

AFRICAN UNION

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PRESS STATEMENT

THE AFRICAN UNION INTENSIFIES ITS EFFORTS TOWARDS THE RAPID RESOLUTION OF THE ABYEI CRISIS

Addis Ababa, 23 May 2011: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Jean Ping, continues to closely follow the unfolding situation in Abyei. He is gravely concerned by the conflict in that area and its humanitarian consequences. He expresses concern over reports of displacement of residents and looting of Abyei town, and calls upon the authorities to protect the civilian population.

The Chairperson of the Commission fully supports the ongoing efforts being undertaken by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) on Sudan, to resolve peacefully the current crisis in Abyei. In this regard, the AUHIP Chairperson, President Thabo Mbeki, undertook a mission of good offices to Khartoum as well as Juba, on 22 and 23 May 2011, respectively, and held promising discussions with President Omar Hassan al Bashir and First Vice-President and President of the Government of South Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit.

Both President al Bashir and First Vice-President Kiir have reaffirmed their willingness to work out modalities for the withdrawal of all the unauthorized forces from the Abyei Area, as well as the establishment of appropriate security and administrative mechanisms to guarantee peace and security for the residents of Abyei.

The Chairperson of the Commission encourages the two Leaders to act swiftly to ensure security, the protection and return of civilians and access for humanitarian assistance. He also anticipates that the Parties will soon take the necessary steps to resolve finally the status of Abyei.

The Chairperson of the Commission wishes to express his deep appreciation for the work being done by the AUHIP, and to reiterate his continued support.

