

AFRICAN UNION

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Peace Day 21 September 2011

**MESSAGE OF DR. JEAN PING, CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF
THE AFRICAN UNION, ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF PEACE**

Today we commemorate the International Day of Peace, established in 1981 by a resolution of the United Nations as a call for a one-day cessation of hostilities in all armed conflicts around the world. In January 2011, the African Union (AU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government decided to institutionalize Peace Day as part of the ongoing Make Peace Happen Campaign.

For the AU, the Day offers a unique occasion to celebrate the work of local peace builders who are devoting their lives to promote peace in their communities and countries. Peace Day also provides an opportunity for a sober reflection on the scourge of war and the challenges ahead in our quest for lasting peace.

Conflict indeed remains a painful reality in different parts of the continent. Inevitably, most of the victims of conflict are innocent women and children. Without peace, they have little hope of improving their lives, little hope of escaping poverty. Often those who work on behalf of the victims of conflict are themselves targeted. Humanitarian workers, medical practitioners, journalists, peacekeepers and other civilians working on the front-lines of war also pay a heavy price for their dedication.

This year, Peace Day comes at a critical juncture in Africa's path towards peaceful and sustainable solutions to ongoing conflicts. The popular uprisings in North Africa have opened up new prospects for democracy and respect for human rights in North Africa. The AU will continue to do all in its power to support the ongoing transitions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, and to ensure that the legitimate aspirations of the people of the region for democracy, human rights, good governance and prosperity are indeed fulfilled.

The events in North Africa have demonstrated a heightened level of consciousness amongst young people about the need for democracy and good governance. We applaud their courage and determination to build a better future.



This year, Peace Day also coincides with a number of significant achievements in the search for lasting peace, stabilization and reconciliation in Somalia. The forces of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) deserve our appreciation and tribute for their bravery and professionalism.

At a time when the Somali people are facing yet another calamity, with the prevailing drought and famine, the obligations of the international community are greater than ever before. It is critical that we meet the humanitarian needs on the ground.

This year has also witnessed a landmark moment in the history of Sudan and well as the continent, with the referendum on self-determination of the South, leading to the emergence of the 54th state of the Union on 9 July 2011. We encourage the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan to spare no efforts in addressing the challenges facing them, promoting good neighbourliness and the emergence of two viable states.

The AU welcomes the return to constitutional order in Niger and Guinea. It also applauds the progress made in post-conflict reconstruction and development in many of the countries that have successfully turned the page of violence and crisis.

On this Day, the AU reiterates its commitment to the promotion of peace and security on the continent, and calls on all Member States, all citizens, civil society and other stakeholders, to redouble their efforts to consolidate the gains made, resolve outstanding conflicts and make peace happen. The challenges and expectations are such that we cannot relent in our efforts.

The AU emphasizes the need for tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding, tenets that embody the very essence of peace.