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PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION STRESSES THE IMPERATIVE AND URGENCY OF AN INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE TO ADDRESS THE CURRENT CRISIS IN SOUTH SUDAN

The AU calls for an immediate humanitarian truce

Addis Ababa, 21 December 2013: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, continues to follow with deep concern the escalation of the political conflict in South Sudan into a violent confrontation that threatens to degenerate into an all-out civil war. She reiterates her call, and that of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), for the concerned South Sudanese stakeholders, both in Government and in opposition, to exercise the responsibilities of leadership and halt the slide towards civil war.

The Chairperson of the Commission is also deeply alarmed by the deteriorating humanitarian situation that has already inflicted untold suffering on the civilian population, including killings, egregious violations of human rights and massive forced displacements. She calls for an immediate humanitarian truce for the Christmas season, as a sign of a commitment by all concerned to the well-being of the people of South Sudan.

Two and a half years ago, the AU welcomed the new nation of South Sudan into its ranks, with high expectations that this new country would become a beacon of peace, prosperity and hope. The Chairperson is profoundly dismayed at the recent turn of events that puts at risks countless human lives and jeopardizes the fundamental viability of the South Sudanese nation.

The Chairperson of the Commission reiterates AU's wholehearted support to the efforts of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which also involve the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, as well as the UN Special Representative to the AU, to secure an immediate end to hostilities in South Sudan. In this respect, she urges the Government of South Sudan and the other belligerent parties to invite

the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to monitor a cessation of hostilities and to undertake all necessary activities for the protection of civilians. She also calls upon the parties to the conflict to facilitate the free and unhindered movement of humanitarian personnel and supplies to affected people in South Sudan.

The Chairperson of the Commission is extremely saddened by the killing of innocent civilians and United Nations peacekeepers in Bor, in the Jonglei State of South Sudan. She condemns these killings as a war crime, and extends AU's heartfelt condolences to their families and to the Government of India, as well as to the UN Secretariat.

The Chairperson of the Commission expresses, once again, AU's commitment to facilitate political dialogue involving the people and leaders of South Sudan, through the High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) and in partnership with IGAD. She stresses that an inclusive dialogue on all relevant issues, based on the respect of human rights, the rule of law and constitutional legality and the rejection of the use of force, is the only way in which the South Sudanese can address their problems and resolve their differences.