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الاتحاد الأفريقي African Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights		UNIÃO AFRICANA Commission Africaine des Droits de l'Homme & des Peuples
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The Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Madam Reine Alapini-Gansou issued the following statement on the occasion of Southern Sudan referendum of 9 January 2011.

The Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Madam Reine Alapini-Gansou, calls upon the international community and friends of Sudan to peacefully accompany the People of Sudan as Southern Sudan vote in the crucial 9 January 2011 referendum.

In this regard, I wish, on behalf of the African Commission, to belatedly congratulate the Government and People of Sudan on the peaceful conclusion of the National Elections, which took place from 11th to 15th April 2010 and hope that the 9 January 2011 referendum would be similarly peaceful. I take this opportunity to encourage the NEC and other Sudanese authorities to ensure that the on-going campaign continues to be both peaceful and fair to all and to quickly address any violations that may arise. Failure to do so will erode confidence in the referendum process and put its success at risk.

I, therefore, call upon all branches of the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan to continue its assistance in providing necessary resources needed for the referendum while remaining neutral in the campaign. In this regard I congratulate the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission for not only completing the registration process in Sudan, a commendable landmark towards the 9 January Referendum and full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), but also for the peaceful and orderly conduct of the registration.

I also want to congratulate the Government and People of Sudan for their spirit of tolerance and the transparent manner in which debates and campaigns have been done, demonstrating their desire for democratic transformation and hope for a better future. I welcome the commitment by His Excellency Omar Hassan el Bashir, on 4 January 2011, to respect the outcome of the referendum. The African Commission underlines the importance of ensuring that the referendum reflects the will of the people of Southern Sudan, and the responsibility of all parties to

address outstanding challenges, ensuring that their public commitments are underpinned by practical action. I thank the Government for taking proactive measures to ensure that violence does not break out before, during and after the referendum.

The African Commission supports the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), of which elections are an essential component. I want to use this opportunity to commend the Government and People of Sudan for the enormous steps they have taken since the CPA was signed and that despite the many challenges experienced during the last five years, the country has largely remained peaceful. I, however note that while much has been achieved in organizing the 2010 elections, the country's first competitive elections since 1986, the referendum of 9 January 2011 process remains at risk on multiple fronts including simmering conflicts in Darfur and several flashpoints in the South. Sudan must therefore remain on track toward the implementation of the remaining provisions of the CPA. I also call on all parties to the Darfur conflict to redouble their efforts to achieve a peace agreement through the talks in Doha, Qatar.

I also remain very concerned by the lack of agreement on Abyei. I welcome the forthcoming resumption of talks between His Excellency President Omar Hassan el Bashir and First Vice President H. E. Salva Kiir Maryadit and urge both parties to reach urgent agreement on Abyei in a manner that reassures communities on the ground that their rights will be protected and maintains peace and stability in the area.

The African Commission underlies the African Union's call for continued restraint, moderation and watchfulness to secure a free and fair referendum. It takes note of, and expresses concern on the noticeable hate speech from some sections of the Sudanese community. I therefore call for moderation and restraint from all. For decades now Sudan has been faced with multiple challenges and the forthcoming referendum requires astute statesmanship from all the leaders of Sudan, unconditional altruism and above all pragmatic leadership to ensure peace before, during and after the referendum.

The African Commission stands ready to continue to assist, together with the rest of the international community, all the Sudanese stakeholders to implement a comprehensive and far-reaching agenda of peace, reconciliation and prosperity for all.

Banjul, 7 January 2011