



PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION LOOKS FORWARD TO A POSITIVE OUTCOME TO THE TALKS BETWEEN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN RESUMING IN ADDIS ABABA ON 6 MARCH

Addis Ababa, 5 March 2012: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, notes that the negotiations between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan on outstanding issues between the two countries will resume in Addis Ababa, on 6 March, under the facilitation of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP). The agenda of the talks includes citizenship and nationality, border issues, as well as financial and other arrangements concerning the transshipment of South Sudanese oil through Sudan, and the use of Sudanese oil infrastructure by South Sudan, which would allow for the resumption of South Sudanese oil production and the resolution of all claims by both countries concerning matters related to oil. Security concerns will be dealt with through the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM), scheduled to meet in Juba, South Sudan, on 8 March 2012.

Beginning in July 2010, the AUHIP has facilitated negotiations between the two Parties on post-referendum and post-secession arrangements. While progress was made, a number of key issues are still outstanding. The Chairperson of the Commission calls on the Parties to seize the opportunity of the forthcoming negotiations to reach agreement on the outstanding issues, in line with the agreed principle of two viable states mutually supportive and living side-by-side in peace. He urges them to approach the negotiation with the required spirit of compromise and mutual accommodation. A common commitment to “two viable states” is by necessity the only principle on which Sudan and South Sudan can achieve their respective national goals of development, democratization and stability.

On the issue of citizenship and nationality, the Parties have agreed to a “citizenship transitional period” that would last for nine months after the secession of South Sudan, during which time the status of South Sudanese nationals in Sudan and Sudanese nationals in South Sudan would be regularized. There are at least 700,000 South Sudanese living in Sudan alone. As the date of the end of the citizenship transitional period approaches (8 April), far more needs to be done to protect the rights and welfare of these people. The AUHIP is working with the Parties on the extension of the transition period. The Chairperson of the Commission urges the two countries

to scale up the issuance of identity documents to nationals of one country who reside in the other, or to facilitate the return to their country of origin of those who wish to do so. The Chairperson of the Commission calls upon Sudan and South Sudan to approach this issue in the spirit of African unity and solidarity, and with due respect to the rights of the populations concerned.

Sudan and South Sudan will discuss the demarcation of their common border, as well as the resolution of the status of the disputed areas. The Chairperson of the Commission calls upon Sudan and South Sudan to pay attention to Africa's best practices in border management, and especially to uphold the principle of a soft border. Existing patterns of migration, settlement and trade across the border should continue uninterrupted as far as possible.

The talks between Sudan and South Sudan will also cover oil and related issues. The Chairperson of the Commission would like to stress that all proposals put to the Parties by the AUHIP were based on the principle of two viable states. The Chairperson of the Commission calls on the Parties to embrace the spirit of compromise that would serve the interests of both Parties on the oil issue, and to put an end to unilateral steps that can only deepen the divide, sow bitterness and rancor, and make resolution of the issue even more difficult.

The AUHIP has taken on the role of facilitating the work of the JPSM, a bilateral mechanism established by the Parties to address all security concerns in the border area and those affecting the security of either state. In February, the JPSM adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Non-aggression and Cooperation, and agreed to the immediate activation of the Border Verification and Monitoring Mission, supported by the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), to work with the Parties' monitors along the common border. These are important steps. The Chairperson of the Commission calls on both Parties to seize the opportunity of the next JPSM meeting to ensure that the commitments made are implemented fully and expeditiously.

In the case of Abyei Area, the AUHIP facilitated an agreement on temporary security and administrative arrangements, on 20 June 2011. Africa, through Ethiopia which provided the required troops for UNISFA, has stepped up to fulfill its responsibilities in this regard. Since the deployment of the UNISFA, a measure of security and normality has returned to Abyei, enabling many Ngok Dinka to return to their homes, while the Misseriya Arabs are able to migrate with their livestock. The Chairperson of the Commission reiterates AU's call on both Governments to withdraw all their forces from the area without any further delay, in accordance with their own commitments.

The Chairperson of the Commission calls on the international community, including the UN and bilateral partners, to continue to support the work of the AUHIP as it facilitates the negotiations, including by actively encouraging the Parties to reach agreement. In this regard, the Chairperson of the Commission welcomes the recent informal interactive dialogue between the AUHIP and the Security Council, held in New York on 27 February, during which members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the leading role of the AUHIP.

More than a year ago, the Parties displayed commendable leadership, making it possible to successfully conduct the referendum on self-determination for southern Sudan. This was followed in July by the formal independence of South Sudan. As a new round of negotiation starts tomorrow, it is critical that the Parties demonstrate the same leadership and commitment.

As stressed by the AU Peace and Security Council on 30 November 2011, Africa as a whole looks to Presidents Omar Hassan Al Bashir and Salva Kiir Mayardit to demonstrate the required spirit of compromise and commitment to good neighborliness, in order speedily to conclude negotiations on all the pending issues, as a necessary condition for the two countries to attain their goals in terms of security, democracy and development, and to meet the most basic needs of their peoples.