



PRESS RELEASE

CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT ON SOUTH SUDAN

Addis Ababa, 12 May 2015: The situation in South Sudan remains extremely fragile and volatile. In the last three weeks, sustained fighting between the Government of South Sudan and the SPLM (in opposition) has been taking place in the greater Upper Nile region. According to the South Sudan Humanitarian Coordinator, since the beginning of May 2015 alone, military activities south of Bentiu, in Unity State, have forced up to 100,000 people to flee their homes. This is in addition to over the 1.5 million people who have already been uprooted. More than 2.5 million others are at risk of hunger and disease as a result of the conflict, and massive violations of human rights and destruction of property continue to take place.

This tragedy is a stain on the conscience of the international community in general and Africa in particular. Most alarming in this ongoing humanitarian tragedy is the inability and unwillingness of the South Sudanese parties to agree on a political framework that would end the fighting and the suffering of their own people.

Almost four years ago, the African Union welcomed the new nation of South Sudan into its ranks, with high expectations that this country would become a beacon of peace, prosperity and hope. We were profoundly dismayed at the turn of events, which has led to the loss of countless human lives and untold suffering.

Since the inception of the crisis, IGAD, under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn of Ethiopia, has made sustained efforts to facilitate the early resolution of this conflict. I renew the AU's appreciation to the leaders of the region for their commitment.

Against this background, marked by a catastrophic humanitarian situation and deadlocked political talks, the imperative of renewed efforts cannot be overemphasized. The African Union intends to expedite the operationalization of the *ad hoc* Committee of Heads of State and Government established by the Peace and Security Council last December, to enhance Africa's support and input to the peace process. It is equally important to work towards the effective implementation of sanctions against all those undermining the quest for peace, violating international humanitarian law and obstructing the efforts of peacekeepers on the ground, in line with the UN Security Council resolution of 3 March 2015.

While the region and the continent as a whole should spare no efforts to end the tragedy unfolding in South Sudan, the South Sudanese parties bear primary responsibility in this respect. It is high time that they live-up to their commitments. They have to end the unnecessary suffering they are inflicting on their own people. They have to understand that there is no military solution to the current conflict.

The African Union renews its commitment to continue to work with the IGAD leadership, with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting way out of the present conflict in South Sudan.