



PRESS RELEASE

African Union Commission Chairperson Pays First Official Visit to Somalia: Calls for Greater Solidarity with Somalia in Addressing the Humanitarian Crisis

Addis Ababa, 18 March 2017: The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, travelled to Mogadishu, Somalia on his first official visit, four days after taking up his new position as the head of the African Union Commission. This visit to Somalia demonstrates his commitment and the determination of the African Union towards the restoration of peace and security in the country.

The visit comes at a crucial time for Somalia and the African Union. Somalia has successfully concluded its much anticipated parliamentary and presidential elections, and earlier in the month, the African Union commemorated the tenth year since the deployment of AMISOM. There is no doubt that AMISOM has laid the foundation for enhanced security, governance and peace in Somalia.

The Chairperson cautioned that the gains were fragile and that extremists groups were bent on reversing the progress made if support is not sustained and coordinated. He appealed to the international community to provide the necessary support to the Somali security forces so they can assume their primary responsibility to provide security to the people of Somalia as well as to AMISOM in order to create a more conducive environment for local reconciliation and stabilization efforts, which are part of AMISOM's transformation and its eventual exit strategy.

The Chairperson congratulated the President of the Federal Government of Somalia, H.E Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmajo" for his election and welcomed his determination to fight against Al Shabaab, stand up Somali National Security Forces, fight against corruption and to do everything to relieve the people of their suffering due to the drought.

The Chairperson expressed deep concern on the dire humanitarian situation in Somalia, and the broader region. The ongoing drought has brought immense suffering to the people of Somalia- compounding the continued and repeated displacement of the Somali people. Over a quarter of a million have been displaced since the end of 2016 to date as a result of the drought, and close to 3 million are in emergency and crisis with an additional 3.3 million in stress. Lives and livelihoods have been lost.

He welcomed the priority the President of the Federal Government of Somalia has placed on addressing the drought situation, and the active efforts of the National Drought Committee. It is of major concern however that the international emergency response remains grossly underfunded. Without timely and adequate resourcing, lives and livelihoods cannot be saved. At this time of hope and optimism for Somalia, it is important that we collectively mobilize to ensure that gains made are not lost and the people of Somalia are central. In this respect, it called on the international community to do more in support of the Federal Government of Somalia in addressing the humanitarian crisis in the country.

The Chairperson of the Commission made an announcement of a symbolic donation of the AU of USD 100.000 to assist the victims of the drought and expressed his wish that others should emulate the gesture. He then called on African Member States and the private sector in particular, as well as the wider international community to demonstrate similar solidarity to save lives and livelihoods in Somalia in the immediate, as efforts continue to provide durable solutions to the protracted displacement and humanitarian crisis in Somalia.

Ten years ago, the African Union and its Members States demonstrated commendable solidarity when the African Union Mission in Somalia was deployed under very difficult circumstances. The Chairperson of the AU Commission visited AMISOM personnel at the AMISOM Headquarters, layed a wreath in memory of the fallen African soldiers who lost their lives in the service of peace in Somalia. He expressed the appreciation of the African Union and paid a tribute to the African civilians, police and military personnel serving in Somalia.

The Chairperson expressed his gratitude to the AMISOM Troop and Police Contributing Countries for their sacrifices to the promotion of peace dividends in Somalia. He re-iterated his priority of ensuring that AMISOM personnel are fully supported and called on the international community to partner with the AU in realizing this objective. At the same time, he is re-assured the people of Somalia and the international community that AMISOM will continue to uphold to highest standard of compliance and accountability in the delivery of their mandate in Somalia.