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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
339th MEETING AT MINISTERIEL LEVEL

ADDIS ABEBA, ETHIOPIA
24 OCTOBER 2012

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AU COMMISSION,
HE DR. NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA**

**Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council,
Members of the Peace and Security Council,
Representatives of the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan,
Representative of the Republic of Mali,
Distinguished members of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel
Special Envoys and representatives of the United Nations and other AU
Partners,
Representatives of the Member States of the African Union,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Firstly allow me to express my gratitude for the congratulatory words from the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council, and for his best wishes. Thank you, my brother.

I am pleased to welcome you all to Addis Ababa, for this ministerial meeting of the Peace and Security Council. Over the years, the Council has demonstrated a great deal of dynamism in dealing with some of the most intractable African conflicts. Its decisions have far-reaching impact in the resolution of conflicts and are eagerly awaited both within and outside the continent. Many, here in Africa and further afield, look forward to the outcomes of their deliberations, including those of today.

This meeting is taking place against the background of a mixed peace and security landscape in our continent. We could point to the remarkable achievements made in Somalia and between Sudan and South Sudan, as

well as the continued consolidation of peace in a number of countries that have emerged from conflict. At the same time, we are faced with complex and worrying developments in northern Mali and the Sahel, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and remaining concerns in Guinea Bissau, in Darfur and other parts of the continent. This situation highlights the need for renewed and robust efforts within the framework of the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities in our collective pursuit of peace and security on the continent. It is important that we succeed so that we address the challenges facing our people on the continent. They cannot wait, as there can be no development without peace and no peace without development. On my part, as I assume the responsibility of leading the work of the Commission, I would like to assure you of my total commitment and that of all my colleagues to spare no effort towards the achievement of our goal of resolving conflicts on the continent, building on the achievements made and lessons learnt from our past experiences.

I would like to thank all Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the members of the Peace and Security Council attending this meeting. Your presence is yet another demonstration of the commitment of your respective countries to the promotion of peace, security and stability in our continent.

Allow me also to thank the Heads of delegation of Sudan and South Sudan, both of whom I had the opportunity of meeting yesterday. We are happy to be with you to celebrate the achievements you have made in your collective quest to build two viable states at peace with one another and

cooperating together on issues of common interest. Be assured of our determination to work with you to address the remaining challenges.

It is also a great pleasure for me to wish a warm welcome to the Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs and his delegation. A few days ago, I was in Bamako to attend a meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali. I have every reason to believe that the conclusions reached on that occasion will go a long way in helping us expedite the resolution of the overlapping crises facing Mali.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two issues feature on the agenda of this ministerial meeting. First, there is the situation between Sudan and South Sudan. This is a matter that the Council has been seized with for many years, from the days of the negotiations for the CPA, resolving the conflict in Darfur, to the process leading to the birth of South Sudan, and establishing neighbourly relations between Sudan and South Sudan. The AU engagement has taken many forms. We have convened talks to mediate between stakeholders. We have deployed peacekeepers in order to ensure security and build confidence. We have mobilized African elder statesmen to lend a hand to the Parties as they seek to end conflict and move these great African sisterly countries towards post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable development.

In so doing, Africa and the AU were driven by a profound sense of solidarity with Sudan and South Sudan, two countries that have had more than their share of violence and suffering. At the heart of AU's engagement

is also the conviction that Sudan and South Sudan are neighbours linked by immutable facts of geography and history. There is no viable alternative except for them to establish close and cooperative relations with each other.

Today, as we meet here, we can proudly look at the achievements recorded. As you all know, last April, and in a context of high tension and armed confrontation on the ground, the Council adopted a roadmap for the resolution of the outstanding issues in the post-secession relations between the two countries. The UN Security Council and other AU Partners readily endorsed the roadmap, in an exemplary display of unity of views among the members of the international community.

We have since come a long way. On 27 September 2012, Presidents Omar Hassan al-Bashir and Salva Kiir Mayardit, under the facilitation of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, signed a series of Agreements on their post-secession relations. This marked a watershed in the relations between the two countries.

That the process has not been an easy one is a known fact. But it takes courage and vision to make painful choices on issues of profound significance for the sake of peace and long-term stability and prosperity. Indeed, leadership carries the burden of decision-making. It is only fitting therefore that, on behalf of all of us, I congratulate the two countries and their leaders for what they have achieved, under challenging circumstances.

As we celebrate, we must also keep in mind the road ahead. On the one hand, we are faced with the challenge of ensuring the effective implementation of what has been agreed upon. For certain, the beginning has been encouraging. Both countries have expeditiously moved to ratify the Agreements they have signed, and are taking steps towards their implementation. We encourage them to stay the course, as progress in the implementation phase will also create the necessary confidence for addressing the remaining issues. I assure them that the AU will stand by them shoulder-by-shoulder in this process.

There remain three critical outstanding matters relating to the determination of the final status of Abyei; the resolution of the status of the disputed and claimed border areas; and the resolution of the conflict in the Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan. The establishment of sustainable and cooperative relations between Sudan and South Sudan requires the final delineation of their common border, a decision on the future status of Abyei Area, as well as the peaceful resolution of internal conflicts within each state.

