

**Statement by SRSF Said Djinnit at the meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council
on the situation in Mali**

Addis-Ababa, 24 October 2012

Mr. Chairman of the Peace and Security Council,
Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union,
Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union
President of the ECOWAS Commission,
Honorable Ministers and distinguished heads of delegations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. We are gathered here, today, to review the recent developments in Mali and chart the way forward in support of the Malian authorities, institutions and people in their efforts to overcome the multifaceted crisis affecting their country. As we do so, it is important to acknowledge the important progress made in recent weeks, both within and outside Mali, to enhance cohesion and develop a common vision among key stakeholders.
2. Indeed, since the return of interim President Traore to Bamako on 27 July, Mali has gradually addressed some of the key issues that were still pending, and hampering the normal functioning of the transition. In accordance with the decisions of the last ECOWAS and AU summits, and consistent with the provisions of SCR 2056 (2012), the Malian leadership formed a Government of national unity, at the end of August. Subsequently, the Malian authorities addressed to the international community some specific demands of assistance in the areas of political dialogue and negotiations, restructuring of the armed forces, humanitarian assistance and capacity building, as well as electoral assistance. In addition, in a letter addressed to the UN Secretary-General, the Malian authorities sought the deployment of an international force to help the Malian armed forces regain control of the Northern part of the country and fight terrorism.

Mr. President,

3. These positive developments, which we expected to take place much earlier, are meaningful in the sense that they confirm the centrality of the Malian authorities and institutions and their role in assuming greater ownership for the resolution of the crisis. They also indicate an improvement in the relationship between the Malian leadership and the international community, with ECOWAS in the lead of our joint efforts -under the leadership of President Ouattara, in his capacity as ECOWAS Chair, Presidents Compaore and Jonathan, who are leading the mediation efforts- with the support of

the AU, the core countries, the UN and other partners. The best illustration of this new momentum was the unanimous endorsement, last Friday in Bamako, of the AU-led strategic concept on Mali.

Mr. President,

4. As we move on, it is however important to acknowledge the daunting challenges that remain ahead of us, for the complete restoration of constitutional order and territorial integrity and unity of Mali. Clearly, the current fragile political dispensation that prevails in Mali needs to be further strengthened to enhance its cohesion and unity of vision on the way forward for the transition. As highlighted by the participants in the Bamako meeting of last week, the Malian leadership is expected to redouble efforts to (i) develop a coherent and consensual roadmap for the transition, with clear measures and benchmarks for the gradual return to constitutional order, through elections, and for the restoration of State authority and territorial integrity; and (ii) create the conditions, with the support of the international community, for the rapid conduct of an inclusive negotiations process with armed groups and rebel groups in the North, through the establishment of the negotiations committee proposed by President Traore in his 29 July address to the Nation.
5. As we prepare for negotiations, it is important to bear in mind the parameters for such a dialogue as reiterated by the Malian representatives at the Bamako meeting, and echoed by other participants to the meeting. These include the respect for Mali's territorial integrity and Constitution, the need for concerned groups to distance themselves from terrorist and organized crime networks, as well as the need to grant access to humanitarians in the North.
6. As they embark on the path of negotiations and dialogue, Malian stakeholders will enjoy full and continued support from the United Nations, in particular from the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, Mr. Romano Prodi, with whom I will be working hand in hand to foster a united and concerted stance on the part of international actors; and impress upon the Malian stakeholders the need to sustain the momentum and gradually own the dialogue and negotiations process in order to rapidly recover Mali's territorial integrity and reunite its population.
7. In parallel, and as provided for in UN Security Council 2071 (2012), the United Nations has already started to work closely with ECOWAS, the AU and the EU, for the planning of the support required by Malian institutions in rebuilding the capacities of the country's defense and security institutions, and assisting in recovering control of the Northern part of the country, and in fighting terrorist networks. In this context, the United Nations has dispatched a team of military planners to ECOWAS Headquarters, last week, to assist in reviewing their planning process for the deployment of

MICEMA. It is expected that the positive momentum generated by the Bamako meeting will help mobilize larger support for the finalization of the Malian and ECOWAS concepts of operations, including from key neighbouring countries, the EU and the AU. Ongoing consultations among stakeholders, which should lead to a joint planning conference next week in Bamako, will necessarily contribute to inform the reporting process by the UN Secretariat in accordance with the request made by the UN Security Council in its resolution 2071.

Mr. President,

8. In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance, for the international community, of rapidly enhancing its presence on the ground in Mali, and welcome in that regard the announcement made by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, of the AU's intention to open an office in Bamako. This will complement the United Nations -as well as ECOWAS and EU- efforts to enhance their presence and interventions in the country. It will also be important to establish adequate mechanisms at strategic and operational levels for the coordination of the various interventions between Malian stakeholders, the ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, as well as other partners.
9. I am confident that today's deliberations of the African Union Peace and Security Council on Mali will provide further impetus to our collective efforts aimed at assisting Mali's early return to constitutional order, restore its territorial integrity, and to garner necessary will and means to address the threat caused by terrorism in the Sahel that would preserve the stability of the region.

I thank you.