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AFRICAN UNION HOLDING WORKSHOP TO PROMOTE RATIFICATION AND DOMESTICATION OF TREATIES

Midrand, South Africa 5 December 2011- A regional workshop of African Union member states from the central and southern regions, representatives from AU organs and African Union Commission officials has started at the Pan African Parliament in Midrand, South Africa, to discuss issues and agree upon actions and recommendations aimed at sensitising member states of the African Union, on the importance of ratification and domestication of treaties of the Organisation of African Unity/ African Union (OAU/ AU), specifically those with direct relevance to shared values. The workshop, which is convened by the AU Commission's Office of the Legal Counsel, is being held under the theme "the ratification and domestication of OAU/AU treaties".

Over 40 delegates are attending the four day workshop which will have the following outcomes:

Improved appreciation of the importance of OAU/AU treaties by member states
Increased support to member states in the signature, ratification/ accession, implementation, reporting and monitoring of treaties
Increased commitment of member states and the AU to speed up the signature, ratification/ accession and implementation and monitoring of OAU/ AU treaties
Enhanced awareness among member states of the need to ensure the OAU/AU treaties are not only ratified, but that they are incorporated into national law and implemented accordingly

The meeting is taking place within the context of an identified need by the Assembly of the African Union and the Executive Council to speed up the ratification process. Of the 42 treaties adopted since the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, only 25 have entered into force and three are in force provisionally. The rest are at various stages of ratification, hence the concern that the process of ratification is slow.

The treaties are important instruments for Africa's development as they have direct relevance in fostering shared values and because of their standard setting and norm creating character for AU member states. All the major treaties adopted so far reflect the principle of inter linkage between peace, stability, development, integration and cooperation in Africa.

The African Union Commission's Legal Counsel Mr Ben Kioko remarked at the workshop's opening ceremony that, currently, it is taking an average of five years to get the 15 signatures required for the ratification of a treaty, adding that the AU Commission would like to see a reduction in the time. He also called on member states of the AU to be well informed on the treaties, so as to prepare thoroughly for their ratification. Ms Helen Dingani represented the Pan African Parliament. Mrs Litha Musyimi Ogana, the AUC director of Women Gender and Development Directorate is also attending the workshop.