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The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Alpha Oumar Konaré, reiterates his deep concern over the serious deterioration of the situation in Darfur, due to large-scale violations of the ceasefire. He strongly condemns these unacceptable acts committed by all the Parties. In particular, he condemns the military operation launched by the Government of the Sudan (GoS) on the eve of the Fourth Round of the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on the crisis in Darfur, which contributed to undermining the negotiation process in Abuja, Nigeria.

He urges the GoS to immediately stop its present military offensive and withdraw its forces to their former positions in order to create an enabling environment for the ongoing political negotiations in Abuja.

He also urges the armed movements (SLM/A-JEM) to stop all attacks against commercial activities and governmental infrastructures, including the police stations.

He supports the Conclusions of the 5th session of the Joint Commission (JC) held in Abuja, on 17 December 2004, and stresses the urgent need for the Parties to comply with the deadline expiring on Saturday, 18 December 2004, at 6.00pm, set by the JC.

The Chairperson reiterates the undertaking by the AU Commission to bring any serious violation to the attention of the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council, as appropriate.

Addis Ababa, 18 December 2004