



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 18 June 2013
(OR. fr)
A 331/13

Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the signing of a preliminary peace agreement in Mali

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission issued the following statement today:

"I welcome the signing in Ouagadougou, by the Malian authorities and northern Mali's non-terrorist armed groups, of a preliminary peace agreement in preparation for the presidential election and inclusive peace talks in Mali.

This agreement is of historic significance. It is a crucial step in the process of building peace through dialogue.

I pay tribute to the determination of the statesmen and the groups' representatives who have reached this agreement. I would also like to express my gratitude for the mediation provided by President Compaoré and the other international actors involved alongside him.

The European Union has lent its full support to these negotiations. It will remain at the side of all Malians to facilitate the implementation of the agreement in all its dimensions".

Note to the editors

The agreement, which fully recognises Mali's unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty, paves the way for a step-by-step and peaceful return of the army, for the re-establishment of the State administration in the Kidal region, and for the organisation of presidential elections in the region, as in all other parts of Mali's territory.

The agreement also makes arrangements to allow for the disarmament and quartering of the armed groups, while at the same time establishing a framework for inclusive peace talks involving all of northern Mali's communities.

P R E S S

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