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PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION AND THE LAKE CHAD BASIN COMMISSION SIGN AN AGREEMENT FOR THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE TO COUNTER THE BOKO HARAM TERRORIST GROUP

Addis Ababa, 16 October 2015: The Commission of the African Union (AU) represented by Ambassador Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security, and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), represented by its Secretary-General, Engineer Sanusi Imran Abdullahi, today, at the AU Headquarters, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the operationalization and sustenance of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) established by the LCB Member States and Benin to neutralize the Boko Haram terrorist group.

The MoU sets out the framework between the AU and the LCBC for the provision of support by the AU to the MNJTF Headquarters in Ndjamena, Chad, and identifies additional areas of support to strengthen the ongoing regional and international efforts to combat the Boko Haram terrorist group. The MoU is in line with the communiqué adopted by the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) at its meeting held on 3 March 2015. In that communiqué, the PSC requested the AU Commission to conclude an MoU with the LCBC, clearly outlining the respective responsibilities and roles of the AU Commission and the LCBC Secretariat in the implementation of the Strategic Concept of Operations (CONOPS) for the MNJTF.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, which was witnessed by the MNJTF Troop contributing Countries (TCCs), as well as by representatives of International Partners, Commissioner Chergui underscored the importance of the event: "This signing ceremony marks a key milestone in enhancing cooperation between the AU and the LCBC for the achievement of the MNJTF mandate. The fight against the Boko Harma terrorist group is a fight to secure the lives and livelihoods of innocent people", he stated. The Commissioner thanked the International Partners for their support.

On his part, the Executive Secretary of the LCBC, Engineer Abdullahi, welcomed the AU's continued commitment. He assured the international community that the resources pledged for the MNJTF will be efficiently used to expedite the neutralization of the Boko Haram terrorist group. He further stated that in fulfilling its mandate, the MNJTF will ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

On behalf of the MNJTF troop contributing countries, the Ambassador of Nigeria to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the AU, Ambassador Usman Baraya, reiterated the commitment of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria to enhance their cooperation and fully operationalize the MNJTF in the pursuit of their common objective of fully eradicating the Boko Haram terrorist group.

The representative of the United Kingdom, speaking on behalf of the Partners, reiterated the Partners' support to the countries of the region in their efforts to counter terrorism, and urged them and the AU to expedite the full operationalization of the MNJTF.

On the margins of the signing ceremony, Commissioner Chergui met with Executive Secretary Abdullahi and the Force Commander of the MNJTF, to exchange on the situation and efforts to operationalize the MNJTF.