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## **AFRICAN UNION HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON DARFUR**

### **AU Panel Listens to Darfur**

**Johannesburg, 2 September 2009:** The African Union Panel on Darfur spent the last week of August in Sudan, on its fourth mission to that country. During this visit to Sudan, the Panel, led by former South African president, Thabo Mbeki, held intensive discussions on its proposals with Sudanese and Darfurian stakeholders.

Since April 2009, the Panel, which includes former presidents, Abdulsalami Abubaker of Nigeria and Pierre Buyoya of Burundi, has spent lengthy periods discussing with the Sudanese people the prospects for expediting and consolidating peace in Darfur.

On previous visits, the Panel has sought the views of Sudanese on its core mandate of exploring ways in which peace, justice and reconciliation for Darfur can be achieved in a complementary manner which does not jeopardise any of these values.

With the conviction that the views and involvement of the people of Sudan are indispensable for the success of any efforts to resolve Darfur, the Panel has undertaken broad consultations within Sudan.

Members of the Panel have met with a wide range of stakeholders, including; representatives of the internally displaced persons, Darfurian refugees in Chad, traditional leaders, Native Administrators, nomadic groups, and some leaders of the armed movements of Darfur.

In Khartoum, the Panel has met on several occasions with the leadership of the Government of Sudan, representatives of political parties, Sudanese civil society actors, and members of the legal profession.

Beyond Sudan, the Panel conferred with, and received representations from, various actors on the international plane, including: the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Mr Luis Moreno-Ocampo; human rights organisations; representatives of international and multi-lateral organisations; as well as the leaders of some of Sudan's neighbouring states. The Panel has taken into consideration all these submissions.

In its engagements with the Sudanese people, the Panel found that peace, justice and reconciliation were central to their aspirations for the future of their country. The Panel

believes that a political settlement, which takes into account the situation in Sudan as a whole, will provide the context and create the environment in which these hopes can be realised.

These interactions with the people of Sudan and Darfur in particular, have greatly enriched the work of the Panel, which will now conclude discussion of its proposals with other stakeholders, including with representatives of the armed movements of Darfur. Thereafter, the Panel will complete its report and present its findings and recommendations to the African Union by the end of this month.

In its final report, the Panel will reflect the views of the people of Darfur as well as its own assessment of the situation in Sudan. It will make proposals on the steps to be taken to manage the process for negotiating a lasting political settlement for the conflict in Darfur. The Panel will also recommend mechanisms for strengthening the systems within Sudan for promoting accountability and reconciliation for the violations in Darfur.

The appointment of a High Level Panel for Darfur reflects the importance the African Union attaches to solving the crisis in Sudan, Africa's largest country. Sustainable peace in Darfur is not only critical for the future of Sudan but is vital for the stability of the region surrounding Sudan, and is justifiably of concern to Africa and the wider world.

The Panel was established by the African Union in March 2009, and its other members are: Justice Florence Mumba, of the Supreme Court of Zambia; Mr Mohammed Kabir, lawyer from Nigeria; and Ms Rakiya Omaar, Director of African Rights and Mr Ahmed Maher El Sayed, former Foreign Minister of Egypt.

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