

H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma  
Chairperson  
African Union Peace and Security Council  
P.O. Box 3243, Roosevelt Street  
W21K19, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Dear H.E. Dr. Zuma,

As members of the Abyei Community, we are appealing to your Excellency and to the African Union Peace and Security Council to conduct the Abyei Referendum in October 2013 as stipulated in the AUHIP September 21, 2012 Proposal on the Final Status of the Abyei Area.

The Referendum is being used as a pawn in a dangerous game between Sudan and South Sudan as the two countries negotiate outstanding CPA issues. The Abyei Referendum, however, is a right of the Ngok Dinka community and other eligible Sudanese that was provided by the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and is not contingent upon approval of or implementation by either government.

Fortunately, the necessary pieces are in place for the African Union and the United Nations to enforce the AUHIP Proposal and to carry out the Referendum.

- **Mandate** – In accordance with the African Union's right to intervene in the affairs of Member States with respect to grave circumstance, such as war crimes committed in Abyei in 2008 and 2011 and that continue to be a threat if the Referendum is postponed, the AUPSC announced on October 24, 2012 that if Sudan and South Sudan fail to agree, the "Council will endorse the 21 September 2012 Proposal as final and binding and would seek the endorsement by the UN Security Council."
- **Border Demarcation** – On July 22, 2009, the Permanent Court of Arbitration produced an Award that identified the boundaries of Abyei, which is binding on Sudan and South Sudan "by the terms of the Arbitration Agreement and by the force of international law."
- **Security** – On May 29, 2013, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of UNISFA until November 30, 2013 and it increased the number of active troops. UNISFA has proven to be a disciplined and effective peacekeeping force with significant engagement among the communities in Abyei and therefore has the ability and authority to facilitate a peaceful referendum.

- **Participation** – Experts indicate that with security in place, organization of the Referendum in October is possible. In anticipation of the Referendum, we are already seeing thousands of displaced members of the Abyei Community return to the area.

The Abyei Community is fully aware of backtracking and inconsistencies that have taken place since September 21, 2012; however we believe the AUPSC can correct its course for the sake of its own credibility, to help establish peace between Sudan and South Sudan and to benefit all permanent and temporary residents of Abyei.

Although not always fully understood (especially by community members manipulated by outside forces), the September 21<sup>st</sup> Proposal provides tremendous benefits for the traditional communities of Abyei, who have negotiated a peaceful co-existence for centuries.

- **Representation** – The Abyei Area Referendum Commission will include two members from each country (South Sudan and Sudan), and will be chaired by a neutral “person of international stature” appointed by the African Union.

- **Protection of Rights** – Regardless of the outcome of the Referendum, both communities will begin again to enjoy good neighborly, civil, political, social and economic relations.
- **Access and Security** – A soft border between Sudan and South Sudan in Abyei will allow the flow of goods and services in addition to the ongoing and protected traditional seasonal migration of livestock. In addition, an Indemnity Fund will be established to compensate for the loss of livelihood or income due to violations.
- **Economic Development and Revenue Sharing** – A Common Economic Development Zone will be created to accelerate social and economic development that will benefit Abyei and the surrounding areas.

The Abyei Community urges the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council to conduct the Abyei referendum in October 2013 in the event the government of Sudan reneges on the conduct of the referendum as agreed.

The worthy vision of the African Union is “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, *driven by its own citizens* and representing a dynamic force in global arena.” The AUHIP September 21<sup>st</sup> Proposal lives up to that vision. It is an African solution for a long-standing African problem. Some describe the failure to implement the Abyei Protocol as a rotting tooth that left untreated has and will spread infection everywhere. The pieces are in place for a successful referendum and the benefits are great. Let 2013 be the year the status of Abyei is finally decided.

Sincerely and respectfully,

The Abyei Community

cc: The United Nations Secretary General

The United Nations Security Council

The African Union

AUHIP Chairperson

IGAD

The European Union

The League of Arab States