



PRESS RELEASE

AFRICAN UNION AND CONFEDERATION OF AFRICAN FOOTBALL CALL FOR RENEWED PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE AHEAD OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF THE AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS IN BATA, EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Addis Ababa, 21 January 2012: An African Union (AU) delegation led by the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, Mr Jean-Pierre Ezin, today met with the President of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), Mr Issa Hayatou, in Malabo, ahead of the official Opening Ceremony of the Africa Cup of Nations in Bata, Equatorial Guinea.

The invitation extended by CAF to the AU Commission is in furtherance of the partnership established within the framework of the “ Make Peace Happen Campaign “, launched in 2010, the Year of Peace and Security in Africa, by the Heads of State and Government, and which has since been sustained.

The AU-CAF partnership aims at promoting a culture of peace and security on the continent through football. Indeed, sport has a key role to play in furthering the objectives of the Make Peace Happen Campaign, in particular in fostering understanding among people, developing positive attitudes among the youth and encouraging healthy competition and the spirit of fair play.

Against this background, Mr Ezin, on behalf of the AU Commission, commended the CAF authorities for a job well done in organizing this great event, in coordination with the local organizing committees of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. He also commended them for their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts towards the realization of lasting peace in Africa.

“As we start up the year 2012 with Africa’s premier sporting extravaganza, memories of an eventful decade, since the establishment of the AU in 2002, as gone by, will always be remembered as the decade of the quest for lasting peace in Africa. It is critical to reflect on the virtues of peace, security and stability as key to sustainable development in Africa. Sport, and in particular football, has a powerful unifying effect. It encourages teamwork and cooperation. Football remains the most popular game in Africa, and indeed in the rest of the world. It plays a critical role in peace-building, and has become one of the vehicles for rebuilding societies disrupted by conflict. Through the ‘beautiful game’, children, women and men share a common



language and a spirit of fair play that transcends the divisions and despair that are the consequences of conflict.” said Mr Ezin.

On his part, Mr Hayatou renewed CAF’s support for the Make Peace Happen Campaign, saying that: *“This is Africa’s moment to leave behind a legacy, by embracing peace in order to create opportunities for sustainable growth in Africa. The Africa Cup of Nations offers yet another opportunity to act, to reflect and to inspire the people of Africa to continue their efforts towards the attainment of lasting peace on the continent.”*

The Commission and CAF have agreed to implement a public awareness campaign for promoting peace during the course of the tournament, with a view to mobilizing all stakeholders for them to take ownership of the “Make Peace Happen” message and commit to actions that will make possible the achievement of peace throughout the continent.

Mr. Ezin thanked the Government and people of Equatorial Guinea for the very warm welcome and hospitality accorded to the AU delegation, adding that: *“Today, the people of Equatorial Guinea and Gabon can be proud for hosting the Africa Cup of Nations, on which the eyes of the peoples of Africa, and those of the rest of the world, are indeed focused”*.

