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PRESS RELEASE

VOTE OF THANKS

ON THE CONCLUSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION (AU) PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL (PSC) FIELD MISSION IN SUDAN, 17–19 MARCH 2013 (DELIVERED BY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE GAMBIA, MEMBER OF THE AU-PSC)

Khartoum, 19 March 2013: On behalf of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU PSC) and on my own personal behalf, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of The Sudan for the warm hospitality extended to our mission since our arrival on 17 March 2013.

We came here seeking to further understand the dimensions of the conflict in Darfur and the challenges to the realization of peace, and to find new ideas that would help in our pursuit to make a breakthrough in the conflict. In so doing, the PSC remains fully committed to respecting Sudan's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

The Peace and Security Council has been seized of the situation in Darfur for quite a long time and, indeed, it still remains on the Council's agenda. The AU PSC is hopeful and striving towards having this conflict come to a speedy end. Our Council believes that the contribution of the African Union and the United Nations (UN) through the United Nations/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) is a clear testimony of the AU's commitment towards making peace in this integral part of The Sudan, in as much as it represents a precedent as a hybrid peace-keeping mission and is therefore a prototype for future peacekeeping missions on our continent and a collective action of the UN and regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

We commend the Troop and Police Contributing Countries, as well as the men and women on the ground for the immense contribution they are making towards the achievement of lasting peace, security and development in Darfur. We pay particular tribute to the men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of Africa.

The PSC strongly supports a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Darfur, and in that vein, it supports the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), as the basis for any peaceful settlement. The African Union supports any efforts that seek to bring on board any armed groups in Darfur that have not yet signed the DDPD.

The PSC will continue to support the activities of UNAMID, including the efforts to ensure diversification of its Police component according to what has been agreed upon within the Tripartite Mechanism, to increase the number of Arabic speaking officers from African countries and thus enhance their ability to serve and interact with the local population.

We encourage the Government of the Republic of The Sudan to continue its efforts aimed at relieving the humanitarian situation prevailing in Darfur, including enhanced protection for vulnerable groups, particularly women and children.

The PSC underlines the importance of close coordination and cooperation between local and regional administrations and UNAMID in Darfur.

We support and congratulate Mohamed Ibn Chambas as the new Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of UNAMID and his team.

We commend the Government of The Sudan for the commitment that it has given to expeditious issuance of visas to UNAMID personnel and look forward to the implementation of this new policy, including speedy clearance for the equipment.

We welcome the recent agreements signed on the 8th and 12th of March 2013, on the implementation modalities of the security and other agreements previously signed between Sudan and South Sudan and we look forward to positive results of these agreements on the security situation in Darfur.

Finally, the PSC wishes to assure the Government of the Republic of The Sudan of its support to resolve the conflict in Darfur, to the best interest of the people of Darfur and indeed, to the interests of all the Sudanese people and Africa as a whole. Once again, our heartfelt gratitude for the hospitality and souvenirs.

Thank you