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PRESS RELEASE

The African Union Welcomes the Opening of Talks on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan

Addis Ababa, 4 January 2014: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, welcomes the beginning of talks between the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and a delegation representing former Vice-President Riek Machar, today, in Addis Ababa. These talks, which had been called for by the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), notably at its Banjul meeting of 30 December 2013, as well as by the Summit of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held in Nairobi, on 27 December 2013, come not a moment too soon.

Not a single day can be lost in the search for peace in South Sudan. Stopping the fighting in South Sudan is not only a humanitarian imperative but also a strategic necessity, in order to halt the rapid descent of Africa's newest nation into collapse. The Chairperson of the Commission notes that the region and the continent as a whole cannot afford the devastating implications of a failed state.

An immediate end to hostilities and the beginning of political dialogue, in line with the relevant provisions of the PSC Communiqué of 30 December 2013, is not only Africa's demand and that of the international community, but is also the plea of the people of South Sudan. Accordingly, the Chairperson of the Commission calls upon the leaders of South Sudan to abandon any attempt to seek military advantage prior to entering negotiations, and instead to declare a cessation of hostilities and engage in unconditional, inclusive and holistic political talks in good faith.

The Chairperson of the Commission expresses AU's full support for, and confidence in, the IGAD Special Envoys, Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin of Ethiopia and General Lazarus Sumbeiywo of Kenya, and its commitment to take all steps required to facilitate a successful conclusion of the negotiations. She calls upon the South Sudanese parties to cooperate fully with the IGAD Special Envoys.