To: All Member States of the African Union Peace and Security Council

16 September 2013

Your Excellencies,

Re: ENDING THE VIOLENCE AND SUFFERING IN SUDAN

As we approach the gathering of world leaders at the upcoming 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), we, a group of civil society organizations from across the continent of Africa and the Middle East, write to draw attention to the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the Republic of Sudan. We appeal to Your Excellencies to intensify your efforts to address the country’s continuing conflicts and secure a halt to ongoing hostilities and the blocks on humanitarian access to civilians in need. We believe what is required is your commitment to a comprehensive, coordinated approach to the resolution of the inter-related armed conflicts currently ongoing in the Sudan.

Your Excellencies,

In Darfur, fighting continues to escalate following more than 10 years of conflict. In recent months, over 300,000 people have been displaced from their homes as a result of the most dramatic upsurge in violence in years. Civilians in East Jebel Marra and the villages of Tanagara, Sharfa, Dolma, Abu Hamra, Sani Kundo and Tagali Umagali in North Darfur have been victim to attacks, including aerial bombardments, at the hands of their own government. 3.2 million people in Darfur are currently receiving humanitarian assistance, and of them, 1.2 million remain in supposedly ‘temporary’ camps.

Your Excellencies,

In the border states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, the conflict between government forces and rebels rages on for a third consecutive year. Over one million civilians have been affected by the ongoing conflict, with more than 225,000 fleeing as refugees to neighbouring South Sudan and Ethiopia. Those who choose to remain live in constant fear of aerial bombardment by the Sudanese Air Force. Alarming, most recent reports highlight an escalation in attacks on the fertile land of Delami County during the planting season, which will have disastrous consequences for food security in the region. Despite this, an estimated 800,000 civilians living in this horror have received little or no humanitarian assistance for the entire duration of the conflict, with the region descending into a humanitarian crisis.

Your Excellencies,

Both of these conflicts warrant your urgent attention and action in pursuit of an end to the suffering of millions and durable peace in the country. Alongside this, we alert you to the risk of worsening conflict posed by the absence of a resolution on the status of Abyei. Though the exemplary efforts of your Council, in collaboration with the African Union High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan (AUHIP) and African Union Commission, have successfully averted further fighting erupting between Sudan and South Sudan, this fragile peace remains in constant risk. Despite the AU’s concerted and ongoing efforts to ensure the full implementation of the multiple agreements signed by the two states, no progress has been made to date on the referendum proposed by the Council in its 24 October 2012 communiqué. Subsequently, tensions have mounted in the region, particularly following the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief Kuol Deng Kuol on 4 May 2013, the increased migration into the region by the Misseriya in anticipation of the proposed referendum and the continued presence of Sudanese Oil Police.
Your Excellencies,

The ongoing cycle of violence in Sudan threatens the stability of not just the African sub-region but the continent as a whole. For this reason, we strongly support the efforts of the AU PSC to assist Sudan and South Sudan achieve the goal of becoming two mutually viable states and to resolve the conflict between the Government of Sudan and rebel forces in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, as well as in Darfur. We contend this should continue to be a high priority for your attention and be a prime example of African leaders implementing African solutions to African problems.

Therefore, ahead of the upcoming meeting of the AU PSC at the Level of Heads of State and Government on the situation in Sudan and South Sudan in the margins of UNGA and the Sudan/South Sudan Consultative Forum, civil society groups across the African continent and the Middle East urge Your Excellencies to consider the following recommendations:

1. We appeal to the AU PSC to demand action leading to the immediate cessation of hostilities in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur and the provision of full and unhindered humanitarian assistance to those who need it, especially those located in rebel-held areas. The suffering of innocent civilians in these regions needs to be dealt with as a matter of utmost urgency.

