



Press Release

Chairperson begins official visit to the United States

Addis Ababa, 18 April 2011 -- The Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Dr. Jean Ping, is in the United States for an official visit which will include a meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State, Mrs. Hillary Clinton and other Senior American Government Officials.

The visit falls within the framework of the Second AU/US Dialogue, scheduled to take place on 20-21 April 2011 in Washington, D.C. The discussion will cover several areas of interest, including: Peace and Security; Democracy, Governance and Human Rights; the AU's Role in Strengthening Democratic Institutions; Education, Youth Development and Empowerment; Trade; Regional Integration; Health; Climate Change; and AU/UN Relations and Support.

In the morning of his arrival in the United States on 15 April 2011, the Chairperson joined other Heads and Representatives of Regional Organizations and the Secretary-General of International IDEA to officially launch the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy, which will serve as a platform for engagement among Regional Organizations on democracy and related issues. This initiative draws on existing cooperation between and among Regional Organizations and International IDEA and builds on the spirit of the January 2010 Retreat convened by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon to promote inter-regional cooperation.

In the afternoon, the Chairperson delivered a Keynote Address on *The Challenges and Future of Democracy in Africa*, at the 44th OAS Lecture of the Americas, organized around the theme: "Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy: Celebrating Ten Years of the Inter-American Democratic Charter". (The Full Text of the Chairperson's Keynote Lecture is enclosed)

It is worth mentioning that this First Meeting of the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy, which took place on 14-15 April 2011 at the Headquarters of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, D.C., was hosted by Mr. Jose Miguel Insulza, Secretary-General of the OAS and attended by Mr. Tuiloma Neroni Slade, Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum and Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Secretary-General of International IDEA, as well as Representatives of the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the President of the European Commission and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. Ms. Fathimath Dhiyana Saeed, Secretary-General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) participated as an observer. (The Press Statement on this event is enclosed)

While in Washington, D.C., the Chairperson also met with U.S. Congressman Bobby Rush (Democrat), with whom he discussed issues related to the African Diaspora, on the run-up to a proposed Diaspora Summit, scheduled to take place in Chicago next year.

On Saturday, 16 April 2011, the Chairperson delivered the opening remarks at a roundtable on Sudan Debt, organized by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and attended, among others, by the AU High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan, led by Former South African President, Mr. Thabo Mbeki.

The Chairperson then flew to Atlanta, Georgia, where he visited the King Centre and paid tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his wife Coretta Scott King for their invaluable contribution to Civil Rights in America and around the world. Dr. Ping's weekend program in Atlanta included Sunday morning worship at the Ebenezer Baptist Church - the church once pastored by Dr. King.

The Chairperson continues his visit to Atlanta where he is scheduled, today, 18 April 2011, to visit the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), commission the African World Museum Exhibition, visit the African Heritage Diaspora Radio and Television at Clark Atlanta University - one of the leading historically Black Universities in the United States - and also pay a visit to Morehouse College - another historically Black American University - where Dr. Ping will receive a Presidential Award of Honor.

It is worth recalling that the AU considers the African Diaspora as Africa's Sixth Region and Dr. Ping is the first Senior Official of the African Union to pay an official visit to the African Diaspora in the American heartland.

The Chairperson returns to Washington, D.C. tonight, where he is scheduled to hold a series of meetings, including with: the Managing Director of the World Bank and the U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan.

Prior to his meetings on Wednesday and Thursday with Senior U.S. Government Officials, Dr. Ping will meet with the African Diplomatic Group in Washington, D.C.

The Chairperson is accompanied, during official talks, in Washington by a high-level delegation, which includes: the Commissioner for Peace and Security, the Commissioner for Trade and Industry, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Economy and the Chief of Staff in the Bureau of the Chairperson.

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