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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

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### World Press Freedom Day:

### African Union to spare no Effort to Strengthen Freedom of Expression, Security and Protection of Journalists



**Addis Ababa, 03 May 2012 –** In his message to mark World Press Freedom Day (WPFDD) observed today 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012 under the theme: “***New Voices: Media Freedom Helping to Transform Societies***”, Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union

Commission (AUC), underlined that the African Union is celebrating the year 2012 as the year of Shared Values. These values, he said are accepted and shared by all member states of the Union. They include human rights as entrenched in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, freedom of speech, democracy and good governance.

Dr. Ping paid tribute to journalists who lost their lives in breaking the wall of silence to inform their fellow citizens. “This commemoration gives us an opportunity to honor all those who have lost their lives in carrying out their mission.... It is through access to information, freedom of speech and freedom of the press that citizens feel that they are part and parcel of the life of their countries; since they are in a better position to perceive the social, political and economic agendas of their environment”, he emphasized, adding that, the celebration of World Press Freedom Day is an opportunity for the African Union to condemn in the strongest terms, attacks and unacceptable treatment perpetuated on journalists around the world. **(See the complete speech in French, English and Arabic on the AU website: [www.au.int](http://www.au.int)).**

The AUC Chairperson’s comments were made at an event held at the AU head quarters in Addis Ababa, to mark world press freedom day. The event was organized by

the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in collaboration with the AUC, associations of journalists based in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Ministry of Information amongst other partner organizations.



Keynote addresses were made by representatives from the Ethiopia National Journalist Union (ENJU), Horn of Africa Press Institute (HAPI), Ethiopian Journalist Association (EJA), and Ethiopia Free Press Journalists Association (EFPJA).

Official messages were delivered by the AUC, the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Government Communications Affairs Office, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The gathering also heard a joint message from the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and the UNESCO Director General Ms. Irina Bokova, which was delivered by the UN Resident Coordinator in Ethiopia. (See complete message on the AU website: [www.au.int](http://www.au.int))

Mr. Shimelis Kemal, Ethiopian State Minister of the Government Communication Affairs Office, in his message highlighted the measures taken by his country to protect and promote an independent media. (See complete message of State Minister Shimelis on the AU website: [www.au.int](http://www.au.int)).

The event concluded with presentations on the statistics and perspectives of social media in Ethiopia, as well as an award ceremony for the recognition of excellence in journalism among others.