



## PRESS RELEASE

### AU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR SOUTH SUDAN, H.E. ALPHA OUMAR KONARE, CONCLUDES SIX-DAY WORKING VISIT TO SOUTH SUDAN

**Addis Ababa, 14 March 2017:** The African Union High Representative for South Sudan [AUHRSS], former President Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali, undertook a six-day working visit to South Sudan from 1 to 7 March 2017. The objective of the visit was to follow up on the progress of the peace process, and new opportunities that could inform and promote more refined and constructive decision-making on overall peace in the country. The visit, which was also undertaken within the framework of the joint AU, IGAD, UN Statement of 29 January 2017 on South Sudan, was to seek viewpoints on the National Dialogue Initiative announced by H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit, the challenges and the potential responses to the Dialogue, and in what ways the Dialogue could serve as a complementary tool for peace in the country.

During the visit the High Representative met with H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit, First Vice President Taban Deng Gai, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, H.E. Deng Alor Kuol. The High Representative also interacted with the secretariat of the National Dialogue Initiative. Further on, he met with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, and Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan, Mr. David Shearer, the African Diplomatic Corps, the European Union Delegation to South Sudan, Troika Countries and other bilateral partners.

The High Representative also visited Malakal, the capital of Central Upper Nile State, as well as Yei, the capital Yei River State, and met the Governors and leaderships of the State parliaments, chiefs and community leaders, faith-based groups, women and youth representatives. He interacted with UN and other international and national aid agencies, and representatives of Internally Displaced Persons [IDPs] in both towns.

In his interaction with the Authorities and other stakeholders, the AU High Representative underscored the unique and historic opportunity for South Sudan for genuine reconciliation through the National Dialogue and urged all to make it as inclusive, free and transparent as possible, which would confer to the whole process the necessary legitimacy, thus initiating its internalization by all the South Sudanese, and prompting the support of the broad international community. He highlighted that this process is not meant to re-discuss the peace agreement but rather to look into ways and means to strengthen what is being achieved today with the ultimate objective to actively preparing for the post-transition period, including the holding of democratic elections in an appeased environment. The National Dialogue will also allow South Sudanese stakeholders to discuss wide ranging issues of utmost national interest, including the crucial questions of Governance, security sector reform, healing, reconciliation and accountability, among others

In all his interactions, the High Representative shared the view that violence remained an unacceptable and unsustainable approach to ending the nation's crisis, and that the AU, UN, IGAD, and the partners and friends of the country will continue to urge for political and other non-hostile means to peace. He stressed his commitment to remain firmly associated with South Sudan, and to continue to explore with the leadership of the country, both internally and in the diaspora, for an inclusive, holistic, broad-based, and sustainable peace in the country.

With the view to alleviating the disastrous effects of the famine, the AU High Representative discussed with the Authorities about the possibility of identifying some islands of peace and prosperity, especially in those well-endowed parts of South Sudan, and to support them with the objective of producing enough food for the local population as well as to support the overall food security of the rest of South Sudan. The entities to be supported should present themselves as models in terms of peaceful dialogue in the resolution of the local conflicts.