

AFRICAN UNION

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URGENT

The Commission of the African Union (AU) presents its compliments to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs/External Relations of the AU Member States, and has the honor to communicate the following:

The Commission wishes to recall that, in the report of the Chairperson on the activities of the Commission covering the period January to June 2009 submitted to the 15th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council held in Sirte, Libya, from 24 – 30 June 2009 [EX. CL/520 (XV)], an update was provided on the issue of maritime security and safety in Africa, which has taken on a higher profile in 2008, mainly as a result of the resurgence of piracy. The Commission indicated that:

- (i) individual countries and intergovernmental Organizations had deployed important sea assets to tackle the trend of piracy off the coast of Somalia;
- (ii) in early 2009, a high-level meeting of 17 States from the Western Indian Ocean, Gulf of Aden and Red Sea areas adopted the “Djibouti Code of Conduct”, concerning the Repression of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in the Gulf of Aden;
- (iii) in connection with UN Security Council resolution 1851 (2008), a Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) was created, to act as Point of Contact between and among States, Regional and International Organizations, on aspects of combating piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia.

It was indicated that, throughout all these meetings, the AU Commission emphasized the need to adopt a multifaceted comprehensive approach, including in-land capability and capacity building, to tackle the phenomenon of piracy off the coast of Somalia, which is just the symptom of a bigger problem. In this regard, the need to stop all illegal activities off the coast of Somalia, including illegal fishing and dumping of toxic waste, was highlighted. The Commission emphasized that world attention on the issue of piracy off the coast of Somalia had diverted attention from the growing threat of attacks off the coast of West Africa.

**To: Ministries of Foreign Affairs/
External Relations of the AU Member States**

The Commission stressed that, in order to tackle all these cross-cutting challenges, including illegal fishing, dumping of toxic wastes, arms and drug trafficking, and in line with the AU Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP), it is in the process of developing an appropriate strategy to address the situation.

On its part, the 13th Ordinary Session of the Assembly held in Sirte, Libya, from 1st to 3 July 2009 adopted Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.252(XIII) on the report of the Peace and Security Council on its activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa. In that decision, the Assembly expressed its serious concern at the mounting insecurity in the maritime spaces around Africa, and Somalia in particular, and strongly condemned all illegal activities in these regions, including piracy, illegal fishing and dumping of toxic waste. The Assembly welcomed the initiatives taken by the Commission to develop a comprehensive and coherent strategy to combat these scourges and requested it to submit reports thereon to the competent organs of the African Union, on a regular basis.

As a follow-up to this decision, the Commission is planning to organize, at the AU Headquarters, in Addis Ababa, from 6 to 7 April 2010, a meeting of Experts of all Member States on maritime security and safety. The Commission will, in due course, communicate the draft agenda and other relevant documents, including a concept note.

In the meantime, the Commission would appreciate receiving confirmation of the participation of Member States and communication of the composition of their respective delegations, by 25 February 2010.

All Communications relating to this issue should be communicated to the following address:

Peace and Security Department

Attention: - LTCDR Samuel Kame-Domguia

(Focal point for Maritime Security and Safety Strategy) and

- Mr. Olabisi Dare (Focal point for Somalia)

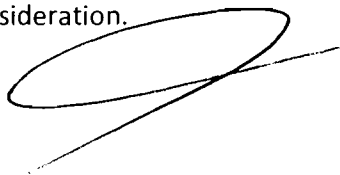
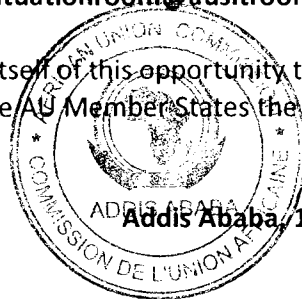
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The Commission of the African Union avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs/External Relations of the AU Member States the assurances of its highest consideration.

Addis Ababa, 12 January 2010

Cc: Embassies of the AU Members States
Addis Ababa