

African initiative pledges to support countries emerging from conflict

Addis Ababa, 1 February 2014 (ECA) - As the AU Summit came to a close in Addis Ababa this week, African countries rallied under the banner, “Africa helping Africa” to pledge assistance to countries emerging from violent conflict and undergoing reconstruction. The initiative stems from a 2012 decision by African Heads of States to organize a pledging conference aimed at expanding intra-African collaboration and mutual self-help, and consolidating the notion of African solidarity.

Speaking at the Conference, Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, hailed the initiative and said, “It is an encouraging signal that Africa is moving to the forefront of mobilizing support for post-conflict reconstruction and development in the continent.”

He said that while up to \$300 billion sums up the cost of lost life, output and damage to infrastructure and property between 1990 and 2005 in Africa alone, “it is equally as costly for countries and societies ravaged by conflict to get back on their feet.”

“Restoring growth and lost capacities is a long and painstaking process even when physical structures are being replaced. We have to bear these additional needs in mind when we consider the extent of support required by countries recovering from conflict,” he added.

He said that several post-conflict countries continue to grapple with complex political and socio-economic challenges and the African Solidarity Initiative addresses a vital need.

“The cheapest way to avoid the costs of violent conflict is, of course, to prevent them,” stressed Lopes.

He underlined the need to tackle the root causes of conflict related to poor governance, marginalization, violation of rights and external interference, among others and noted that the economic causes of conflict have their own logic and are often deep-rooted and overlooked.

“Struggles for access to natural resources and their rents and economic exclusion and highly skewed income distribution also play their own part and continue to matter even after peace agreements have been negotiated,” said Lopes stressing that a sustainable peace requires full consideration of economic causes and consequences.

In addition to the financial and in kind support pledged at the Conference, Mr. Lopes called for

commitments for support through technical assistance and capacity building programmes.

“This is an opportunity to put the African Solidarity Initiative on a firm footing and I pledge that ECA, for its part, will deploy its technical expertise and range of capacity development services in support of this key programme,” he said.

Statement by Mr. Carlos Lopes