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PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION WELCOMES THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SOUTH SUDAN POLICE SERVICE FROM ABYEI

Addis Ababa, 11 May 2012: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, welcomes the withdrawal from Abyei, on 10 May 2012, of the 700-strong South Sudan Police Service (SSPS). This withdrawal was confirmed by the Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), Lieutenant General Tadesse Tesfay, in a letter addressed to the AU on 10 May 2012. The Chairperson of the Commission commends the Government of the Republic of South Sudan for making good on its pledge to withdraw from Abyei, in line with the letter it addressed to the AU regarding its acceptance of the Roadmap.

It is to be recalled that, at its 319th meeting held on 24 April 2012, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU adopted a Roadmap aimed at easing the current tension, facilitating the resumption of negotiations on post-secession issues and the normalization of relations between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan. Among other things, the Roadmap calls for the implementation of all pending aspects of the 20 June 2011 Agreement on Temporary Security and Administrative Arrangements for the Abyei Area, in particular the redeployment, within two weeks, of all Sudanese and South Sudanese forces out of Abyei. This Roadmap was subsequently endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2046 (2012) of 2 May 2012.

The Chairperson of the Commission would also take this opportunity to express his appreciation to UNISFA, its Force Commander, and the Government of Ethiopia, for ensuring the security of the local population.

The Chairperson calls on the Government of the Republic of Sudan to reciprocate and withdraw its forces from Abyei, in line with its acceptance of the Roadmap and the timetable contained therein. With the effective deployment of UNISFA, there is no longer need for any other force to remain in Abyei. The security of Sudanese within the territory is being adequately ensured by UNISFA forces. Moreover, such withdrawal would mark a significant step in the normalization of relations between the two countries and the creation of confidence between them.

The Chairperson of the Commission once again reiterates AU's determination to ensure adherence to all aspects of the Roadmap. He requests the Parties to continue fully and unconditionally to implement the Roadmap, including the withdrawal of their armed forces to their side of the border and the acceptance of the administrative and security map presented by the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for the purposes of activation of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mission (JBVMM).