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PRESS RELEASE

(For Immediate Release)

AU Special Representative Saddened by Attack on AMISOM Peacekeepers, Urges for Calm and Restraint in Hiiran Region.

Mogadishu-October 19, 2014: The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) for Somalia, Ambassador Maman S. Sidikou is saddened by news coming in from the central Hiiran region that armed men and rioters blocked and attacked AMISOM peacekeepers this morning while they were on a reconciliation mission in the area.

The AMISOM forces were bound for the village of Deefow – the epicentre of recent localised conflicts. Deefow is 40 kilometers north of the city of Beletweyne, the regional capital of Hiiran. Our peacekeepers were blocked by armed men and protesters at El-Gal, 10 kilometers north of Beletweyne. The men opened fire on the AMISOM troops who had no choice but to defend themselves.

"I am deeply saddened to hear of this clash in the Hiiran region. I wish to request for calm and restraint and hereby plead with the people of Hiiraan to choose peace and avoid any further conflict in Deefow and elsewhere. I wish to clarify to the people of Hiiraan – and indeed the whole of Somalia – that AMISOM is non-partisan and does not support any particular group or clan. We are in Somalia to serve all Somali people and support their government to achieve lasting peace," Ambassador Sidikou said.

The AU Special Representative also said that AMISOM regrets any loss of life or injuries that occurred in the attack and urged the people of Hiiran to work with AMISOM and the Somalia government to amicably resolve their internal differences and avoid any other acts that would further aggravate the situation.

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