



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **THE AU TAKES STEPS TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH SUDAN**

#### ***The AU reiterates its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and support to the IGAD-led mediation***

**Addis Ababa, 18 January 2014:** The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, reiterates her serious concern about the on-going situation in South Sudan. She deplores the senseless killing of innocent civilians and the humanitarian tragedy unfolding on the ground. Thousands of civilians continue to lose their lives while attempting to flee for safety, as was the unfortunate case of over 200 people who drowned in the White Nile while fleeing from the fighting.

The Chairperson of the Commission urges the Government of South Sudan and the armed opposition to cease hostilities immediately and unconditionally, and sign an agreement to this effect in the supreme interest of their suffering people. She calls on all the parties to ensure unfettered and secured access by humanitarian agencies to all the people who are in urgent need for assistance, especially women, children and the elderly.

The Chairperson of the Commission reminds all the parties of their obligations to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law. In this respect, she recalls the decision of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), meeting in Banjul, The Gambia, on 30 December 2013, requesting her, in consultation with the Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant AU stakeholders, to urgently establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate human rights violations and other abuses committed during the armed conflict in South Sudan and make recommendations on the best ways and means to ensure accountability, reconciliation and healing among all South Sudanese communities.

As a follow up to this decision, the AU Commission has taken steps to develop the terms of reference of the Commission of Inquiry, select its members and mobilize the support required for the effective discharge of its mandate. Building on African experience and acting within the framework of AU instruments, this Commission of Inquiry will be an Africa-led mechanism expected to contribute in addressing the plight of the victims and assist the people of South Sudan to devise a comprehensive

strategy on how to build their young nation, reconcile their differences and deal with root causes of the current crisis to avoid its recurrence and bring about lasting and sustainable peace.

The Chairperson Commission reiterates AU's strong support for the African mediation on South Sudan led by IGAD, and commends the Mediation Team for its sustained efforts and continued commitment in the search for a solution to the current conflict. She also expresses appreciation for the support of the AU partners to the IGAD Mediation and encourages them to continue to do so.