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**Address by the President of the African Union Commission, Mr Jean Ping,
on the occasion of the handing over ceremony of the Flame of Peace to
the President of the Republic of Cameroon**

**Festivities marking the 50th anniversary of the Independence of
Cameroon**

May 18, 2010

**His Excellency, the President of the Republic of
Cameroon,**

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to be here in Yaoundé on this day to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Cameroon with you. This is undoubtedly a historic moment, when we celebrate the achievements of a peaceful and prosperous nation. The Cameroonian people know the value of peace. Peace has enabled this country to take advantage of the abundance of its human and natural resources, and to ensure economic and political stability, which are necessary ingredients for the country's development. Cameroonians can thus be proud of these achievements.

Permit me, Mr President, seize this opportunity to praise and thank the Cameroonian Government for its engagement towards the promotion of peace in Africa, especially in the Central African Region, where it notably showed proof of its

leadership role when it played host to the meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council and also during the setting up of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX).

Mr President, the peaceful resolution of the conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria on the Bakassi peninsula and the choice of dialogue and negotiation, which prevailed throughout the process, is a concrete proof that peace is possible without any need for violence. The resolution of this conflict using the Law and dialogue is a source of pride and a reference for Africa and the rest of the world.

This year, 2010, during which several African countries, including Cameroon, are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their independence, is also one of peace and security in Africa. It was solemnly decided in Tripoli on August 31, 2009, by our Heads of State and Government who deemed it necessary “as leaders, not to simply hand down the load of conflicts to the next African generation”. In fact, if countries like Cameroon can enjoy dividends from peace, others continue to endure the agony of war. And yet, peace and security are the corner stone of a prosperous, democratic and integrated Africa.

The Year of Peace and Security is an ideal opportunity to examine efforts made towards ensuring peace on the continent. This is in a bid to double the efforts and, if need be, launch new initiatives to promote peace and security. While celebrating the achievements of the past decade, this programme equally aims at facing present challenges and enabling all stakeholders to contribute towards attaining the objective of a conflict-free continent.

In order to get all stakeholders involved, at the political, institutional, civil society and community levels, and encourage all citizens to contribute towards making peace a reality, the Year of Peace and Security campaign will be crowned by the International Day of peace on September 21.

Declared by the United Nations in 1982, this Day of Peace is a unique opportunity for our continent to come together to show that peace is possible. All the activities within this Year of Peace and Security in Africa will centre on this day. It will be aimed at suppressing violence, conflict and war on September 21 – for the first time, all Africans will collectively experience peace.

By so doing, the main objective is to show that peace is possible in Africa and that life is far better without violence or conflicts.

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

This year 2010 marks the beginning of a new era of peace for the continent. It offers an opportunity for all to work towards peace in Africa in 2010 and even beyond.

Permit me, Your Excellency, to entrust to you the Flame of Peace. Now in Cameroon and passing through Africa, this Flame is to serve as a sign of collective and individual commitment of all nations, peoples, and African governments to take up their responsibilities and strive to ensure that peace becomes a reality throughout the continent.

Thank you.