency (SUDESA) is critical to its credibility, operational effectiveness, and long-term impact. The funding strategy is designed to ensure both immediate resource mobilisation and enduring institutional viability, leveraging a mix of public, private, and philanthropic sources.

Initial Funding Sources

SUDESA will pursue a diversified portfolio of initial funding, targeting strategic development partners and institutions aligned with its mandate. Priority sources include:

- **Bilateral Donors:** Engagement with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Swedfund, and other Nordic partners to support digitalisation, gender equity, and institutional development.
- **Multilateral Institutions:** Partnership with the African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations agencies (e.g., UNDP, FAO, UN Women), and the Nordic Development Fund to finance sectoral programs and capacity-building.
- **EUSL Contributions:** Direct institutional support from EUSL, including technical assistance, seed funding, and access to global networks and innovation platforms.

Formal funding proposals will be developed for each strategic partner, aligned with their thematic priorities and investment modalities.

Long-Term Sustainability Model

To ensure financial independence and resilience, SUDESA will adopt a hybrid sustainability model comprising:



- **Membership Fees:** Structured contributions from affiliated institutions, including government ministries, regional bodies, and development partners, based on tiered membership categories.
- **Service Contracts:** Revenue generation through the provision of technical services, digital platforms, policy advisory, and capacity-building programs to public and private entities.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Joint ventures with private sector actors in areas such as digital infrastructure, agribusiness, and innovation hubs, governed by transparent and equitable partnership frameworks.
- **Institutional Endowment:** Exploration of a long-term endowment fund, capitalised through donor contributions and managed under fiduciary oversight, to support core operations and strategic initiatives.

SUDESA will establish a Financial Sustainability and Resource Mobilisation Unit within its Secretariat, tasked with donor engagement, financial planning, and investment strategy development. All financial operations will be subject to independent audit and public disclosure, in line with international standards and donor requirements.

10. Budget and Financial Planning

The financial planning for the South Sudan Development and Social Equity Agency (SUDESA) is structured to support its phased implementation over a three-year period. The budget reflects both institutional and programmatic priorities, aligned with the operational roadmap and strategic mandate.

A. Budget Overview

The total projected budget for the first three years of SUDESA's operations is USD 31.2 million, distributed across three phases:

- **Year 1 (Setup):** USD 7.8 million
- **Year 2 (Pilot):** USD 10.1 million
- **Year 3 (Scale-Up):** USD 13.3 million

B. Budget Breakdown by Category

Category	Year 1 (Setup)	Year 2 (Pilot)	Year 3 (Scale-Up)	Total (3 Years)
Institutional Setup	1,500,000	500,000	300,000	2,300,000
Programmatic Implementation – Digital Transformation	500,000	1,000,000	1,500,000	3,000,000
Programmatic Implementation – Agricultural Development	400,000	900,000	1,300,000	2,600,000



Category	Year 1 (Setup)	Year 2 (Pilot)	Year 3 (Scale-Up)	Total (3 Years)
Programmatic Implementation – Social Development	400,000	900,000	1,300,000	2,600,000
Programmatic Implementation – Gender and Inclusion	300,000	600,000	800,000	1,700,000
Capacity Building	350,000	500,000	600,000	1,450,000
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)	200,000	300,000	400,000	900,000
Communications and Advocacy	150,000	200,000	250,000	600,000
Contingency and Risk Management	100,000	150,000	200,000	450,000
Annual Totals	7,800,000	10,100,000	13,300,000	31,200,000

C. Financial Governance

All budget allocations will be subject to approval by the Governing Board, with quarterly financial reporting and annual independent audits. A digital financial management system will be deployed to ensure transparency, traceability, and compliance with donor and national standards.

9. Implementation Roadmap

The operationalisation of the South Sudan Development and Social Equity Agency (SUDESA) will follow a phased implementation strategy, designed to ensure institutional readiness, stakeholder alignment, and programmatic impact. The roadmap is structured around three core phases: Setup, Pilot, and Scale-Up, each with defined milestones, deliverables, and risk mitigation measures.

Phase I: Setup (Months 1–6)

- Formal signing of the Founding Agreement between EUSL and the Government of South Sudan
- Issuance of a Presidential Decree and/or initiation of legislative process for legal recognition
- Establishment of the Governing Board and appointment of the Director-General
- Recruitment of core staff and operationalisation of the Executive Secretariat
- Development of foundational policies, including HR, procurement, data governance, and MEL

- Launch of the Resource Mobilisation Strategy and submission of funding proposals to key partners

Phase II: Pilot (Months 7–18)

- Rollout of **pilot programs** under each strategic pillar in selected regions or sectors
- Establishment of **technical units** and deployment of digital platforms and tools
- Initial disbursement and management of donor funds under fiduciary oversight
- Stakeholder consultations and validation of programmatic models
- Mid-term review and refinement of operational strategies based on lessons learned

Phase III: Scale-Up (Months 19–48)

- Expansion of programs to national scale, with regional integration components
- Institutionalisation of public-private partnerships and service delivery contracts
- Launch of the SUDESA Innovation Fund to support local solutions and entrepreneurship
- Formal engagement with regional bodies (e.g., IGAD, COMESA) for recognition and alignment
- Establishment of a permanent headquarters and regional coordination offices
- Integration of SUDESA into national planning and budgeting frameworks

Key Milestones and Deliverables

- Month 3: Legal establishment and Board inauguration
- Month 6: Secretariat operational and first donor agreements signed
- Month 12: Pilot programs launched and MEL system activated
- Month 24: National program expansion and regional partnerships formalised
- Month 36: Independent institutional review and sustainability assessment
- Month 48: Full operational maturity and integration into national systems

Risk Assessment and Mitigation

SUDESA's implementation will be guided by a proactive risk management framework, addressing:

- **Political Risks:** Mitigated through co-ownership, legal safeguards, and diplomatic engagement
- **Financial Risks:** Addressed via diversified funding, transparent systems, and donor oversight
- **Operational Risks:** Managed through phased rollout, capacity-building, and adaptive planning
- **Reputational Risks:** Controlled through rigorous MEL, stakeholder engagement, and public reporting

Final Summary

The establishment of the South Sudan Development and Social Equity Agency (SUDESA) represents a bold and necessary step toward institutionalising a new model of development—one that is inclusive, digitally enabled, and strategically aligned with both national aspirations and global commitments.



Anchored in the Agenda for Social Equity 2074, SUDESA is not merely a coordination mechanism, but a transformative agency designed to serve the people of South Sudan through innovation, equity, and long-term vision.

Through its multi-sectoral mandate, hybrid governance model, and phased implementation strategy, SUDESA will address critical institutional gaps while creating a platform for sustained investment, policy coherence, and regional integration. Its operational independence, combined with strong legal foundations and transparent financial systems, will ensure credibility and resilience in a complex and evolving development landscape.

While the initial budget reflects the scale and ambition of the agency, it is presented as a model framework—adaptable to a five- or ten-year mandate depending on national priorities and partner engagement. The financial architecture is designed to evolve, with mechanisms for sustainability, co-financing, and public-private collaboration embedded from the outset.

SUDESA is more than an institution; it is a commitment to a future where South Sudan leads its own development journey—strategically, inclusively, and with the full confidence of its people and partners