

**PR NO.25/22<sup>ND</sup> AU SUMMIT****President Abdel Aziz of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania elected African Union Chairperson**

**Addis Ababa, 30 January 2014-** At the opening ceremony of the African Union's Assembly of Heads of States and Government, the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz was elected as the new Chairperson of the Union. He replaces the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Mr Hailemariam Dessalegn. The Chairpersonship of the African Union rotates annually.

In his acceptance speech, President Abdel Aziz thanked the Ethiopian government for hosting him and other dignitaries with great warmth and hospitality and commended this as being in the true spirit of African co-operation and development. He emphasised the need for Africa to continue to stand united in its pursuit of development and pointed specifically to the co-operative use of natural resources as a source of strength on the continent.

President Abdel Aziz highlighted the urgency of integrated environmental protection and food security measures. He hailed 2014, the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa, as the opportune time to continue work towards sustainable environmental and agricultural practices. He pointed to the harnessing of the Senegal River's hydroelectric capacity to generate power across the Senegalese, Malian and Mauritanian borders as an example of the success of inter-governmental development efforts and encouraged nations across the continent to strive to work together for sustainable development. Through the co-operative use of water and land resources specifically, he said, Africa can increase the size and yield of its cultivated land and tackle the issues of food insecurity and hunger.

Effective and innovative development of the energy and agricultural sectors, he said, had the capacity to radically improve the lives of Africa's diverse citizenry in a number of ways. Transforming the rural economy through modernised irrigation practices as well as transforming the livestock sector will significantly impact economic growth and reduce poverty on the continent. This will, in turn, combat the spread of diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS and improve the general health of Africa's citizens.

Speaking on issues of peace and security, the new Chairperson congratulated the Democratic Republic of Congo on the signing of a cease fire agreement and was encouraged by the continuing progress towards peace and stability in Tunisia, and the Central African Republic, which recently elected its interim president. President Abdel Aziz underscored the need for African nations to stand in aid of one another during times of conflict and to strengthen Africa's role and strength in international matters.

Chairperson Abdel Aziz re-iterated that Africa needs continental solutions to continental issues. He affirmed that with the continent's vast human and natural resources, Africa has the capacity for rapid and sustainable development which can see it become a world leader in environmental innovation and sustainable growth.

**LFM/wzm**

**For further information contact**

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: [dinfo@african-union.org](mailto:dinfo@african-union.org) | Web Site: [www.au.int](http://www.au.int) | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

**Follow us**

Face book: <https://www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionCommission>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/\\_AfricanUnion](https://twitter.com/_AfricanUnion)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/AUCommission>

**Learn more at:**

<http://www.au.int>