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## PRESS RELEASE

### THE AFRICAN UNION TOTALLY REJECTS THE SO-CALLED DECLARATION OF 'INDEPENDENCE' BY A REBEL GROUP IN NORTHERN MALI

**Addis Ababa, April 6, 2012:** The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, expresses AU's total rejection of the statement made by an armed group, the "National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA)", regarding the so-called 'independence' of 'Azawad'. He firmly condemns this announcement, which is null and of no value whatsoever. He calls on the international community as a whole to fully support this principled position of Africa.

The Chairperson of the Commission recalls the fundamental principle of the intangibility of borders inherited by the African countries at their accession to independence and reiterates AU's unwavering commitment to the national unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Mali. He stresses that the AU and its Member States will spare no efforts to contribute to the restoration of the authority of the Republic of Mali on its entire territory, and bring to an end the attacks being carried out by armed and terrorist groups in the northern part of the country.

As a follow up to the communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of April 3, 2012, the Commission, working closely with all stakeholders, is taking the necessary steps to apply individual sanctions to the leaders and members of armed groups involved in the attacks in northern Mali and in atrocities against the civilian population, as well as to compile a list of all terrorist and other armed groups operating in conjunction with them on the territory of the Republic of Mali, for their inclusion in the AU's list of terrorist groups.

The Chairperson of the Commission further reaffirms AU's full support to the efforts by ECOWAS to take concrete steps to protect the unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Mali, including through the deployment of its standby brigade. To this end, he calls upon all AU Member States and partners to extend the necessary support to ECOWAS. In this respect, the AU will continue to work closely with the *Core Countries* (Algeria, Mauritania and Niger), ECOWAS and its Member States, to further strengthen Africa's collective response to the current challenges in Mali, as well as to mobilize political support and assistance from the larger international community.

