Mr. Chairperson

Thank you for giving me the floor and the opportunity to brief the PRC and provide a summary report on the AUPSC and EUPSC Joint Field Mission to Mali that was undertaken from 10-14 February 2015.

The African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the European Union Political and Security Committee (EUPSC) undertook a Joint Field Mission to Mali from 10-14 February 2015. This was in accordance with the agreement reached and decision taken at their 7th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting that they held in Brussels in May 2014.

The Joint Field Mission was co-lead and co-chaired by H.E. Anne Namakau Mutelo, Ambassador of Namibia to Ethiopia and Sudan and Permanent Representative to the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Member of the AUPSC, and Ambassador Walter Stevens, Permanent Chair of the EUPSC.

The two sides exchanged views on a number of issues of mutual concern within the peace and security agenda with a view to further enhance cooperation within the African Union-European Union Joint Strategy, of which peace and security is a key pillar.
The two sides acknowledged that some ideas and undertakings were already being developed and implemented, such as the holding of regular video-tele-conferences between the two co-Chairs, staff-to-staff contacts through the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the EU in Brussels and the EU Delegation to the African Union in Addis Ababa, respectively.

The two PSCs had further discussed the possibility of undertaking a Joint Field Mission to conflict or post-conflict areas in Africa. In this respect, the two sides had then agreed to undertake, as a start, a joint field mission to Mali before the end of 2014.

The choice of Mali was mainly because both the AU and EU have closely inter-linked and ongoing activities in support of the country, with a view to assisting them overcome their current challenges.

Due to the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease in the three West African countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in August 2014, however, the two PSCs could not undertake the joint field mission as had been previously planned. Following consultations between the two Co-Chairpersons of both the AUPSC and EUPSC, the two sides agreed to undertake the Joint Field Mission to Mali from 10-14 February 2015, instead. The overall objective of the Joint Field Mission was to express the AU and EU’s solidarity and continued support to the Government and people of Mali and to encourage them in their efforts towards the resolution of the conflict and steps leading to national reconciliation.

The two PSCs had an opportunity to meet all the different political, parliamentary, civil society players and also get first-hand information from the different stakeholders on the progress made regarding the reforms in Mali. The joint mission also assessed the political, security, humanitarian and socio-economic situation prevailing in the country.
The security situation in Northern Mali is still fragile and has been marked in recent weeks by the multiplication of attacks against the Malian army and the International forces of MINUSMA and French Operation Barkhane. It is in this context that the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) to MINUSMA met in Niamey, Niger on 5 November 2014, with the participation of the AU Commission, to discuss and make recommendations on the modalities for further strengthening the Peace Keeping Mission.

Finding a lasting solution to the peace and security problems in Northern Mali still remains a challenge. One of the most important issues is to restore confidence between the central Government and the people of the northern part of the country.

There is, therefore, a need for all stakeholders to engage in sincere and honest negotiations beyond the formal signing of a Peace Agreement that was just concluded in the Inter-Malian Peace Talks that took place in Algiers, Algeria, under the able mediation of the Government of Algeria. It is hoped that the Peace Agreement will be implemented and safeguard national unity and reconciliation as well as enhance tolerance and cohesion in the long run.

Copies of the Joint Co-Chairs’ Statement adopted at the end of the Joint Field Mission as well as my concluding remarks have already been provided to all Member States by the PSC Secretariat, for information and records, as well as to serve as a reference for future follow-up actions by Member States.

I have the honour and priviledge to inform members of the PRC that I met with the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union on 19 February 2015, five days after our Joint Mission, to report back on the outcome of the Joint Field Mission to Mali. I used the opportunity of that audience with Her Excellency to recommend that the African Union Commission should send a technical team comprising of the Special Envoy on Women and Peace and Security, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA), as well as the Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR), back to Mali.
The purpose of such a technical visit is to meet with the civil society, women and youth groups in GAO town in the north of Mali, with a view to finding out how they can be assisted with projects that will improve their lives and prevent them from being easy recruits for the Jihadist groups.

Mr. Chairperson

We were warmly received by H.E. President Keita, the Prime Minister, Ministers and the wonderful people of this ancient, great and historic country. Going down the memory lane and delving into history for a while, Mali is the core of ancient empires going back to the fourth century. It was conquered by the French in the middle of the 19th Century and became independent in 1960.

The country was regarded as a model of African democracy until the military seized power in March 2012 and the North fell under Al-Qaeda control. Despite its political travails, however, Mali is renowned worldwide for its rich music and culture, having produced the likes of Salif Keita. The Great Mosque of Djenne is the largest mud brick building in the world and is a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site.

We have now come back to Addis Ababa and our EU colleagues went back to Brussels. We have reported back to our political principals of what we found out on this joint field mission. We will see how to mobilize resources in order to strengthen MINUSMA in order to enable it to provide security where it is needed most, in the rural areas and at the grassroots level.

We should not forget that the African Union was the first to intervene in Mali and established the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) which later was transformed into the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).
The Chairperson of the African Union Commission found it necessary to maintain a presence of the continental organization in the region to accompany Mali and other countries of the region in their efforts for stabilization, peace building, governance and development. Hence the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) was established in August 2013 and continues to monitor the situation on the ground. MISAHEL is based on four main pillars, namely political affairs and governance, security in the Sahel, human rights and humanitarian action and development. It is important to support these noble African solidarity efforts.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the Government and People of Mali, the colleagues at MINUSMA and MISAHEL, the French Operation Berkhane and each and everyone who made our joint mission a success. My thanks and appreciation also go to all my colleagues who are Members of the PSC, for the support and encouragement given to me during this historic and first ever Joint Field Mission between the African Union Peace and Security Council and European Union Political and Security Committee. I could not have done it without them.

My profound thanks also go to the PSC Secretariat, the interpreters, pilots, drivers and all relevant players and stakeholders who played a significant role in the success of this Joint Field Mission,

You will all agree with me that the Joint Field Mission was a resounding success that should be repeated to other conflict regions and countries in both Africa and Europe. The AUPSC should also undertake field missions to conflict and post-conflict countries and regions on its own in future in order to show African solidarity and try to assist wherever and in whatever way possible within the African Union’s financial and other means.

I thank you for your kind attention.