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## **ECOWAS STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN THE NORTH OF MALI**

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At the request of H.E. Alassane Dramane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire and current Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Kadre Desire Ouedraogo, led a fact-finding mission to the Republic of Mali from 16 to 18 March 2012.

The ECOWAS Commission has followed with deep concern the rapidly deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Mali provoked by the attacks in the north of the country by the rebel National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), and by the activities of suspected terrorist cells. The gravity of the unfolding tragedy was once more brought into sharp focus following this mission.

The Commission deplors the unnecessary loss of life and property, the mass refugee flows and internal displacement, as well as the collapse of central authority in certain parts of the north. The mindless acts of violence, terrorism, and banditry pose a serious threat not only to the territorial integrity of Mali and the regional integration process, but also to international peace and security.

The Commission strongly condemns the atrocities perpetrated in the north by the rebels, and calls on the MNLA to immediately and unconditionally observe

a cease-fire, lay down their weapons, and relinquish all occupied territory in the north to central authority.

The Commission wishes to reiterate its solidarity with the Government of the Republic of Mali and to leave the MNLA in no doubt that ECOWAS will take all necessary measures to assist the country to safeguard its' sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensure the continuity of constitutional rule in the country.

To prevent any further escalation of violence, therefore, the Commission strongly urges the MNLA to take advantage of the Government's predisposition to a peaceful resolution of the crisis by immediately engaging in dialogue with a view to determining peaceful means and modalities for addressing their grievances and finding a lasting solution to the damaging crisis.

The Commission urgently calls on humanitarian agencies and the International Community to join ECOWAS in taking all necessary measures to guarantee protection, relief and support for the populations adversely affected by the rebellion. It also urges the International Community to provide all the necessary assistance to ensure the holding of the impending presidential election on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Finally, the Commission urges Member States and partners to support the Government of Mali with logistics and materiel as the country battles to defend its territorial integrity and restore law and order.

In the coming days, ECOWAS intends to launch a mediation process in Mali, within a framework of a general cease-fire agreement, aimed at bringing all the stakeholders to the negotiation table in the quest for a peaceful solution to the crisis. The mediation initiative being proposed by ECOWAS shall be carried out in cooperation and consultation with all the States bordering Mali. To this end, ECOWAS urges all the belligerents to subscribe to the initiative. It also calls on the African Union and the International Community to support this effort aimed at finding a lasting solution to the crisis.

**H.E. Kadre Desire OUEDRAOGO**  
**President of the ECOWAS Commission**

**Abuja, 19 March 2012**