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PRESS RELEASE

(For immediate release)

AMISOM opens training on improving understanding and compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Human Rights (HR) for the Somali National Army Officers

Kampala – August 20th, 2013; The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has today opened a four-day training workshop on improving understanding and compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Human Rights (HR) for thirty-two officers of the Somali National Army (SNA) in Kampala, Uganda. The training which is being convened with technical and logistical support from the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission seeks to contribute to professionalizing and building a competent Somali Armed Forces by introducing the essential rules of International Humanitarian Law, both treaty and customary rules and other relevant norms binding Somalia.

The workshop was officially opened by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of the Republic of Uganda, Honorable Asuman Kiyingi who noted that IHL is a fundamental instrument in the day to day running of the national and International Affairs for a country like Somalia that is emerging from a long spell of armed conflicts. He said; "... it is incumbent upon you to borrow a leaf from countries like Uganda, Burundi, South Africa, among others to ensure discipline, reconciliation, unity in diversity in order to build a prosperous, secure and self-sustaining Somalia."

Representing the Federal Government of Somalia, Colonel Ali Amer said it was important for such training programmes in IHL and HR to include all commanding officers and key personnel of the Somali National Army. The workshop which has drawn experts and other high ranking officials from the African Union Commission, United Nations, and the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (ICRC) among others is the second of such initiatives by AMISOM after a similar event was conducted in Djibouti towards the end of last year for senior officers of the Somali National Army.

In the opening remarks read on her behalf, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Dr. Aisha Abdullahi observed that the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 additional protocols remain important tools for the protection of civilians, as they clearly stipulate the rules of engagement in a situation of armed conflict. "I hope this training will provide us with a way forward on how we can use IHL and other relevant regional and international legal instruments such as the ones on human rights in enhancing the protection of such vulnerable persons." She Said.

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) for Somalia, Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif commended the Somali National Army for the security gains in the country especially driving out Al-Shabaab terrorists from key towns. He encouraged the officers to build on the Somali customs and norms to better respect IHL and HR.

The training will enhance Somali National Army Officers' understanding of the basic rules regulating the conduct of hostilities in Somalia. It will also lead to the adoption of a forward looking strategy and action plan to ensure compliance with IHL by SNA and respect for other relevant norms.

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