In its report, the Panel has provided recommendations to the Council on the resolution of these outstanding matters. It is my hope that Council will seriously consider and endorse all the proposals made by the AUHIP.

At this juncture, I would like to pay tribute to the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for its unwavering determination in the search for a solution to the many problems that affect Sudan and South Sudan, under the leadership of Former President Thabo Mbeki, with

Presidents Abdulsalami Abubakar and Pierre Buyoya. These great African sons and patriots have demonstrated exceptional commitment and steadfastness in finding African solutions to this African problem. We owe you a great debt and all the best on resolving the remaining issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The second item on the agenda of this meeting is the situation in Mali. The facts are well known. Mali is faced with a serious crisis in its northern part, which is now occupied by armed terrorist and criminal groups. This was compounded by the institutional crisis that arose as a result of the coup d'état of 22 March 2012.

The overlapping crises in Mali constitute a serious threat to some of the core principles of the AU, particularly the principles of respecting the national unity and territorial integrity of Member States, and rejection of terrorism and transnational crimes. These are principles that are of vital importance for the maintenance of peace, security and stability on the continent, as well as for its development. Attempts to undermine them have far reaching consequences and, as such, constitute a threat to international peace and security.

Thanks to the determined efforts of ECOWAS, with the support of the AU and the rest of the international community, significant progress has been made towards resolving the institutional crisis. We welcome the formation of the Government of National Unity, last August. Indeed, it is critical, at a time when the very survival of the Nation is at stake, to ensure

that Malians close ranks and focus their energy on the fundamental challenges confronting them. We encourage the Malian stakeholders to consolidate the progress achieved and forge ahead to define a roadmap to meet the objectives of peace, stability and development.

At the same time, Malians and the international community alike need to redouble efforts to address the prevailing situation in the north. The latter represents a threat, not only for Mali and the Sahel region, but for the continent as a whole. It is therefore important that we have to attend to these matters immediately and decisively.

It was in this context that the Support and Follow-up Group held a high-level meeting in Bamako, on 19 October 2012, to interact with the Malian authorities on the way forward, as well as to review the Draft Strategic Concept for the Resolution of the Crises in Mali, prepared by the AU Commission in consultation with the Malian authorities, ECOWAS, the UN, the EU and other international stakeholders. The Strategic Concept, which was developed as a follow-up to decisions by this Council, articulates, in a holistic manner, the political, security, military and other measures that need to be taken to address the challenges at hand. I am pleased to note that the meeting in Bamako welcomed the Draft Concept. It is my hope that the Council will endorse the document, to enable us forward it to the Security Council to seek its support.

As part of the approach contained in the Strategic Concept and in line with relevant decisions and resolutions of this Council and the UN Security Council, we are working with the Malian authorities, ECOWAS, the UN, the

EU and other partners to finalize the joint planning for the early deployment of an African-led international force to help Mali recover the occupied territories in the North. At the same time, we will leave the door of dialogue open to those Malians willing to negotiate on the basis of a clear commitment to the respect of Mali's unity, territorial integrity and rejection of links with terrorist and criminal groups. It should, however, be made clear that negotiations cannot be open-ended.

Our continent needs to show utmost solidarity with Mali. We have to provide this country with whatever means at our disposal to help it restore in earnest State authority over the northern part of the country. We have to do everything in our power to consolidate Malian leadership and ownership of the ongoing efforts.

In concluding, allow me to express my appreciation to President Yayi Boni, the Chair of our Union, the leaders of ECOWAS, notably Presidents Alassane Dramane Ouattara, Blaise Compaore and Goodluck Jonathan, and the ECOWAS Commission President, Kadre Désiré Ouédraogo, for their unshakable commitment to the cause of peace, security and stability in Mali and the region as a whole. I pay tribute to the core countries of Algeria, Mauritania and Niger for standing with Mali in these trying moments and for their efforts in countering terrorism and criminal networks in the Sahel. I thank our partners, in particular the United Nations which, through the adoption of resolutions 2056 (2012) and 2071 (2012), has shown true partnership and leadership in rallying international support to African-led efforts.

To our sisters and brothers in Mali, I would like, once again, to assure them of Africa's solidarity. The AU will leave spare no effort to assist them during these trying times.

We will also work hand-in-hand with all those concerned to address the long-term challenges facing the Sahel-Sahara region. In this respect, the AU is taking steps to open an Office in Bamako and to strengthen its presence elsewhere in the region. We will also soon be appointing a High-Representative for Mali and the Sahel Region.

Finally, it would be a remiss of me if I do not pay tribute to the many partners, both bilateral and multilateral, who are with us today. We fully appreciate your invaluable support to our peace efforts. In Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, Mali and the Sahel, to list but a few, you are standing by us. I have no doubt that we can continue to rely on your support, as we strive to promote African-led solutions to the challenges at hand.

I thank you.