CONCLUSIONS
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1. The Support and Follow-up Group on the situation in Mali convened in Bamako, on 19 October 2012, as a follow-up to its inaugural meeting held in Abidjan, on 7 June 2012. The meeting, which took place under the joint chairmanship of the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was attended by high-level representatives of the countries of the region and international partners.

2. The meeting was opened by the Interim President of the Republic of Mali, Mr. Dioncounda Traoré. It is the first international meeting in which the new Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, participated since she took office, on 15 October 2012.

3. The meeting afforded an opportunity to review the latest developments in Mali and to extensively interact with the Malian authorities, in particular the Prime Minister and Ministers of the Government of National Unity, on the way forward. It also reviewed the Draft Strategic Concept for the Resolution of the Crises in Mali, prepared by the AU in consultation with the Malian authorities, ECOWAS, the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and other international stakeholders.

4. The meeting marked the reengagement of Mali in multilateral diplomatic efforts. It provided the participants with the opportunity to unite in solidarity with the people of Mali, and to agree with the Malian State on an effective mobilization of efforts to complete the restoration of constitutional order, as well as to safeguard the national unity and territorial integrity of Mali. It is in this spirit that the following conclusions were reached:

a) The meeting commended ECOWAS and the regional leaders for their commitment and sustained efforts to assist Mali to overcome the challenges facing it. It stressed the contribution of the core countries in combating terrorist and transnational criminal networks in the region. The meeting also expressed appreciation to the AU for its initiatives, including the announcement made by the Chairperson of the AU Commission regarding the appointment of a High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, as well as the opening of an AU Office in Mali, and its overall coordinating role in line with the principles underpinning the African Peace and Security Architecture. The meeting welcomed the appointment by the UN Secretary-General of a Special Envoy for the Sahel Region, Mr. Romano Prodi, as well as the adoption of Security Council resolutions 2056 and 2071. It commended other international actors, including the EU, the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and bilateral partners, for their contributions to the ongoing efforts.

b) The meeting welcomed the progress made in addressing the institutional crisis triggered by the coup d’état of 22 March 2012, including the formation of the Government of National Unity on 21 August 2012. At the same time, the meeting reiterated the deep concern of the
international community over the prevailing situation in the northern part of Mali, stressing that it constitutes a serious threat to peace and security in Mali, the region and beyond. It also expressed concern at the dire humanitarian situation on the ground.

c) Underlining the critical importance of united national leadership and ownership in the search for lasting solutions to the crises in Mali, the meeting called on the Malian authorities and stakeholders to redouble their efforts and to take full advantage of the existing international momentum, notably by:

   (i) enhancing coherence among the transitional institutions, to facilitate the implementation of the two main transitional tasks, namely the restoration of State authority over the northern part of the country and the organization of free, fair and transparent elections in the first quarter of 2013;

   (ii) elaborating as a matter of priority, through broad-based national consultations and with the support of the international community, a detailed roadmap, with concrete steps and timelines, on the implementation of two main transitional tasks, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2056 and 2071;

   (iii) urgently establishing the envisioned national structure that will be in charge of conducting negotiations with Malian armed groups in the north that are willing to engage in dialogue to find a political solution to the crisis, on the basis of the strict respect for the national unity and territorial integrity of Mali, rejection of terrorism and transnational organized crime, as well as armed rebellion. The meeting emphasized that negotiations cannot be open-ended;

   (iv) seizing the opportunity of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) meeting on 24 October, devoted to the situation in Mali, to provide a timetable on the implementation of the tasks mentioned in paragraph 4 (c. ii) and (c.iii) above;

   (v) respecting human rights and the rule of law, combating impunity, and ensuring full and effective civilian rule over the military, consistent with relevant ECOWAS, AU, UN decisions and resolutions, as well as pronouncements by other international actors; and

   (vi) taking immediate steps to facilitate the efforts of the international community to respond to the request regarding the deployment of an international military force, including by sensitizing all those concerned in this regard.

d) The participants expressed the determination of their respective countries and organizations to sustain the current international momentum and to extend the required support to the Malian-led efforts to address the challenges at hand. In this respect, considering the assistance requested by the Malian transitional authorities from ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, the EU and other partners, the meeting:
welcomed the Draft Strategic Concept as an important step to further coordination among the international stakeholders and assist in comprehensively dealing with the crises in Mali, through action-oriented measures covering issues relating to the transition and governance in Mali, the restoration of state authority in the north, security sector reform, elections, stabilization and post-conflict peace building, resumption of basic services and humanitarian assistance, and follow-up;

noted that the AU PSC is due to consider the Draft Strategic Concept on 24 October 2012, with a view to endorsing it and transmitting it to the UN Security Council for it to lend its support to the proposed Concept;

encouraged ECOWAS, the AU, the UN and the EU, in cooperation with Mali and other stakeholders, to expedite the finalization of the joint planning to respond to the request of the transitional authorities of Mali for an African-led international military force to assist the Malian armed forces to recover the occupied regions in the north of Mali. In this respect, the meeting requested the three organizations to immediately prepare a joint work plan that would outline all the tasks that need to be undertaken to finalize the planning, including the concept of operation, it being understood that all related activities should as much as possible take place in Mali. The participants looked forward to the submission by the Secretary-General of a report on the envisaged deployment and other related aspects, in accordance with resolution 2071, and noted with satisfaction the readiness of the Security Council to respond to the request of the Malian transitional authorities;

called for the adoption of sanctions against terrorist and criminal networks, as well as against all Malian rebel groups and individuals who do not cut off all ties with terrorist organizations and/or refuse to embark on a negotiated process towards addressing the crisis as outlined above, noting that the Security Council has already expressed its readiness to adopt targeted sanctions;

encouraged the core countries to intensify their efforts to combat criminal and terrorist networks, in particular through the Liaison and Fusion Unit (UFL) and the Joint Operational Command (CEMOC), called for enhanced coordination between them and ECOWAS, and urged the AU Commission to immediately take the required initiatives to this end;

urged the international community as a whole, including regional and international organizations, to swiftly extend the necessary capacity-building, financial and logistical support to the Malian defense and security forces to enable them to play the lead role in restoring full state authority over the
northern part of the country and dismantling the terrorist and criminal networks, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2071;

(vii) stressed the critical need for all international actors concerned to closely coordinate their efforts towards addressing the multifaceted challenges facing the Sahel-Sahara region, recognizing in this respect the important role that the UN Special Envoy can play. The participants agreed to convene, in the near future, a meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group devoted to this issue, and welcomed the offer by the EU to host this meeting;

(viii) appealed for greater regional and international support to address the immediate humanitarian emergency arising from the crisis in the north of Mali, both within Mali and in the countries hosting refugees fleeing the conflict.

e) The participants strongly emphasized the critical importance of a strong partnership and an effective working relationship at all levels among the international stakeholders, including ECOWAS, the AU and the UN, to facilitate coordinated support to the Malian-led efforts. In this respect, the participants stressed the central coordinating role of the Support and Follow-Group and urged the co-chairs, working with other international stakeholders, to urgently develop modalities aimed at enhancing the functioning and effectiveness of the Group.