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PRESS STATEMENT

President Mbeki, Chair of the AUHIP, formally submits the Electoral Code of Conduct to the National Elections Commission (NEC)

Khartoum, 17 March 2010: The Chairperson of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel on Sudan (AUHIP), former President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki, today met the Chairperson of the Sudanese National Elections Commission (NEC), Mawlana Mr. Abel Alier, to formally submit to the NEC the Electoral Code of Conduct that had been prepared by the AUHIP and signed by 26 political parties contesting the forthcoming elections in Sudan, including both the National Congress Party and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, as well as by nine independent gubernatorial candidates contesting elections in Southern Sudan.

The Code commits all signatories to abide by electoral laws, to promote a fair electoral contest, and to refrain from all forms of violence and obstruction of other contestants. In handing over the signed Electoral Code of Conduct to the NEC, Mr. Mbeki stressed that it was not meant to replace existing Sudanese national legislation, but was a set of commitments entered into voluntarily that are complementary to Sudanese legal provisions, in order to ensure that the forthcoming elections are free, fair, transparent and inclusive,.

Mr. Mbeki also briefed the NEC on the monitoring mechanism being put in place by the African Union to assist the parties fully to meet their obligations as outlined in the Code, and to promote confidence between the parties as they take another step in the democratization of the Sudan. A team of election monitors from the African Union (AU) has begun arriving in the Sudan, in order to begin working with the political parties to establish the Political Parties' Councils (PPC), which will be the mechanism to resolve electoral disputes between the parties.

Mr. Alier, for his part, welcomed the efforts taken by the African Union to assist the Sudanese parties to hold free and fair elections in challenging circumstances, and expressed his desire to work closely with the AU election monitors and the AU Election Observer Mission, which will also soon be deployed.

The Code remains open for signature, at the AU's Sudan offices, by any party or independent candidate. Any party or candidate who is unable to sign the Code in person may instead make a public declaration consenting to be bound by the Code.

Mr. Mbeki also submitted to the NEC the signed Declaration of Common Commitments, in which political parties reiterate their support for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and for the attainment of peace, justice and reconciliation in Darfur.

In addition to its chair, the AUHIP also comprises former heads of state General Abdulsalami Abubaker of Nigeria and Pierre Buyoya of Burundi.

For enquiries about signing the Code of Conduct:

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