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«Hisséne Habré Trial Should Start in 2013 » says AU Legal Counsel

Addis Ababa, 22 January 2013 – MsDjenaba Diarra, Acting Legal Counsel of the African Union Commission(AU) has, today, updated the media on two issues featuring high on the agenda of the AU 20th Summit : the HisséneHabré Case and the status of ratification of AU instrument.

With regard to Hisséne Habré's trial, she stated that *«the AU strongly believes that the trial should start sometime in 2013»*. Ms. Diarra reported on progress made in collaboration with the Republic of Senegal, which was mandated in 2006 by the AU Assembly to judge Habré on behalf of Africa. Since his ascension to power, President MackySall has taken concrete steps toward the trial, said Ms. Diarra. The technicalities, e.g. the extraordinary chambers located within the national court of Senegal are being worked out. *«The trial is important for the AU. It shows our willingness to fight impunity and shows that we have adequate African mechanism to address African issues »* Ms. Diarra added. With regard to funding, Ms. Diarra recalled that the pledges made in 2010 by Africa and the international community, were confirmed in 2011.

On treaties signed during the OAU-AU, the Acting Legal Counsel informed that out of 32 legal instruments, 22 have entered into force. However, Ms. Diarra emphasized that generally, the AU encounters challenges regarding ratification. To face this challenge, the AU has established a ministerial committee within the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Organisation of African Unity in order to find solutions to shortcomings engendered by the slow pace of ratification. The AU Commission also recommended the creation of a fund aimed at bringing technical assistance to Member States for ratification and domestication. The AU also uses organs especially the Pan African Parliament (PAP) to advocate for the ratification.