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## PRESS RELEASE

### THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN MEET IN ADDIS ABABA

*The meeting discussed a wide range of issues of common concern*

**Addis Ababa, 16 August 2015:** The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, today received the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Sudan, Prof. Ibrahim Ghandour. The meeting afforded them an opportunity to exchange views on a number of issues of common concern, including the implementation process of Agenda 2063, women empowerment, and peace and security issues both in Sudan and in the wider region.

The Foreign Minister briefed the Chairperson of the Commission on the impact of the unilateral sanctions imposed on Sudan, the efforts being deployed by the Sudanese Government regarding the preparations for the National Dialogue announced by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in January 2014, and the situation in Darfur, as well as on the implementation status of the 2012 Cooperation Agreement between Sudan and South Sudan facilitated by the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In particular, the Minister stressed the importance of AU's renewed efforts towards the lifting of sanctions imposed on his country. He also called for the early completion of the exit strategy for the AU/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), and reiterated the commitment of the Sudanese authorities to ensure the successful holding of the National Dialogue, including by facilitating the participation of all stakeholders.

The Chairperson of the Commission seized the opportunity to recall the AU's long standing engagement in Sudan. She reiterated the AU's continued commitment to assist the Sudanese stakeholders overcome the many challenges confronting their country and meet the aspirations of their people to lasting peace, security and stability. In this regard, she recalled that the AU and its policy organs, notably the Peace and Security Council, have regularly called for the lifting of the sanctions imposed on Sudan, adding that progress in addressing the conflicts facing the country would greatly facilitate the efforts being undertaken by the AUHIP. Regarding the National Dialogue, she underlined the imperative of ensuring that the process leading to this crucial event is conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner, so as to meet the expectations of all sections of the Sudanese society. She acknowledged the need to develop an exit strategy for UNAMID, it being understood that such a strategy should be conceived and implemented in a manner that does not jeopardize the gains made since the deployment of the Operation. She called for sustained efforts to implement the outstanding aspects of the 2012 Cooperation Agreement, and pledged the AU's continued commitment to assist the parties in this respect.

The quest for peace in South Sudan featured prominently in the discussions. Both the Chairperson and the Minister emphasized the urgency of ending the conflict, through the conclusion of an agreement by the set deadline of 17 August 2015, failure of which will have far reaching consequences for South Sudan, the region and the continent as a whole. They urged the parties to demonstrate the commitment and leadership required to this end. The Chairperson reiterated the AU's full support to the IGAD-led process and the importance of continued backing by the larger international community, including the UN.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss the follow-up to the decision adopted by the Assembly of the Union at its 25<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 14 to 15 June 2015, on the implementation of previous AU's decisions on the International Criminal Court, recommending the formation of an open-ended Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and requesting that steps be taken to facilitate an interaction between the Committee and the UN Security Council. The Chairperson updated the Minister on the steps taken by the Commission in pursuance of the Assembly's decision.