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AFRICAN UNION HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON DARFUR

Press Statement

Clarification - African Union Panel on Darfur's Position on the ICC and Darfur

Addis Ababa, 11 July 2009: The African Union High Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD) has noted a Reuters news report which claims that the former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, Chairperson of the Panel, has called on the three Sudanese personalities, including President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir to present themselves before the International Criminal Court to stand trial.

This report is completely false and highly irresponsible. No member of the Panel has made any such pronouncement. Indeed, no member of the Panel could make any such pronouncement as the Panel has not yet completed its work.

At a press conference held at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa yesterday, Mr. Mbeki was asked about the Panel's position on the ICC arrest warrant against President Bashir. Mr. Mbeki indicated that the Panel operated on the basis that the ICC warrant "is a given". He, however, acknowledged that some of the interested parties with whom the Panel has met had called for ICC trials.

The Panel was established to address the issues of peace, reconciliation and justice in Darfur. These issues are fundamental to resolving the crisis of Sudan as manifested in Darfur. The search for peace, reconciliation and justice for Darfur is broader than the ICC process. In this connection, the ICC Prosecutor, Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo, reiterated his support for the Panel's work when he met with the Panel this week in Addis Ababa.

The Panel has previously met with the Government of Sudan, representatives of some of the armed opposition movements, political parties, civil society representatives, internally displaced people, refugees, tribal leaders, Native Authorities of Darfur. The Panel has also met with some of Sudan's neighbouring countries, representatives of other foreign governments and institutions, amongst others.

The Panel will continue with its work and will hand over its report to the AU in September.

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