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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

PRESS RELEASE

SUDANESE PARTIES TO BEGIN TALKS TO ADDRESS THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN BLUE NILE AND SOUTHERN KORDOFAN

Addis Ababa, 23 July 2012: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, notes that, on 23 July 2012 representatives of the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) are scheduled to meet in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), to discuss how to provide essential humanitarian assistance to affected populations in the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, Sudan.

The Chairperson notes that action on this issue is long awaited and desperately needed. The unfolding humanitarian crisis began with the eruption of the armed conflict and the associated humanitarian crisis in Southern Kordofan in June 2011 and in Blue Nile three months later. In February 2012, the AU, the United Nations and the League of Arab States forwarded their *Joint Proposal for Access to Provide and Deliver Humanitarian Assistance to War-Affected Civilians in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States* to the Parties. This Proposal was immediately accepted by the SPLM-N. On 27 June 2012, the Government of Sudan signaled its acceptance of the Joint Proposal.

The Chairperson is deeply concerned that civilians in the two areas are suffering hunger, disease and displacement. It therefore is imperative that there are no further delays in the delivery of assistance to the affected populations by neutral and impartial humanitarian agencies. It was in this context that the Peace and Security Council (PSC), meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government on 14 July 2012, welcomed the Government of Sudan's acceptance of the *Joint Proposal*, and reiterated its firm belief that it is the responsibility of the relevant authorities, and in particular the Government of Sudan, to ensure that all affected areas have unfettered access to humanitarian assistance. The PSC therefore stressed the need to ensure that humanitarian assistance is forthcoming as a matter of utmost urgency, delivered by competent, impartial agencies. The PSC urged the Government of Sudan and the SPLM-N to cooperate with the relevant United Nations agencies, in particular the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The AU hopes that this meeting will provide an opportunity for the Parties immediately to agree on how to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to those in desperate need.

The Joint Proposal calls on the AU, UN and LAS to put together joint teams to carry out a rapid humanitarian assessment mission in all the affected areas in the two states. It further stipulates that the three organizations will deploy monitors to observe the distribution of humanitarian relief to ensure that the humanitarian aid reaches the intended beneficiaries. The AU is ready immediately to deploy an assessment team including eminent African personalities to this end, and to deploy monitors to ensure that assistance is delivered to those in need in a neutral, impartial, transparent and accountable way.

The Chairperson therefore expects that the two Parties urgently reach agreement on the modalities for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, as any further delays would cause further suffering, and could likely lead to further unconscionable loss of life.