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## **COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON THE SITUATION IN MAURITANIA**

**ADDIS ABABA, 28 JANUARY 2009**

1. At the initiative of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Mr. Jean Ping, another consultative meeting on the situation in Mauritania was held in Addis Ababa on 28 January 2009. The meeting was attended by the following organizations: League of Arab States, United Nations, Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), European Union (EU) and the African Union. The African members and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council also attended the meeting.

2. The participants reviewed the developments in Mauritania since the consultative meeting held in Brussels on 12 December 2008, as well as the efforts to resolve the crisis arising from the coup d'Etat of 6 August 2008 and to restore constitutional order in the country. In this regard, the participants were informed of the outcome of the 163<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU, held in Addis Ababa on 22 December 2008, notably the decision to impose targeted sanctions against all those, both civilian and military, whose activities are designed to maintain the unconstitutional status quo in Mauritania, if, by 5 February 2009, constitutional order is not restored, and to seize the UN Security Council to confer a universal character on these measures. The participants shared the deep concern expressed by the PSC and reiterated by Chairperson Jean Ping in the face of the resurgence of the scourge of *coups d'Etat* in Africa.

3. The participants noted that no progress had been made towards the return to constitutional order on the basis of the elements for a way out of the crisis as agreed at its previous meetings, namely: the unconditional release of President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, his contribution as President to the search for a solution, the participation of all stakeholders, and the full respect for the Mauritanian Constitution. As indicated at its meeting on 21 November 2008, this could lead to the holding of free and fair presidential elections, as part of a comprehensive, peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis that would be acceptable to the different Mauritanian stakeholders and enjoy the support of the international community. The participants noted that the initiative known as the "*Etats généraux de la Démocratie*", which took place from 27 December 2008 to 6 January 2009, was not attended by all the political forces in Mauritania and that its conclusions did not meet the requirements of the international community regarding the return to constitutional order through a consensual process. Furthermore, the participants took note of the proposals made by President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi in his speech of 23 January 2009.

4. The participants expressed their concern over acts of harassment against President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi. They urged the authorities borne out of the coup d'Etat to meet fully the commitment they have made with regard to the unconditional release of President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, ensure his security and refrain from any act that could hamper his freedom of movement and expression.

5. The participants emphasized the risks associated with any unilateral move to legitimize the coup d'Etat and reiterated their call to the authorities borne out of the coup to put the interests of Mauritania and the search for consensus above any other consideration. They reiterated their readiness of their organizations to pursue the dialogue with the Mauritanian stakeholders to find an early solution consistent with the elements listed above and, within this framework, to assist the process of restoring constitutional order. The participants called for full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. They reiterated the commitment of their respective organizations to democracy and stability, as well as to the progress and well-being of the people of Mauritania.

6. The participants reaffirmed the determination of their respective organizations to continue their joint efforts under the auspices of the AU, and confirmed the intention of their organizations to draw the conclusions from the current deadlock and take appropriate measures according to their own procedures.

7. The participants agreed to continue working together under the auspices of the AU and in support of its efforts, to promote an early settlement of the crisis and the return to constitutional order in Mauritania. Taking into account the timetable ahead of the AU and the consultations between the EU and Mauritania within the framework of Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, the participants agreed to meet in Paris, on 20 February 2009, at the invitation of the OIF.

**Addis Ababa, 28 January 2009**