PRESS RELEASE


Ouagadougou, 19 May 2014: The fifth meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services of the countries of the Sahel-Saharan region opened today in Ouagadougou. The meeting will conclude tomorrow, 20 May 2014, with the adoption of operational conclusions on measures to be taken in the coming months in the fight against the terrorist and criminal groups and the promotion of security in the region.

Organized within the framework of the Nouakchott Process on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahel-Saharan region, launched on 17 March 2013, the meeting will afford an opportunity to assess the security situation in the region, the status of the implementation of the operational conclusions of the previous meetings of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services and the operationalization of the APSA in the Sahel-Saharan region. The meeting will devote a specific session to the threat posed by the Boko Haram group and the ways and means for a more coordinated and effective action in support of the efforts of the Nigerian Government, on the basis of the existing African normative and institutional framework regarding the fight against the scourge of terrorism and transnational organized crime.

The Ouagadougou meeting was opened by the Minister of Territorial Administration and Security of Burkina Faso, Dr. Jerome Bougouma. The Minister seized the opportunity to reaffirm the continued readiness of his country for initiatives aimed at finding solutions to the security challenges faced by the region, which, he stressed, call for continued consultations to ensure greater synergy in action. For his part, in the speech he made at the opening ceremony, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, having welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the Nouakchott Process, highlighted the need for continued commitment of the countries of the region, particularly in light of the threats posed by terrorist and criminal groups, such as Boko Haram, and the growing link between terrorism and transnational organized crimes. At the start of the meeting, General Gilbert Diendiere, Chief of Staff of the President of the Faso, made welcoming remarks to all the participants.

The meeting brings together representatives of the following countries and organizations: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Chad. The AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), former President Pierre Buyoya; the AU Special Envoy for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and Director of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSR), Francisco Madeira; as well as representatives of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL), the Community of the Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Northern African Regional Capability (NARC) and the UN Office in West Africa (UNOWA).
NOTE TO THE EDITORS

1. **About the genesis of the Nouakchott Process**: The Nouakchott Process on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan region was launched on 17 March 2013, during a meeting held in the Mauritanian capital. That meeting agreed on a number of measures to address the security challenges faced by the region. It was agreed that the relevant Ministers would meet at least once every six months, while the Heads of the Intelligence and Security Services would meet once every two months.

2. To date, the AU Commission has organized five meetings of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services. The first meeting was held in Bamako, on 18 April 2013; the second, in Abidjan, on 20 and 21 June 2013; the third, in Ndjamena, on 10 September 2013; the fourth, in Niamey, on 17 February 2014; and the fifth in Ouagadougou, on 19 and 20 May 2014. In addition, two other ministerial meetings were held after the one that took place in Nouakchott within the framework of the Process: Ndjamena, on 11 September 2013; and Niamey, on 19 February 2014.

3. **About the countries and organizations participating in the Nouakchott Process**: The Nouakchott Process includes the following eleven countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Relevant AU structures, namely the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRST) and the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL), which is a platform for exchanges of views among eight of the member countries of the Nouakchott Process, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Community of the Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the North African Regional Capability (NARC), the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the UN Multidimensional and Integrated Mission for Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA), also participate in the Process.

4. **About the enhancement of security cooperation in the Sahel-Saharan region**: The meetings of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services provide an opportunity to exchange views on the security situation in the Sahel-Saharan region, the enhancement of security cooperation among the countries concerned and building national and regional capacities in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime. They have proved to be a valuable tool for confidence building, and also contributed to the promotion of cooperation among all relevant services.

5. Among the activities undertaken to date or underway within the framework of the Nouakchott Process, it is worth mentioning:

   (i) the joint consultative mission undertaken to Libya by ACRST, CISSA and UFL, from 3 to 5 September 2013, and the organization, by the AU Commission, in cooperation with the Libyan Government, of a workshop on the enhancement of operational control of land borders in the Sahelo-Saharan region, in Tripoli on 4 and 5 September 2013;

   (ii) the production and distribution of a special edition of the ACSRT daily news highlights devoted to the Sahel region;

   (iii) the organization of several capacity building activities, especially with respect to intelligence collection and analysis;
(iv) the dispatching of ACRST assessment missions to different countries in the region to assess existing capacities and ways and means of strengthening them; and

(v) the ongoing identification of current security arrangements and existing agreements between the countries of the region and assessment of their implementation status, with the aim of supporting their operationalization and improving their efficiency as appropriate.

6. **About the operationalization of the APSA**: The second aspect of the Nouakchott Process relates to the operationalization of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region. This issue was considered by the Nouakchott ministerial meeting in the light of the inadequate geographical coverage of the different existing AU’s structures. Participants had then stressed the need for greater synergy among the various components of the African Standby Force (ASF) covering the North, West and Central African regions, to address the security challenges faced by the Sahelo-Saharan region, including through closer cooperation in information sharing, training, equipment and operational capabilities.

7. In this context, the AU Commission, on the basis of existing experiences, is working out generic concepts of operation on the establishment of joint patrols and mixed units between the countries of the region, in order to enhance their efforts. A meeting of the Chiefs of Defense Staff and Ministers of Defense of the countries of the region is scheduled to take place in Bamako to discuss these concepts, as well as the modalities for strengthening other existing security cooperation structures in the region. This meeting is expected to facilitate the establishment of common capacities that would enable the countries of the region to fully play their role in the fight against the scourge of terrorism and transnational organized crime.

8. **About the next steps in the Nouakchott Process**: At the ministerial meeting held in Niamey, the participants reaffirmed the commitment of their respective organizations and countries to work towards the continued strengthening of the Nouakchott Process, recognizing that it constitutes a unique framework for a collective approach to the security challenges facing the region, on the basis of a shared vision and responsibility. In this context, the meeting agreed on the convening of a Summit of the countries participating in the Nouakchott Process, to mobilize increased political support for the Process and enhance its ownership by the countries of the region. They also agreed on the establishment, under the leadership of the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), of a lean Secretariat in Niamey, to better coordinate the implementation of the Nouakchott Process pending its possible transformation into an Executive Secretariat under MISAHEL. The Commission is endeavoring to follow-up those decisions.

9. **About the AU Strategy for the Sahel**: The Nouakchott Process is a component of the AU Strategy for the Sahel, developed by MISAHEL. This Strategy focuses on security, good governance, gender and development. It is based on a holistic approach to the multidimensional challenges facing the region.