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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **THE AFRICAN UNION LOOKS FORWARD TO A SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT MEETING BETWEEN THE PRESIDENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN AND THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN**

**Addis Ababa, 22 September 2012:** The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, looks forward to the forthcoming Summit meeting between President Omar Hassan al Bashir of the Republic of Sudan and President Salva Kiir Mayardit of the Republic of South Sudan, scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa, on 23 September 2012. He would like to encourage both Presidents to take advantage of this unique opportunity to reach agreement on the outstanding issues in the post-secession relations between their two countries.

Over the years, the AU has maintained an intense and sustained engagement with the Sudanese stakeholders and people. In October 2009, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) established the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), chaired by former President Thabo Mbeki and including former Presidents Abdulsalami Abubakar and Pierre Buyoya. This has represented an unprecedented degree of African engagement and assistance at the highest level.

Throughout its engagement, the AU, notably through the AUHIP, has maintained the view that solutions to the challenges at hand lie with the Sudanese people themselves. The AU also recognises that the crisis affecting Sudan and South Sudan is an African crisis, and as such, Africa has a duty to assist the two States to achieve a lasting solution.

It was in this spirit that the PSC, deeply concerned by the outbreak of fighting along the border between Sudan and South Sudan, issued its Communiqué and Roadmap of 24 April 2012, in an effort to assist the Parties to return to the negotiating table and overcome the challenges facing their relationship. The PSC was also concerned at the eruption of armed conflict in the “Two Areas” of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, which lie within the Republic of Sudan.

The AU applauds the manner in which the Sudanese parties managed a peaceful and credible referendum on self-determination and the subsequent transition to the



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independence of the Republic of South Sudan. The AU understands that this transition has presented enormous challenges to the people and leadership of the two States: Sudan faces both the immediate economic challenges presented by the secession of the South, as well as the greater and more strategic challenge of redefining itself as a nation and how it relates to its citizens; South Sudan has begun its journey as an independent state, which brings with it many responsibilities and the necessity to give serious consideration to how it wishes to build its future. Both States continue to face the challenge of governing diverse societies.

Whilst these challenges are daunting, the AU is convinced that this transition also presents significant opportunities for the peoples of Sudan and South Sudan. Africa and the world at large are united in their support for the peaceful coexistence and mutual viability of both States.

As the deadline specified by the PSC Roadmap and endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2046 (2012) approaches, the AU is fully aware that difficult decisions must be made by both sides to finalise negotiations on their post-secession relations.

The AU stresses that national leadership, especially at historic moments such as these, carries the burden of decision-making. The decisions on issues of profound significance to citizens and governments are undoubtedly difficult and can involve painful choices. Nonetheless, recognizing the long-term imperative of building two viable States, good neighbours and at peace with one another, and maintaining the close relationships between the peoples of Sudan and South Sudan, the AU is confident that the leaders will rise to the occasion and leave a legacy of peace for generations to come.