PRESS RELEASE

Three-day Workshop on 'Weapons Contamination in Africa' kicks off today

Addis Ababa 05 March 2013 – The Commission of the African Union (AU) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are holding a three-day workshop on "Weapons Contamination: Addressing key challenges to meeting clearance deadline under the Mine Ban Convention and Convention on cluster Munitions", at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The workshop brings together over 60 experts from the AU Member States, partners, ICRC, technical personnel from national Mine Action Centres, demining operators, African demining centres and the United Nations (UN).

The workshop will be an opportunity to exchange views with AU Member States on key challenges in meeting clearance deadlines under the Mine Ban Convention (MBC), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and make recommendations. Participants will share experiences, identify the nature of assistance required by affected countries, and coordinating mobilization of the required resources.

The AUC and the ICRC envisage that the meeting will strengthen intra-African cooperation and support AU Member States as they clear and destroy anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions.

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Note to the Editors

About AU’s assistance to Member States to meet mine clearance deadlines

The African Union continues to assist Member States towards meeting their mine clearance deadlines in accordance with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. As of 10 December 2012, there are 160 States Parties to the treaty, 51 of which are African Union Member States. This treaty is the cornerstone of the international effort to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel (AP) mines.

The Treaty stipulates that that each States Party is expected to have cleared all of its mined areas within ten years after ratifying it. However, a number of countries have not been able to meet these requirements, and have had to reschedule their deadlines by making extension requests.

On the other hand, some AU member states are also party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). This is an international treaty that prohibits the use, transfer and stockpile of cluster bombs, a type of explosive weapon which scatters submunitions ("bomblets") over an area. As of 10 December 2012, 77 countries have ratified it, 20 of which are AU member States.