



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION
OBSERVER MISSION ON THE SOUTHERN SUDAN
REFERENDUM

16 January, 2011

In response to the invitation of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC), H. E. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union (AU), dispatched an Observer Mission to the Sudan to observe the Referendum, which was conducted from 9 to 15 January, 2011.

The AU Observer Mission was led by Dr. Victor Tonchi, Chairperson of the Namibia Electoral Commission. The Mission was composed of 110 members, drawn from National Election Commissions, National Parliaments, the Pan African Parliament, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the AU, Regional Legislative Assemblies and Regional Economic Communities, Ambassadors, prominent individuals and members of civil societies from various African countries. The Mission was assisted by a team of technical staff from the AU Commission and Pan African Parliament.

Based on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and in line with the Communique of the Peace and Security Council of AU of 21 December, 2010, the AU Commission sent this Mission to observe the conduct of the Referendum. The Referendum

permits the People of Southern Sudan to confirm the unity of Sudan, or secede.

The main aim of the Mission was to make an objective, independent and impartial observation of the Referendum in the Sudan. In particular, the Mission was expected to:

- i. Determine whether the Referendum was conducted in accordance with the CPA and SSRC guidelines;
- ii. Determine whether the Referendum environment was conducive for voters to participate and exercise their fundamental rights;
- iii. Establish whether the participating political parties, agencies and groups have been satisfied with the preparations for and conduct of the Referendum;
- iv. Evaluate the level of voters' awareness and whether the voters' right to choose freely and in secrecy were guaranteed, upheld and protected;
- v. Identify and record electoral flashpoint and/or malpractices;
- vi. Assess whether the media coverage and conduct have been in conformity with the Referendum rules and guidelines;
- vii. Evaluate transparency and adequacy of the voting, counting and collation processes; as well as the announcement of the results; and
- viii. Establish whether the results of the Referendum are a true reflection of the democratically expressed will of the people of Southern Sudan.

The AU Mission deployed 18 teams to cover 16 States . On the whole, the Mission is impressed with the level of preparedness, conduct, and logistical arrangements put in place by the SSRC. Reports from AU Observers in the field indicate a massive turnout, especially in the majority of States in Southern Sudan. More specifically:

- i. The Mission notes with satisfaction that the Referendum was conducted in accordance with the CPA and SSRC guidelines. For example, adhering strictly to the voting procedures such as opening and closing of the polling stations, diligently verifying the identity of voters, and giving assistance to voters who were physically and visually impaired, by officials at the polling stations.
- ii. The Mission further notes that the Referendum environment was peaceful, secure and orderly to allow voters in large numbers to exercise their democratic rights with relative ease. The Mission also strongly commends the Government of Sudan for the reassurances to accept the verdict of the Referendum.
- iii. Participating national and international observer groups, civil society, political parties representatives and voters, all expressed satisfaction with the preparation for, and the conduct of the Referendum.
- iv. Voter turnout was massive in almost all States in Southern Sudan. However, voter participation in the north was notably low. By the fourth day more than 80 percent of

registered voters in Southern Sudan had casted their votes, and voting time had to be extended to accommodate long queues on the first two days. Banners, posters, flyers, television and radio broadcasts appear to have been used intensively to sensitise, mobilise and educate the citizens.

- v. Vote counting started as scheduled on the evening of the 15 January 2011, and the process was professionally managed in accordance with SSRC rules and guidelines. The Mission commends the SSRC, the people and the government of the Sudan for a successful Referendum.
- vi. The Referendum was conducted in a safe and peaceful environment. There was massive deployment of police, military, and security intelligence personnel nationally, and at all polling stations to ensure safety. However, a few incidents of violence and deaths were reported at the border regions during the Referendum. The Mission implores all stakeholders to exercise maximum restraint in order to promote peace, stability and development.

In conclusion the AU Observer Mission is therefore of the view that the Referendum was organised and conducted in accordance with the CPA and the SSRC guidelines. It was also consistent with AU Guidelines on Standards for the Conduct of Democratic Elections in Africa. It is therefore the opinion of the AU Mission that Southern Sudan Referendum was free, fair and credible, and indeed a true reflection of the democratically expressed will of the people of Southern Sudan.