Planning Conference begins in Mali to revise AFISMA Joint Concept of Operations

Bamako, 15 February 2013 – Due to the rapidly evolving situation in Mali, a Planning Conference to revise the Joint Concept of Operations (CONOPs) for the African-led International Force in Mali (AFISMA) started in Bamako, Mali, today. The Conference will last until 20 February 2013.

Participants at the Conference include senior officials of the AU and ECOWAS, as well as the European Union (EU) Military Advisory Team in Mali, and UN military and civilian planners. The revised AFISMA CONOPs will be integrated to include military, police and civilian components, and the civilian component includes Political Affairs, Human Rights, Humanitarian Affairs, Gender and Public Information.

The opening ceremony of the Conference was attended by a representative of the Head of AFISMA, as well as representatives of the Government of Mali, ECOWAS, the UN, and Partners.

Speaking on behalf of former President Pierre Buyoya, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Mali and Head of AFISMA, Major General J.M. Mokoko recalled that a revision of the AFISMA CONOPs was rendered necessary by recent developments in Mali and mandated by the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council.

He further stated that the multifaceted crisis in Mali constitutes a serious violation of some core principles of the African Union, namely: respect for the territorial integrity of AU Member States, a total rejection of terrorism in all its forms, a rejection of any recourse to armed insurrection as a means of achieving political objectives, and a rejection of the unconstitutional change of governments.

In this context, he underscored, African Heads of State and Government, meeting within the framework of the 20th AU Summit, in Addis Ababa on 27 and 28 January 2013, reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of the AU and all its Member States to assist the Republic of Mali in defending its national unity and territorial integrity.

"Thanks to the determination and efforts of the International Community to help Mali, we can all look to the future of this country with hope... The outcomes of this Conference must reflect the integrated, multidimensional, coherent and efficient approach necessary for the International Community, AFISMA and the Malian Defense and Security Forces to achieve a sustainable resolution of the multifaceted crisis facing Mali." Major General Mokoko stated.

Speaking on behalf of the Government of Mali, the Chief of Mali’s Defense Forces, Brigadier General Dembelé, extended the appreciation of the Government and People of Mali to France, the AU, ECOWAS, UN, EU and the entire International Community for responding in a positive and timely manner to Mali’s request for assistance in ridding the country of terrorist and armed criminal networks. He welcomed the establishment of AFISMA and pledged Mali’s full cooperation with the Mission.

The opening ceremony began with a minute of silence observed in memory of persons who have lost their lives in the Malian conflict, especially since military operations commenced last month to stop the rebel advance into Southern Mali and liberate the Northern part of the country.

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