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PRESS RELEASE

Inaugural Meeting of the Support Group for the Facilitation of the National Dialogue in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Addis Ababa, 4 July 2016: The African Union (AU) today held the inaugural meeting of the Support Group to the AU-led Facilitation of the Congolese National Dialogue.

The meeting, which was chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, was attended by the AU-appointed Facilitator, former Prime Minister of Togo, Mr Edem Kodjo; the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, Said Djinnit; the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Maman Sidikou; the European Union (EU) Managing Director For Africa, Koen Vervaeke; the Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF), former President of the Helvetique Confederation, H.E Pascal Couchepin; the Executive Secretary of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), H.E. Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax and the representative of the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Amb. Ambeyi Ligabo.

The meeting took place within the framework of their partnership for peace and security in Africa, in line with their collective commitment to support the Democratic Republic Congo in consolidating the achievements made during the last decade, and in the framework of the relevant bodies of the AU and UN Security Council Resolution 2277.

The meeting was briefed by the AU-appointed Facilitator on his efforts so far in bringing together the various Congolese political actors, as well as civil society to begin the national dialogue. The UN Special Representative for the DRC also briefed the meeting on the prevailing political situation in the country with particular emphasis on the state of play with regard to the efforts to convene the national dialogue, noting that the situation remains tenuous and thus requiring the urgent need to support the Facilitator to begin the national dialogue.

Following an exchange of views and discussions, the meeting:

1. Reaffirmed the commitment to the crucial importance of holding a successful national dialogue with all Congolese stakeholders preferably by the end of July 2016 and agreed to undertake consultations aimed at encouraging all stakeholders to participate in the dialogue;
2. Called on all stakeholders to create a conducive environment for the holding of the national dialogue;

3. Underlined the objectives of the Support Group which will include providing political and advisory support to the AU Facilitator; garner and maintain the support of local and international actors, including the mobilization of the necessary resources for the successful holding of the national dialogue; and contribute to the preservation of peace and security in the DRC;
4. Welcomed the ongoing efforts by the Congolese authorities and especially by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), with the support of various partners to undertake the required revision of the voters' register;
5. Called on international partners to provide the necessary support that will contribute to help overcome the challenges being experienced with regard to the voters' registration, as well as the economic challenges currently facing the DRC.