



PRESS RELEASE

The Chairperson of the Commission appoints a Special Representative for Guinea Bissau

*The Special Representative will also head the newly-established
AU Liaison Office in Guinea Bissau*

Addis Ababa, 7 October 2010: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, has appointed Professor Sebastiao da Silva Isata, from Angola, as his Special Representative for Guinea Bissau and Head of the AU Liaison Office in that country.

Professor Isata, who is 52, has been Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Angola from 1996 to 1999. In that capacity, he was involved in a number of initiatives relating to Angola's foreign policy and bilateral relations, as well as conflict resolution efforts, particularly in Guinea Bissau. Professor Isata has also served as Director of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the MPLA – PT, from 1984 to 1988. He holds a doctorate in Law from the Howard University, in the US, and has taught in several Universities, including the University of Western Cape (Cape Town), South Africa.

This appointment is part of the follow-up to the relevant provisions of the Tripoli Plan of Action of 31st August 2010 and decisions of the AU Peace and Security Council. It should be recalled that, in the Tripoli Plan of Action, the Assembly, among others, stressed the need to ensure the early deployment in Guinea Bissau, with the support of the United Nations, the European Union and other AU partners, of a joint AU-ECOWAS stabilization mission to consolidate peace and stability and lend the necessary support to the Government in security sector reform, post-conflict reconstruction and development and fight against drug trafficking. On its part, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU, at its meeting held on 29 March 2010, called for the establishment of an AU Liaison Office in Guinea Bissau, in anticipation of the subsequent deployment of the envisaged AU/ECOWAS joint civilian mission.

As Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission and Head of the AU Liaison Office in Guinea Bissau, Prof. Isata will spearhead and coordinate the implementation of AU decisions relating to the situation in the country. In this respect, he will pay particular attention to the efforts aimed at consolidating peace and stability in Guinea Bissau, including security sector reform, fight against drug trafficking, good governance and post-conflict reconstruction and development in general.

Professor Isata will work closely with ECOWAS and its member states, the United Nations, the European Union, the Community of the Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), and other members of the international community, including AU bilateral partners.

It should be recalled that, as part of the AU's support to peace building efforts in Guinea Bissau, the Chairperson of the Commission and the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ramtane Lamamra, visited Guinea Bissau in February and April 2010, respectively. In addition, former Angolan Foreign Minister João Bernardo de Miranda, then Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission, visited Guinea Bissau on several occasions, to assist in the efforts aimed at stabilizing the country.

The PSC has also deliberated on the situation in Guinea Bissau on several occasions. A PSC delegation visited the country in April 2009, to assess the situation and consult with the Bissau Guinean leaders and political stakeholders.

Finally, at its 15th Ordinary Session held in Kampala, from 25 to 27 July 2010, the Assembly of the Union, *inter alia*, emphasized the importance of the effective implementation of the security sector reform, and requested the AU and ECOWAS Commissions to speed up preparations for the rapid deployment of the stabilization mission provided for in the Tripoli Plan of Action.