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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION, DR. JEAN
PING, AT THE INAUGURATION OF HIS EXCELLENCY
HASSAN SHEIKH MOHAMUD,
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA,**

MOGADISHU, 16 SEPTEMBER 2012

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**HASSAN SHEIKH MOHAMUD,
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA,**

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President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of the Federal Republic of Somalia,

Heads of State and Government,

Ministers and other dignitaries,

Heads of Diplomatic Missions,

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Somalia,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to be present here on this historic occasion of your formal inauguration, as the first democratically-elected President of the Republic since 1991.

I am proud to be associated with this ceremony, which marks the end of a long and arduous journey the people of this great African country have travelled to reach this milestone, signaling a new hope, a new beginning and daring to invent the future!

This happy day has been possible because the people of Somalia willed it, hungered for it, fought for it, united for it. They eventually won it because they deserve it.

Now that we all know where, as a nation you have come from, how and at what cost, we must heed what one philosopher warned: "He who forgets the past will repeat it". The people of Somalia do not want a repeat of another twenty one years of suffering. The mantra from today is "Never Again!" And I have no doubt you are committed to honoring this pledge, in word and in deed.

Whilst we celebrate the successful end of the eight-year transitional arrangement, I am pleased to note the role played by the outgoing President of the Transitional Federal Government, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, and his team. We owe them tons of gratitude. We also applaud the former President for his humility in accepting the outcome of the election and planting the seeds of democratic ethos and conduct in the Somali body politic. President Sharif did not hang

on to power. He was educated by power. He steered the country into this new dispensation, delivering a legacy which shall be etched forever in the annals of the history of this country.

To the people of Somalia and all those who contributed, in one way or another, to the advent of this day, I say Thank You, Thank You and Thank You! MAHADSANID!

Mr. President, the challenges you are inheriting from the two decades of destruction and despair that plagued Somalia are legion and all too familiar to you. Throughout the past 21 years, you lived and endured them, right here in Somalia, giving hope where there was none. Your towering and built to last example is the Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development (SIMAD), which together, with equally dedicated Somali colleagues, you founded in 1999. In other words, Mr President, you had a vision, belief and faith in the future of Somalia. And you prepared for it.

On our part, as AU, we remain committed, including through the brave women and men who constitute AMISOM, to provide any help we can. In so doing, we will, as before, be guided by your Government's priorities to ensure peace, security, stability, national healing, service delivery and development.

I have no doubt your country's partners, some of whom we collaborate and cooperate with at international level, are driven by the same burning desire to see Somalia rise up again and be the proud nation it should be, at peace with itself and its neighbors and occupying its rightful place in the comity of nations.

It is with this in mind that I sincerely request you to accept my best wishes for your good health in all your endeavors and enduring prosperity for the people of Somalia.

Thank you.