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PRESS RELEASE

AFISMA Revised Joint Concept of Operations finalized in Bamako

Bamako, 22 February 2013 -- Following the conclusion in Bamako on 20 February 2013 of a weeklong planning conference to revise the harmonized Joint Concept of Operations (CONOPs) of the African-led International Mission in Mali (AFISMA), the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were briefed on the revised CONOPs on 21 February 2013.

The briefing which took place in the Malian capital, was given by senior African Union (AU) and ECOWAS military and civilian officials, with the participation of representatives of the Malian Government and Military Authorities and in the presence of bilateral and multilateral Partners.

The AFISMA Revised Joint CONOPs has been integrated to include a more robust military component, as well as substantial police and civilian components. The beefed-up civilian component includes Political Affairs, Human Rights, Humanitarian Affairs, Gender and Public Information units.

It is worth recalling that AFISMA was established by the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council in its resolution 2085 (December 2012). The Mission is headed by the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Mali, the former President of Burundi, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, while Mr. Cheaka Touré of Togo has been appointed as the Deputy Head of Mission.

The Special Representative and his Deputy were briefed on the AFISMA Joint CONOPs on 19 February 2013. During the briefing, Mr. Buyoya was accompanied by the Mission's Force Commander and other senior AFISMA officials.

The AFISMA planners have also emphasized the need for the international community to prioritize the management of the over 340,000 refugees and internally displaced persons in Mali and neighbouring countries. To that effect, the Planning Conference welcomed the work that has been accomplished by the Malian Government to identify all displaced persons and elaborate a plan for their assistance and safe return home. The revised CONOPs also underscores the need to harmonize the actions of the various military forces present in Mali.

The AFISMA revised Concept of Operations will be submitted to the competent policy organs of the AU, ECOWAS and UN.

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