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AU Peace and Security Department Holds Open Doors as World Commemorates Peace Day



21 September 2011, Addis Ababa; On 21 September 2011, the Peace and Security Department (PSD) of the African Union opened its doors to its partners, the United Nations Office to the African Union, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), members of the press and staff of

the African Union Commission (AUC) as part of global activities to mark the International Day of Peace (or Peace Day). This event took place as part of various activities planned under the ongoing African Union (AU) - Make Peace Happen Campaign and pursuant to a Decision of the Assembly adopted in January 2011 institutionalizing Peace Day.

Visitors were given a guided tour of the Department at the AUC headquarters in Addis Ababa including the Situation Room and received briefings on the AU Border Programme and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). They were also given the opportunity to learn more about the AU's role in promoting peace, security and stability on the continent. Staff and invited guests observed a minute of silence at 1 pm in honor of those who have lost their lives in various conflicts and to show solidarity with thousands of international and grassroots organizations that observed the same.

Created in 1981 by a unanimous resolution of the United Nations, the observance of Peace Day has grown exponentially in recent years and now reaches every level of society. 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. In a Peace Day message by Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the AU Commission, read on his behalf by Mrs. Habiba Mejri-Cheikh, Director of Information

and Communications (DIC), it is emphasized that *“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 that region. 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 annual celebration gives the AU a chance to step back and together with its partners, critically reflect on its successes as well as challenges in the long struggle towards lasting peace, stability and security on the continent. Speaking before the screening of a film documentary, ‘*The Gate of Hope*’, Col Almoustafa Umar of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) said, *“following on the progress made by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the AU Mission in Somalia, the International Community needs to meet its obligations to help restore peace and reconciliation in Somalia.”*

For the AU, this was an opportunity to show solidarity with the International Community and demonstrate its commitment to creating an Africa at peace with herself and the rest of the world.