
African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL)

**LAUNCHING BY MISAHEL OF A PROJECT TO SUPPORT EDUCATION IN
THE GAO REGION OF MALI**

Bamako, 15 October 2015: The High Representative of the African Union (AU) for Mali and the Sahel and Head of the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), Pierre Buyoya, on 14 October 2015, launched a project to support education in the region of Gao, in northern Mali. The project will be executed by the Non Governmental Organization (NGO) CRADE (Office of Research Action for Endogenous Development). The ceremony took place in the presence of the regional authorities, including the Governor and the Mayor of Gao, as well as of officials in charge of education, notably the Director of the Gao Education Academy and the Director of the Pedagogical Centre, and representatives of the United Nations (UN) Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The project focuses on the distribution of school kits to 3,500 children in the Bourem area. The Bourem area was chosen because of the acute needs on the ground, particularly in view of the crisis that affected the northern part of Mali. The local officials expressed their appreciation to MISAHEL for the launching of the project, which would facilitate education of children in Bourem. The Governor of the region expressed the commitment of the authorities to support education actors in the region and pledged to monitor closely the smooth implementation of the project. On his part, the AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, recalling the commitment of the AU to Mali since the outbreak of the political and security crisis which affected that country, stated: "The AU has been with you during the liberation struggle, the AU has been with you during the negotiations in Algiers, the AU will continue to stand by you in the monitoring and the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, the AU is with the people of Gao, it is with the children of Gao and supports education, a pillar for peace and development of any country."

Following these interventions, the High Representative handed over school kits to beneficiaries. The ceremony ended with a vote of thanks by the children of Gao.

On the margins of the ceremony for the launching of the project, the High Representative held talks with the Governor of Gao, in order to inquire about the political and security situation in the region. Furthermore, the High Representative conferred with the Head of the MINUSMA Office in Gao, who informed him about the evolution of the security situation in the region, stressing the need to expedite the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Finally, the High Representative visited the Gao branch of the Observatory for the Rights of Women and Children (ODEF), an organization that benefits from AU funding for the implementation of an education and awareness raising campaign about violence perpetrated against women.