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PRESS RELEASE

SYMPOSIUM ON VICTIMS OF TERRORIST ACTS OPENS TODAY IN ALGIERS

Algiers, 27 October 2014: The Commission of the African Union (AU) is convening a two-day Symposium on victims of terrorist acts at the facilities of the African Centre on Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT). The Symposium comes at the initiative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, who emphasized the need for a forum at the level of the AU to give a face and a voice to the victims of terrorism in Africa.

The Symposium is being attended by a number of Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and international organizations, as well as African associations of victims of terrorist acts. The meeting was officially opened by Mr. Kerma Hassan, Director-General for African Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

In his welcome remarks, Francesco Madeira, the Chairperson's Special Representative for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and Director of the ACSRT, highlighted the human cost of terrorism and the untold suffering inflicted on civilians, as a result of terrorist acts, including physical injury, psychological trauma, and destruction of livelihoods. He also emphasized that terrorist acts in Africa further aim to inflame ethnic and religious tensions and disrupt nation-building and reconciliation. He highlighted that the Symposium was the first step at the level of the AU Commission towards promoting an adequate response to the needs of the victims and strengthening the role of civil society in counter-terrorism, in line with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the relevant AU instruments and frameworks.

In this regard, the Symposium will consider international best practices, as well as measures, laws and policies implemented by member states to respond to the needs of victims, including rehabilitation, rebuilding of livelihoods and enhancement of the criminal justice response.

Moreover, building on the success achieved through the AU engagement with civil society in the areas of peace, security and socio-economic development, the Symposium aims to discuss and promote an active role of civil society and associations of victims of terrorist acts in preventing and combating of terrorism. The Symposium will therefore consider the initiatives and experiences of the associations of victims of terrorist acts, including in providing assistance and support to the victims and their families, engagement with Governments in promoting counter-terrorism legislation, as well as in countering violent extremism through interaction with civil society and development of a counter-narrative to extremist ideology.