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ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND GOVERNANCE

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which was adopted by African Heads of State and Government in January 2007 at the AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, will enter into force on **15 February 2012** thirty (30) days after the deposit of the fifteenth instrument of ratification on 16 January 2012 by the Republic of Cameroon in conformity with Article 48 of the Charter.

The following Member States are Parties to the Charter:

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|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Mauritania | 6. Rwanda | 11. Guinea |
| 2. Ethiopia | 7. Chad | 12. Niger |
| 3. Sierra Leone | 8. Ghana | 13. Guinea- Bissau |
| 4. Burkina Faso | 9. South Africa | 14. Nigeria |
| 5. Lesotho | 10. Zambia | 15. Cameroon |

The Charter is premised on universal values of democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law, supremacy of the Constitution and constitutional order in the political arrangements of States. The Charter emphasizes the importance of pre-election observation, electoral observation missions and special advisory missions as well as the need to create a conducive environment for independent and impartial national monitoring or observation mechanisms.

The Charter addresses among other things, the issues around unconstitutional changes of government which are the major cause of violent conflict in Africa by setting out measures to strengthen electoral institutions and processes to ensure democratic, free and fair elections and by rejecting and condemning unconstitutional changes of government.

It also underscores the obligation to ensure the independence of the judiciary, the promotion of best practices in the management of elections for purposes of political stability and good governance, the obligation to hold transparent, free and fair elections in accordance with the African Union's Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa through the establishment and strengthening of independent and impartial national electoral bodies, the strengthening of national mechanisms for redress of election disputes, a binding code of conduct for political stakeholders, as well as free and equitable access by political parties to state controlled media during elections.

The Charter also underpins the fundamental human rights values among others the elimination of all forms of discrimination, promoting the rights of women, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, displaced persons and other marginalized vulnerable social groups, promoting good governance, the rule of law and establishment of public institutions that promote democracy and constitutional order.

The Charter recognizes the role of Civil Society, the private sector, women, social groups with special needs, youth and people with disabilities in the development and governance process as well as in the monitoring and implementation of the Charter.

The Commission calls upon all Member States, to take the necessary measures to institutionalize good economic and corporate governance and to incorporate the provisions of the Charter into national laws, policies and practices.

The Commission also appeals to all Member States that have not ratified the Charter to do so as soon as possible.

Addis Ababa, 17 February 2012