



PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION APPLAUDS THE SUCCESS OF THE REFERENDUM IN SOUTHERN SUDAN

Addis Ababa, 8 February 2011: The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Jean Ping, congratulates the people of Sudan and their leaders on the occasion of the official announcement by the South Sudan Referendum Commission, on 7 February 2011, of the results of the Referendum on self-determination in Southern Sudan.

The Chairperson, recalling the solemn declaration on the Sudan adopted by the AU Summit of January 2011, expresses his conviction that with the completion of this referendum, Sudan has decisively overcome its tragic history of division and its exceptional legacy inherited from its past. In recognition of the Sudan's unique political circumstances, Africa recognized the right of self-determination for the people of southern Sudan, and supported the free and fair exercise of this right. Indeed, the AU will be keen, at the end of the interim period, on 9 July 2011, to welcome into its ranks the 54th member state of the Union.

The Chairperson applauds the leadership and unswerving commitment to peace of President Omar Hassan al Bashir and First Vice President Salva Kiir Mayardit that have made possible this triumph. He further expresses his gratitude to the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, its Chairman Professor Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil and Deputy Chairman Justice Chan Madut, for the extraordinary efforts they deployed to ensure a successful outcome of the referendum, which was held in a timely, credible and peaceful manner.

The Chairperson welcomes the immediate acceptance of the results of the referendum by the Government of Sudan and its readiness to proceed expeditiously to conclude all necessary steps to ensure the speedy and peaceable establishment of the independent state of Southern Sudan.

The Chairperson is confident that the Sudanese parties will successfully conclude all outstanding matters necessary for the completion of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and will soon agree on all post-referendum issues necessary for the establishment of two viable and mutually supportive states. In this regard, he reiterates his unwavering support to the work of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel led by former President Thabo Mbeki, for its facilitation of the negotiations between the Parties.