



PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION DEEPLY CONCERNED BY THE SECURITY SITUATION AT THE BORDER BETWEEN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

Addis Ababa, 27 March 2012: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Jean Ping, notes with very deep concern the escalating security situation along the border between Sudan and South Sudan, where there has been an outbreak of fighting between the military forces of Sudan and South Sudan. This includes ground fighting on both sides of the border and aerial bombardment.

This unfortunate and worrying development is happening at a period of growing optimism arising from the recent initialing of two important Agreements between the two countries, under the facilitation of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), and on the eve of an extremely important scheduled visit to the Republic of South Sudan by the President of the Sudan, during which the two leaders were expected to speed up the momentum towards the resolution of all outstanding issues in their post-secession relations and the promotion of good neighborliness between the two countries. These incidents also come at a time when the two Parties have recently reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of two viable States, mutually supportive and at peace with their neighbours.

The Chairperson of the Commission wishes to stress that military means will never provide a long-term to answer to the bilateral issues affecting the relations between the two countries and that any disputes over border territories can be resolved only through peaceful means.

The Chairperson urgently calls on the two States to scrupulously respect the Memorandum of Understanding on Non-Aggression and Cooperation signed on 10 February 2012, and underlines the imperative of de-escalating the situation, including withdrawing their forces 10km from the borderline, establishing the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mission (JBVMM) and halting any support to rebel forces operating in the territories of the other country.

Additionally, it is critical that appropriate steps be taken to create an environment conducive to the holding of the planned Summit between the two Presidents and the continuation of the post-secession negotiations.

The AU welcomes the commitment of both countries to send senior delegations to the Joint

Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM) preparatory meeting in Addis Ababa this week, supported by the AUHIP. The JPSM should then meet to allow the two countries to resolve issues of concern in a peaceful manner. The JPSM and the JBVMM should immediately launch an investigation into the events of the last two days.

The AU remains committed, through the AUHIP, to helping the two countries reach an agreement on the post-secession issues, on the basis of the agreed principle of two viable states living in peace side-by-side and cooperating on issues of common concern, as well as relevant AU and international principles governing relations among sovereign States.

