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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321  
Email: [situationroom@africa-union.org](mailto:situationroom@africa-union.org)

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **THE AFRICAN UNION WELCOMES THE POSITIVE STEPS TAKEN TOWARDS NATIONAL DIALOGUE IN SUDAN**

**Addis Ababa, 18 September 2014:** The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosozena Dlamini Zuma, welcomes the positive steps recently taken by the Government of Sudan towards creating conducive conditions for the holding of the National Dialogue announced by President Omar Hassan Al Bashir in January 2014.

In this respect, the Chairperson of the Commission notes with satisfaction the release of Professor Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, the leader of the Sudan Congress Party, and seven of his party's members, as well as the release of Dr. Mariam Sadiq al-Mahdi, the Deputy President of the National UMMMA Party. She stresses that these important steps are in line with the Agreement on the National Dialogue and Constitutional Process, signed by the representatives of the National Dialogue Committee of the 7+7 and the Paris Declaration Group, as well as the communiqué of the 456<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) of 12 September 2014. She encourages the Government to continue in the same stride and take further measures to ensure transparency in the National Dialogue process.

The Chairperson echoes the appeal made by the AU PSC to the international community, to fully play the role expected of it, in support of the National Dialogue and the people of Sudan, including by extending the necessary economic and financial assistance to help stabilize the economy of the country.

The Chairperson of the Commission reiterates the AU's continued commitment to assist Sudan, through the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), in its pursuit for a genuine democratic transformation. It should be recalled that, on 10 September 2014, the Chairperson of the AUHIP, former President Thabo Mbeki, met with President Al-Bashir to discuss issues relating to the National Dialogue and ways through which the AU can continue to support the efforts being made by the Sudanese stakeholders.