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PRESS RELEASE

THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION WELCOMES THE AGREEMENT ON ABYEI

Addis Ababa, 21 June 2011: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Jean Ping, welcomes the signing, in Addis Ababa, on 20 June 2011, by the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), of an Agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of Abyei Area, under the facilitation of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) on Sudan, chaired by former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa.

The Agreement provides for the demilitarization of Abyei area, including the redeployment of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and SPLA from all parts of Abyei and the immediate dispatch of an Interim Security Force for Abyei (ISFA), mandated by the United Nations Security Council and consisting of a brigade of Ethiopian soldiers, as well as for temporary administrative and policing arrangements for Abyei pending a final resolution of the status of the area. It paves the way for the return of the Abyei people displaced by the recent fighting to their places of origin.

The AUHIP will make its recommendation on the final status of Abyei to the President of Sudan and the President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) at a time to be agreed.

The Chairperson of the Commission commends the GoS and the SPLM for this Agreement, which is a breakthrough in the talks between them, and hails it as a foundation for agreement on further issues in the coming days. He urges them to faithfully implement the provisions of the Agreement and extend the necessary cooperation to the AU and the United Nations to that end. The Chairperson of the Commission also congratulates the Government of Ethiopia for its readiness to provide troops for the ISFA without delay.

The Chairperson of the Commission pays tribute to the AUHIP members, former Presidents Thabo Mbeki, Abdulsalami Abubakar and Pierre Buyoya, and to the support team, for the work done and the commitment to peace. He also expresses appreciation to all AU partners supporting the negotiations, in particular the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).