



PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION REITERATES ITS APPEAL FOR A GREATER MOBILIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO DEFEAT THE AL-QAEDA LINKED AL SHABAAB IN SOMALIA

Addis Ababa, 11 February 2012: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, has learnt of the announcement, on 9 February 2012, in a video statement, by the head of Al Qaeda, Ayman Al Zawahiri, that Somalia's Al Shabaab had officially affiliated itself with the international terrorist organization. This followed an earlier audio message in which the Somali group's leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane aka Mukhtar Abu al-Zubeyr, pledged allegiance to the al Qaeda leader, vowing that his followers "will march with him as loyal soldiers."

The decision by Al Shabaab to formally join Al Qaeda is a desperate move by a group riddled with internal disputes and weakened following the recent gains made in Mogadishu by the forces of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and those of AMISOM, as well as the operations being conducted in other parts of the country by the TFG forces with the support of Ethiopia and the new AMISOM contingent from Kenya.

The Chairperson of the Commission notes that the evidence is now clear that Al Shabaab is an outfit of Al Qaeda, driven by a global terrorist agenda, far removed from the preoccupations and interests of the people of Somalia, and bent on destabilizing the Horn of Africa and beyond. Over the years, Al Shabaab has caused mayhem in Somalia and inflicted untold suffering to the Somali people, as demonstrated by its repeated and indiscriminate attacks against civilians and its refusal to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the needy populations, especially during the severe drought that affected Somalia last year.

Against this background, the Chairperson of the Commission reiterates AU's appeal to the Somalis who have not yet joined the Djibouti peace process, including the June 2011 Kampala Accord and the September 2011 Mogadishu Political Roadmap, to do so in earnest. He urges them to pursue their political objectives through peaceful means, with due respect to the legitimate aspirations of the Somali people and their desire to open a new chapter in the troubled history of their nation.

The Chairperson of the Commission calls on the international community to extend the required support to the Somali people in their quest for peace, stability and reconciliation. Today more than ever before, there is an opportunity to turn around the situation in Somalia for the greater good of its long-suffering people and in support of regional stability and international security, including the overall efforts to fight terrorism and piracy.

In this respect, the Chairperson of the Commission emphasizes once again that support by the UN Security Council to the strengthening of AMISOM, on the basis of its new strategic concept, as adopted by the AU Peace and Security Council on 5 January 2012, is paramount. Accordingly, he urges the Security Council to speedily take the action expected of it, in line with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Such a step will go a long way in strengthening the momentum towards a successful Conference in London on 23 February 2012 and will pave the way for a greater mobilization of the international community in support of peace, security and reconciliation in Somalia.

The Chairperson of the Commission also calls on all AU partners to provide adequate support for the Somali national security forces, which, ultimately, are expected to ensure the long term security of Somalia and contribute towards the implementation of the AU peace and security agenda.