2. We call on the AU PSC to endorse the AUHIP proposal on Abyei from 21 September 2012 as a fair, equitable and workable solution to the dispute between Sudan and South Sudan that both states should now accept as final and binding, particularly as we fast approach the October 2013 deadline for the proposed referendum on the region's final status. We encourage the AU PSC to review the recommendation from the AUHIP in its report of 29 July 2013 which suggested the Council undertake a visit to the Abyei Area to express support for the people of the region. This would demonstrate to both parties the Council’s concern over the impasse on the final status of the Abyei Area to both parties, and the need for an urgent and conclusive resolution of this issue, as presented in the AUHIP proposal.

3. Acknowledging that the fundamental drivers of the conflict are shared across Sudan, we encourage the Council to move away from the piecemeal peace deals of the past and state its support for a comprehensive approach to the resolution of conflicts in Sudan that culminates in a national dialogue process which is holistic in its content and scope and inclusive of all relevant stakeholders, not solely the Government and armed groups. We believe this is in line with the commitment at the historic AU Summit in May of this year to address the root causes of conflict and the affirmation of the AU PSC in its 29 July 2013 communiqué that a framework of democratisation is essential for both Sudan and South Sudan. We urge the AU PSC to ensure greater capacity is provided to support this democratisation process, as well as to support a similar process in South Sudan. Furthermore, we encourage the AU PSC to develop this comprehensive approach in consultation and coordination with other key regional international players.

Your Excellencies,

We thank you for your consideration of our concerns and look forward to working with the AU in our joint efforts to support peace and security in Sudan and ensure an end to the suffering of innocent civilians.

Signed:
Africa Democracy Forum
Africa Peace Forum
African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS)
African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL)
African Research and Resources Forum (ARRF)
Agency for Independence Media (AIM)
Arab Coalition for Darfur (ACD)
Arab Network for Human Rights Information
Arab Program for Human Rights Activists (APHRA)
Blue Nile Strategic Center for Social & Cultural Studies (Blue Nile)
Cairo Institute for Human Rights (CIHRS)
Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO)
Darfur Bar Association
Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre (DRDC)
East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
Governance Bureau, Khartoum
Human Rights Advocacy Network for Democracy (HAND)
Human Rights and Democracy Media Centre, Palestine
Human Rights First Society Saudi Arabia
Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA)
Al-Khatim Adlan Centre for Enlightenment and Human Development (KACE)
Kamma Organization for Development Initiatives (KODI)
Kush Incorporated
Middle East and North Africa Partnership for Preventing Armed Conflict (MENAPPAC)
Non-Violence Network in the Arab Countries (NNAC)
Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organisation (NRRDO)
Peace and Security Institute of Africa (PSIA)
Permanent Peace Movement (PPM)
South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network (SSHRDN)
South Sudan Human Rights Society for Advocacy
Sudan Consortium
Sudan Democracy First Group (SDFG)
Sudan Human Rights Monitor (SHRM)
Sudanese Association for the Defence of Freedom of Opinion and Conscience (SADFOC)
Tammuz Organization for Social Development, Iraq
Zarga Organisation for Rural Development (ZORD)

Cc:
Ambassador Donald Booth, U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan
H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson, African Union Commission
H. E. Dr Nabil El Araby, Secretary General, League of Arab States
Robin Gwynn, UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan
Zhong Jianhua, Chinese Special Representative on African Affairs
H.E Julia Dolly Joiner, Commissioner of Political Affairs, African Union
UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon
H.E Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner of Peace and Security, African Union
H.E. (Eng) Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary, Intergovernmental Authority on Development
Mikhail Margelov, Russian Special Envoy to Africa
Mrs. Rosalind Marsden, EU Special Representative in Sudan
H.E. Thabo Mbeki, Chairperson, AU High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan
Haile Menkerios, UN Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan
H. E. Dr Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Qatar
Zeid el Sabaan, Cabinet Adviser – African Affairs
Ambassador Samir Hosni, Head of Arab-African Cooperation
Mr. Endre Stiansen, Norwegian Special Envoy to Sudan
Members of the United Nations Security Council