PRESS RELEASE

INAUGURATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE AGAINST THE BOKO HARAM TERRORIST GROUP

Addis Ababa, 25 May 2015: The Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union (AU), Smail Chergui, the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), Sanusi Imran Abdullahi, and the Chadian Minister delegate at the Presidency of the Republic in charge of National Defense and Veterans Affairs, Benaindo Tatola, today, in N'Djamena, officially inaugurated the operational Headquarters (HQ) of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) deployed by the member States of the LCBC and Benin, to combat the Boko Haram terrorist group.

The ceremony was held in the margins of the 16th ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), held in Ndjamena on 25 May 2015, and in which Commissioner Chergui participated. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), Mohamed Ibn Chambas, also participated in the ceremony. Commissioner Chergui, Mr. Chambas and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Abdoulaye Bathily, are currently conducting a joint visit in the countries directly affected by the activities of Boko Haram, namely Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Nigeria.

The MNJTF operational HQs will have a total strength of approximately 100 military and civilian personnel provided by the LCBC Member States and Benin. It will include liaison officers deployed by the AU and bilateral and multilateral partners, and will operate under the authority of Major-General T. Y Buratai of Nigeria, Commander of the Force.

The activation of the MNJTF HQs is being done in follow-up to the communiqués adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU at its meetings held on 29 January and 3 March 2015. In these communiqués, the PSC, in support of the efforts of the LCBC Member States and Benin, authorized the deployment of the MNJTF for an initial period of twelve (12) months; endorsed the Strategic Concept of Operations (CONOPS) as agreed to during the meeting of experts, held in Yaoundé, from 5 to 7 February 2015, in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the MNJTF mandate and tasks; and authorized the increase of the MNJTF strength from 7,500 to 10,000 military and other personnel.

The AU Commission reiterates its support to the LCBC Member States and Benin. In this regard, it will spare no effort to facilitate the effective implementation of the mandate of the MNJTF, notably through the mobilization, from the international community, of the required political, financial and logistical support, and the provision of the necessary expertise.