Press Release

AFISMA Head of Mission meets with Mali’s Independent National Electoral Bodies and reiterates AU and ECOWAS support to Mali’s Transition

Bamako, 10 April 2013 – The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission and Head of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), former President Pierre Buyoya, has reiterated the support of the AU and ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, to the on-going political transition in Mali. President Buyoya was speaking in Bamako, on 09 May 2013, during visits to Mali’s General Delegation for Elections (DGE) and Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI).

The Special Representative and the electoral officials discussed preparations for Mali’s upcoming polls, scheduled to begin with presidential elections in July 2013. Issues discussed during the meetings included: AFISMA’s critical role in support of efforts by the Malian authorities to provide security before, during and after the elections; measures currently underway to ensure that displaced Malians within the country and in neighboring states are offered the opportunity to freely and fully exercise their right to vote; the relationship between Mali’s electoral bodies and other political stakeholders, especially the Government, Political Parties and Civil Society; and the need for enhanced voter education and mobilization, with a view to increasing Malians’ trust in their country’s political system and raising voter turnout to bolster the credibility of the elections.

“Free, fair and transparent elections are an essential component of the solution to Mali’s multifaceted crisis. In that regard, the AU and ECOWAS will do everything possible to help Mali organize credible elections, within the timeframe set by the Malian Government and Parliament. Our assistance will include financial and capacity support, as well as Good Offices and the deployment of Election Observers,” he stated.

At the Independent National Electoral Commission, President Buyoya was received by all 15 members of the Commission which includes 10 representatives of Political Parties (including the opposition party), and 5 representatives of Civil Society (including religious organizations, the Bar Association and the Malian Association of Magistrates). All geographical regions of Mali (including Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu) are represented in the Commission.
However, President Buyoya observed that there is only one woman among the Commission’s 15 members, and encouraged the Malian authorities to work towards greater political inclusivity.

The Chairperson of the Commission, Mr. Mamadou Diamoutani, described the Commission as “the moral guarantor” of the electoral process. He identified key challenges facing the Commission and expressed satisfaction with the support and collaboration, so far, received from the Government. “We will do everything possible to make sure that Mali’s next elections are credible,” the Chairperson promised.

Welcoming the Special Representative to the DGE, earlier on, Mali’s Delegate General for Elections, Gen. Siaka Sangare, acknowledged that in the contemporary African political context, it is no longer enough to be elected to office; political leaders must be clearly seen and accepted as having been properly elected. He extended his appreciation to AFISMA, the AU and ECOWAS for their support to Mali’s electoral process, and promised that his Office will do everything in its power to organize credible elections in the next few months. With regard to the country’s electoral calendar and other key issues related to the elections, the Delegate General stated:

“We are on track to organize credible presidential elections in July. A biometric voter register is being updated and will be posted online. All Malians, including Political Parties, Civil Society organizations and individual Citizens will freely examine this register. Measures are being taken to ensure that Refugees and IDPs are offered an equal opportunity to exercise their right to vote.”

Special Representative Buyoya extended to the two Bodies the commendation and encouragement of the AU and ECOWAS, and promised to revisit them soon.

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