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STATEMENT BY H.E DR. JEAN PING,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AU COMMISSION,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON SUDAN
IN THE MARGINS OF THE AU SUMMIT
ADDIS ABABA, 31 JANUARY 2011

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Chairperson of IGAD,

President Omar Hassan al Bashir,

First Vice President of Sudan and President of the Government of Southern Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit,

Heads of States and Government

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,

Former Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Pierre Buyoya, of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to welcome you all to this special high-level meeting on Sudan, which occurs at a historic juncture in the destiny of this nation.

There is no country that is closer to our hearts, more dear to our aspirations and identities as Africans, than Sudan. There is no country in which the African Union, acting in close partnership with our colleagues at the United Nations, has invested more effort than Sudan.

The people of Sudan have suffered many tribulations and faced many hardships over the years. And just as the Sudanese people welcomed and hosted Africans, including pilgrims, students and refugees in their hour of need, over the decades, so we too in Africa have done our utmost to assist our brothers and sisters in Sudan when they have in turn needed our help.

I am proud, therefore, that, at this Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of Africa, we can welcome our brothers, President Omar Hassan al Bashir and First Vice President Salva Kiir Mayardit, and congratulate them on the successful implementation of the major elements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, including especially the Referendum in southern Sudan.

The leaders of Sudan have shown exemplary courage and commitment to peace. We are confident that they will continue to lead northern and southern Sudan in

this same spirit, continuing to provide guidance as their people face the challenges ahead.

We also congratulate our brothers in IGAD, who convened the negotiations that led to the signing of the CPA in Kenya, six years ago. We thank those in the UN and the rest of the international community who so greatly supported the efforts for peace in Sudan.

In particular, I mention President Thabo Mbeki, President Abdulsalami Abubaker and President Pierre Buyoya of the AU High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan. It is a mark of the AU's commitment to Sudan that it took the unprecedented step of assigning three former Heads of State to act as our highest representatives in the country. The Panel was initially constituted to examine the issue of Darfur and, on submitting its Report in October 2009, was re-constituted with a mandate to cover all matters facing Sudan. The Panel has played an extremely active role in this regard, and has worked in exemplary partnership with UNMIS and other African and international partners.

The smooth and credible referendum in southern Sudan is a triumph for the Sudanese people, which decisively puts behind us many years of strife and suffering. We are confident that the Sudanese people will now be able to build their future in a spirit of friendship and good neighborliness, and contribute to the advancement of democracy and development on this continent.

We are all aware that many challenges lie ahead for Sudan. Prominent among these is the resolution of the conflict in Darfur. The African Union, in the form of the Panel and UNAMID and its Joint Special Representative Professor Ibrahim Gambari, are playing a leading role, in close partnership with the State of Qatar, in seeking a peaceful settlement of the Darfur conflict.

Important issues remain for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to be concluded successfully. These including the pressing matter of resolving the status of Abyei, of demarcating the border, and completing the Popular Consultations in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States. Another challenge is reaching agreement on post-referendum issues. Through the work of the AU

Panel, we are achieving important progress. The two parties' have made a common commitment to building "two viable states" that will ensure that northern and southern Sudan are at peace with each other, their neighbors, and internally.

We are confident that this unique step will definitively mark an end to conflict in Sudan. In the months and years ahead, the African Union will continue to work in support of the efforts of our Sudanese brothers and sisters to ensure peace, prosperity and harmony.

I thank you.