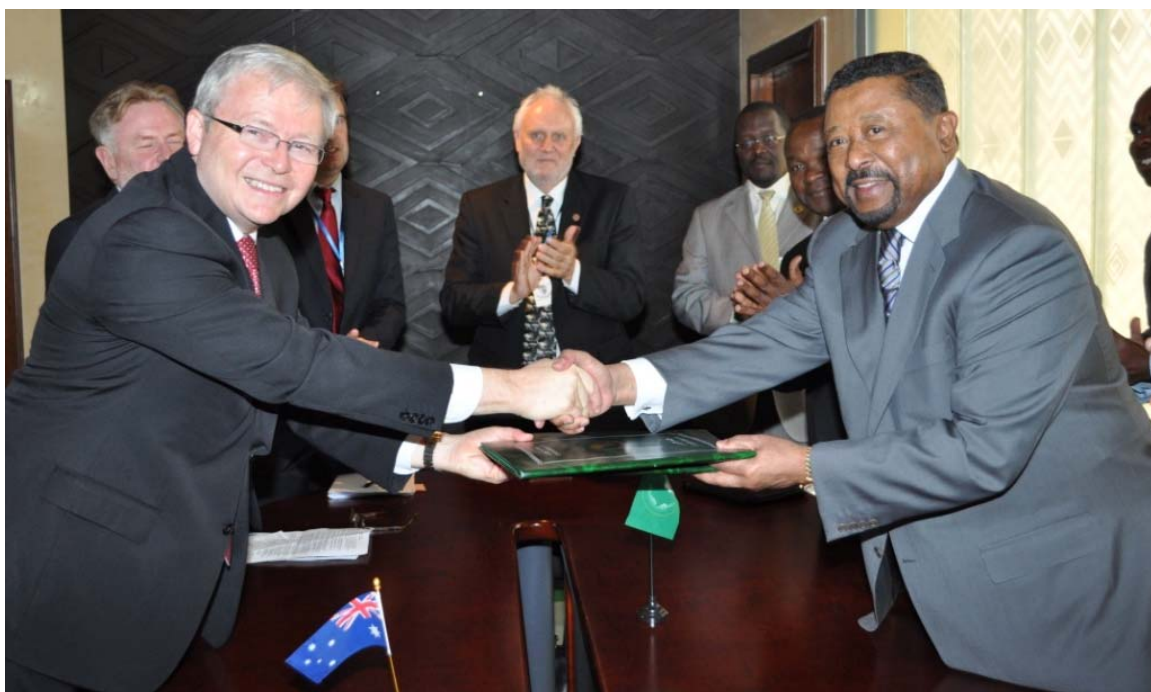


*Press Release*

**African Union and Australia Sign Institution and Capacity Building Support Agreement**



*Chairperson Ping (Right) and Foreign Affairs Minister Rudd exchange documents sealing an agreement between the African Union and Australia (Photo DIC)*

**Addis Ababa, 26 January 2012** - The African Union Commission (AUC) and the Government of Australia have signed an agreement that will enable Australia to support the Institution and Capacity Building Programme of the Commission.

The agreement was signed today, Thursday 26 January 2012, at the AU Headquarters by the Chairperson of the Commission, Dr. Jean Ping and the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Mr. Kevin Rudd MP.

The support of two million Australian Dollars (about USD2.1million) covers two-years and will be implemented and monitored on behalf of the Australian Government by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and for the AU by the Strategic Policy Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Resource Mobilisation Directorate.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chairperson said that he was delighted to welcome the Foreign Affairs Minister and underscored the importance and depth of AU relations with Australia.

Recalling that 2011 was a particularly challenging year for Africa, Dr. Ping expressed appreciation to the Government of Australia for its sustained support of the Commission and renewed the expression of his sympathy to the Australian nation for last year's devastating floods which resulted in several deaths and widespread loss of property in the state of Queensland.

On his part, Minister Rudd said that he was pleased to be back in Addis Ababa and agreed with the Chairperson that AU relations with Australia are excellent. He described the agreement as a concrete demonstration of Australia's strong sense of responsibility towards Africa.

Following the signing ceremony, both personalities exchanged views on issues of mutual interest, including investment opportunities in Africa.

"This Continent of a billion people has the potential to become the next China," the Foreign Affairs Minister stated. He revealed that Australia has 600 projects in 41 African countries and emphasized the commitment of his country to the enhancement of its economic ties with Africa.

"We have been at the receiving end of investment, so we understand the challenges," Minister Rudd added, and underscored the importance to his country of preserving "Brand Australia," – the international reputation and good image of Australia

The Honourable Mr. Rudd was accompanied by Australia's Ambassador to Ethiopia, H.E. Ms. Lisa Filepetto and several other senior Australian diplomats, including the Permanent Representative to the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Gary Quinlan and the Minister Counselor of AusAID in Pretoria, Mr. Jamie Isbister.

On the AU side, the Chairperson was flanked, among others, by the Deputy Chairperson, the Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff in the Bureau of the Chairperson, the Chief of Staff in the Bureau of the Deputy Chairperson, as well as the Chairperson's Political and Diplomatic Advisor.

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