



PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION WELCOMES THE SIGNING OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON NON-AGGRESSION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

Addis Ababa, 11 February 2012: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, welcomes the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Non-Aggression and Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Sudan (GoS) and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GoRSS) at the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM) meeting held in Addis Ababa, on 10 February 2012. The JPSM also agreed to a number of other decisions regarding security relations between the two countries and along their common border.

The MoU was signed by 1st Lt. Gen. Mohamed Atta Elmula Abass, Director General for National Intelligence and Security Services, on behalf of the GoS, and Major General Thomas Duoth Guet, Director General for General Intelligence Bureau, on behalf of the GoRSS, in the presence of the Chairperson of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), former President Thabo Mbeki.

The JPSM was established in 2011, as the first inter-governmental mechanism between the Sudan and the newly-independent Republic of South Sudan. Meeting at ministerial level, it addresses security concerns between the two countries in order to foster confidence and reduce the likelihood of security issues escalating into conflict. This was the second time the JPSM had met.

The MoU on Non-Aggression and Cooperation includes a commitment by the two states to respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, a commitment to non-interference in the internal affairs of the other state and the rejection of the use of force, as well as a commitment to equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. In the context of the heightened tension between the two countries, the Chairperson of the Commission stresses that the speedy and full implementation of the MoU will make a significant contribution to promoting peace and reducing the likelihood of conflict.

In addition to the MoU, the two states also adopted a number of decisions on steps to reduce tension along their common border. They agreed to the immediate activation of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mission (JBVMM), which would have the task of monitoring the Secure Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ) between the two countries and investigate any allegations of violation by the two states. The two states also agreed to the establishment of mechanisms and procedures to investigate allegations and counter-allegations against either state in areas beyond the border. Furthermore, they agreed that the next meeting of the JPSM would be held in Juba on 8 March 2012.

The Chairperson of the Commission would like to recall that the JPSM is not the only inter-state mechanism between the two states that is working to reduce tension between them. The Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC), which is mandated to address security matters in Abyei as part of the Agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area, also facilitated by the AUHIP, has held three meetings to date. Together with the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), the AJOC, of which the AU is a member, has succeeded in reducing tensions in the Abyei Area. The Chairperson calls on the international community to extend support to the two states to facilitate the return of displaced persons to Abyei.

The Chairperson of the Commission expresses his appreciation to the AUHIP, its Chair, former President Mbeki, its other members, former Presidents Abdulsalami Abubakar and Pierre Buyoya, and the support team, for their tireless work in promoting peace, prosperity and mutual viability between Sudan and South Sudan, and in facilitating the negotiations of all outstanding issues in their post-secession relations.

The Chairperson of the Commission calls on both parties to redouble their efforts in the round of negotiations starting on 12 February 2012, to reach an agreement on all outstanding issues. He also calls on the international community, which has provided significant support to the efforts of the AUHIP, to continue to stand by it, as we enter this next critical phase in the relations between the two countries.

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