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**PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
161st MEETING
16 DECEMBER 2008
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

PSC/PR/Comm.(CLXI)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 161st meeting, held on 16 December 2008, was briefed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on its activities in Africa.

The Council expressed its gratitude to the ICRC for its humanitarian efforts and assistance to victims of armed conflicts in Africa.

The Council took note of the many challenges encountered by the ICRC in undertaking its humanitarian tasks, particularly the difficulties encountered to access civilians in conflict areas. In this regard, recalling the relevant principles on the respect of human rights, the respect of the sanctity of human life, as well as the respect of relevant provisions of international humanitarian law as enshrined in Article 4, (o and m) of the Constitutive Act of the AU and Article 4 (c) of the Protocol of the PSC, Council called on the authorities of countries affected by conflicts to facilitate access by the ICRC to civilians in need of humanitarian assistance.

The Council further requested the Commission, in line with the relevant provisions of the Constitutive Act of the AU and the Protocol of the PSC, to take all necessary measures to enhance the relationships with the ICRC in the area of promotion of peace, security and stability on the Continent.

Addis Ababa, 16 December 2008