



PRESS STATEMENT

THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION EXPRESSES DEEP CONCERN AT THE DECISION OF THE PRE-TRIAL CHAMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT ON DARFUR

The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Mr. Jean Ping, has just learnt of the decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC), following the application made by the Prosecutor of the ICC, to issue an arrest warrant against the President of the Republic of the Sudan, Mr. Omar Hassan Ahmed El Bashir, on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Chairperson of the Commission is deeply concerned at the far reaching consequences of this decision, which comes at a critical juncture in the process to promote lasting peace, reconciliation and democratic governance in the Sudan. He underlines that the search for justice should be pursued in a way that does not impede or jeopardize the promotion of peace.

The Chairperson of the Commission recalls that it was because of these concerns that the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU, at its 142nd meeting held on 21 July 2008, requested the United Nations Security Council, in accordance with the provisions of Article 16 of the Rome Statute, to defer the process initiated by the ICC.

The PSC is scheduled to meet tomorrow morning to review the situation. On his part, the Chairperson of the Commission is consulting with a number of stakeholders and AU partners, to mobilize support for the AU's position on this issue and to ensure that the hard-won but fragile gains made thus far in the quest for lasting peace and reconciliation in the Sudan are not reversed.

Addis Ababa, 4 March 2009