

African Union Strengthens Resolve on Somalia



KAMPALA, Uganda - Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Paul Adam, has welcomed the call by the African Union to strengthen its role in ensuring stability in the state of Somalia. Minister Adam is currently representing President Michel at the 15th Summit of the African Union presently concluding in Kampala, Uganda. **The Summit regroups the 53 heads of state of the continent or their designated representatives to discuss the major issues of concern for the continent.**

Following the terrorist attacks in Kampala two weeks ago, **the need to identify new approaches towards Somalia was universally acknowledged at the Summit.** The Summit has also addressed the need to ensure that the capacity of all African states, including Somalia, was increased, to be able to ensure that there was return to the rule of law in the whole of Somalia and reduction of threats such as piracy and terrorism.

"A united approach is key to success in the long term. There is a need for all countries of Africa to address this issue. There is also the need for all other partners, whether it be NGOs, or international organizations, politicians or civil society, to present a united front against terrorism and piracy. Nothing will be achieved by just waiting for the problem to go away," Minister Adam commented.

The state of affairs in Somalia was high on the agenda in view of recent events, but **the Summit's main theme of "Maternal, Infant, and Child Health and Development in Africa" was also discussed in depth with a view to mobilizing more resources in the fight to reduce the mortality rate of children and mothers in childbirth.** It is to be noted that Seychelles currently boasts one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the continent after sustained investment in the health sector since independence and which has continued despite the challenges of economic reforms. **The Summit urged all countries to reach the Abuja target of a minimum of 15 percent of the national budgets allocated to healthcare by 2015.** Seychelles currently devotes 24 percent of its ministries' budget to the health sector and is well placed to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

The Summit also noted the need for the AU to engage with other multilateral and regional partners, in recognition of the new challenges posed by globalization and the world economic crisis. The second Afro-Arab Summit is expected to take place this year in Sirte, Libya, to strengthen relations between Africa and the Arab world.

During the Summit, the Seychelles delegation also engaged in a number of bilateral meetings aimed at continually sensitizing African partners to the challenges of piracy and climate change. The delegation also participated in discussions on the subject of the vulnerability of small island states in relation to these issues. These talks included ongoing negotiations on the status of the contributions of Seychelles, as a small island state, to the African Union.

Seychelles has successfully argued in the past, in other regional organizations such COMESA and SADC, that the specificities and vulnerabilities of small islands need to be factored into the calculations of the contributions of small island states. This is particularly relevant in the context of debt rescheduling, where as middle-income countries, small island states are not eligible for full debt write-off, as well as in the context of piracy, which hinders the security and economic development of small islands. Discussions are ongoing with the African Union Commission to this end.

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