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DIVISION OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

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African Union/ Australia Government, Holds International Symposium on the Protection of Civilians in Conflict Zones

Addis Ababa, 5 March 2010 - The African Union Commission (AUC), collaboration with the Australian Government, have ended today, Friday 5 March 2010, a four days International Symposium on the Protection of Civilians in Conflict Zones, at the Conference Center of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNCC), in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in the presence of Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, former Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and former Prime Minister of Tanzania, and Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union .

Organized from the 2nd to the 5th of March 2010, the Symposium was aimed at barnstorming on the African Union Draft Guidelines for the Protection of Civilians by Peace Support Missions as well as reviewing the steps that have been taken by peace support operations to provide protection to civilians (POC) in the African context, amongst others.

The Draft Guidelines reflect the values, principles, laws and conventions of the AU, particularly the 'Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force'. It is divided into three key parts: the first section outlines the fundamental principles, including the definition of key terms; the second part outlines the best practice in relation to planning, mandating and supporting peace support operations; and the last part provides guidance in relation to the operationalisation of a POC mandate at the mission level.

Participants at the symposium shared view on a number of issues such as the contemporary experiences from the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) on the protection of civilians; the responsibilities and expectations for Heads of Missions, including leadership; development of a Protection of Civilians directive and its content;

Multi-dimensional approaches to implementing protection tasks for different mission components, including political process, physical protection, rights based protection and the establishments of a secure environment amongst other things were equally discussed during the symposium.

The AU Symposium brought together experts in the domain of peace and security from the AU Commission; the Asia Pacific Civil-Military Center of Excellence, Australia; the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and key AU troop and police contributing countries as well as AU Partners.

The symposium ended with a Press Conference at the African Union headquarters, addressed by: Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, former Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity and former Prime Minister of Tanzania; Mr. Michael Smith, Executive Director of Asia Pacific Civil-Military Center of Excellence, Australia and Mr. Sivuyile Bam, Head of Peace Support Operations Division, Department of Peace and Security, African Union.