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PRESS RELEASE

OPENING OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE HEADS OF INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE SAHELO-SAHARAN REGION

Abidjan, 20 June 2013: The 2nd meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region opened today, 20 June 2013, in Abidjan. The following countries are represented at the meeting: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal, as well as Ghana and Benin as observers. In addition, the Commission of the African Union (AU), the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) and the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL) are also in attendance.

The opening ceremony was marked by the statements delivered by former President Pierre Buyoya, AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, Head of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), and by the Ivorian Minister of Defense, Koffi Koffi Paul, in the presence of his colleague in charge of Presidential Affairs, Ibrahim Ouattara, as well as by the message of the ECOWAS Commission President, Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, read by the representative of this organization at the meeting.

Organized by the AU Commission, in collaboration with the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the meeting will examine the security situation in Mali and in the Sahelo-Saharan region in general. In this respect, participants will be briefed on the conduct and outcome of the assessment mission dispatched by the AU to Niger, following the terrorist attacks of 23 May 2013 in Agadez and Arlit. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to exchange views on the enhancement of security cooperation among the countries of the region and on issues relating to capacity building, as well as on cooperation modalities with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which will take over from AFISMA as from 1 July 2013.

The Abidjan meeting is a follow-up to the conclusions of the consultative ministerial meeting on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Sahara region, held in Nouakchott, on 17 March 2013. The first meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services of the countries of the region took place in Bamako, on 18 April 2013.