PRESS RELEASE

HOLDING IN NOUAKCHOTT OF A MEETING ON SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE SAHELO-SAHARAN REGION

Addis Ababa, 15 March 2013: As part of its efforts to consolidate the progress made in the restoration of the Malian Government’s authority over the northern part of the country and to promote security and stability in the Sahelo-Saharan region, the Commission of the African Union (AU) will be convening ministerial meeting of the concerned countries and organizations in Nouakchott, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, on 17 March 2013, under the auspices of President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. The discussions will focus on strengthening security cooperation among the countries of the region, including through effective border control and regular intelligence sharing, in order to better combat the terrorist and criminal networks active in the region and to facilitate the implementation of the mandate of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). The discussions will also focus on the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region. The objective is to strengthen synergy among existing structures and to identify operating procedures which will make it possible to adequately respond to the security challenges facing the region.

Representatives of Mali and its immediate neighbours, as well as those of other countries in the region, including Foreign Ministers and other senior officials, will attend the meeting. Relevant Regional Economic Communities and other regional cooperation structures, as well as international partners, will also attend the meeting. The AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ramtane Lamamra, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission in Mali and Head of the AFISMA, Pierre Buyoya, and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for West Africa, Said Djinnit, will take part in the meeting.

The Nouakchott meeting is in follow-up to the communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) meeting at the level of the Heads of States and Government, held in Addis Ababa, on 25 January 2013, which requested Mali’s immediate neighbours to provide the necessary support in the area of intelligence and any other assistance that could facilitate the stabilization operations on the ground. In this regard, the PSC encouraged the Commission to organise, as soon as possible, a meeting of Mali’s neighbours and other stakeholders. On its part, the Support and Follow-up Group on the situation in Mali, meeting in Brussels, on 5 February 2013, reiterated the crucial importance of cooperation among the neighbouring countries of Mali in the areas of intelligence and effective border control, in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism and transnational crime, and to facilitate the implementation of AFISMA’s mandate.