



Press Release n° 08 / 19th AU Summit

21st Ordinary Session of the Executive Council opens on signs of unity and collective interest for Africa



Addis Ababa, 12 July 2012 – Ahead of the 19th African Union Summit to be held on 15 and 16 July 2012, the Executive Council of the African Union began meeting at its 21st Ordinary Session today 12 July 2012 to discuss issues on its agenda in preparation the 19th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union. The Executive Council, composed of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the African Union and government officials representing their countries, will have, among other matters, to look into the

election of the leadership of the AU Commission, adopt the 2013 budget, examine sources of alternative funding for AU activities and consider the state of security on the continent.



Addressing the Council, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Jean Ping stressed that the escalation of tension between Sudan and Southern Sudan, the mutiny in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the unconstitutional changes of government in Mali and Guinea Bissau have all been of great concern to the Commission. Mr. Ping welcomed the progress achieved through the democratic elections in Senegal and Lesotho, as well as the activities of the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). According to the AUC Chairperson, the

operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF) will reinforce the peace and security architecture of the continent, and the strategic partnership with the UN system. "This will generate greater policy and strategic coherence in our approach when addressing the issue of peace and security on the continent ", he noted.

Development priority areas highlighted by Dr Ping

The period under review was marked by institutional crises but this has not stopped the Commission from pursuing other priorities. Chairperson Ping cited as an example, the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) through a roadmap and Priority Action Plan for 2020. In the area of education, the Chairperson announced the launch in September this year, of courses in three of the five thematic Pan African University campuses situated in Nigeria, Cameroon and Kenya while the fourth university located in Algeria will welcome its first students in 2013.

Meanwhile the Commission, Dr. Ping underlined, has continued its efforts to strengthen the position and interests of Africa in the international arena and has consolidated strategic partnerships with a view to enhance the development of the continent. Many crucial activities to fulfill the vision of the AU are being implemented, such as the theme of the summit "Promoting intra-African trade" and the efforts aimed at establishing a continental free trade area by 2017.

Chairperson Ping reminded the Council of the "necessity to find a lasting solution to the problem of funding of the African Union and its activities. This, he said, will help enhance the sustainability of the actions of the organisation, asserting the credibility of the leadership and the African ownership of its initiatives.



On the other hand, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) pointed out that peace, security and stability are necessary ingredients for the boosting of a continental free trade zone. He said Africa has all the assets to be successful, stressing that the manufactured goods in Africa already account for 46% of intra-African trade and that the infrastructure is of a higher standard than that of some regional sectors such as Mercosur, an economic and political agreement among three South American states.



Mr. Nassirou Arifari-Bako, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Benin and Chairperson of the Executive Council in his speech, emphasized on the discomfort caused by the postponement of the election of the members of the Commission last January 2012. This situation, he said, hinders the smooth functioning of the Commission and jeopardizes the credibility of the Union. Speaking on the theme of the Summit, Mr. Arifari-Bako, said "if development depends largely on stability, it is

also dependent on the economic integration of Africa, thus the need for alternative sources of financing".

The opening ceremony of the Executive Council was marked by a moment of silence in memory of the late Dr. Archigramm Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and Mr. Ahmed Ben Bella, first President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

The 21st Ordinary Session of the Executive Council ends on 13 July 2012. Its report will be submitted to the 19th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU for adoption.

Journalists are invited to cover the closing ceremony on 13 July 2012 in the plenary hall of the new AU Conference Center.

For more information kindly consult the AU Website: www.au.int

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