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LAUNCHING OF 2006 AS THE YEAR OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

The AU Commission has the honour to invite members of the local and international media to the Launching Ceremony of 2006 as the Year of African Languages on 20th June 2006 at 10AM in the Commission Conference Centre.

As background information to the launch, it should be noted that 6th Session of the AU Assembly, meeting in Khartoum, the Sudan, adopted wide-ranging instruments to promote the convergence of social and cultural views and policies on the continent. Amongst others, the Statutes to establish the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) and the Language Plan of Action for Africa were adopted and endorsed by the AU Heads of State and Government. In furtherance of this landmark decision on promoting African languages, the Commission is convening the official launch and Inaugural Session of the Interim Governing Board of the Academy of African Languages on the above date. A Guest of honour representing the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is expected to present the official launch statement. The Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Commissioner for Social Affairs will also address the Launching Ceremony and the event will be attended by other AU Commissioners, Embassies of AU Member States, UN Agencies, Experts, and members of the diplomatic community in Addis Ababa.

The Year of African Languages 2006 is indeed a historic continental event that will usher in the preparations to mark this important event. The year is important as a contribution in our African Renaissance as it gives true recognition to the importance of our culture and our language. African languages constitute the bulk of common African intangible heritage and serves as an umbilical cord between generations: past, present and future. The inauguration of the Academy of African Languages is therefore at the core of Africa's efforts to renew its commitment to ensuring the promotion of African languages. The inauguration will be followed by a two-day meeting of the Interim Governing Board, composed of Ministers and High-Level representatives for each of the AU five regions.

The Media, too, plays an important role, by placing African languages at the core of national and regional development. The media is therefore cordially invited to cover this historic event at 10AM on 20 June 2006.

Addis Ababa, June 20, 2006