Declaration of the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly
on the security situation in the north of Mali

Louis Michel and Musikari Kombo, Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly wish to express grave concern at the deterioration in the situation in the North of Mali following deadly attacks carried out by groups claiming to be linked to the Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA), notably in the towns of Ménaka, Tessalit, Aguelhoc, Leré and Niafunké. The attacks on those towns have left scores dead and prompted the massive exodus of the civilian population to neighbouring countries. In Aguelhoc, in particular, the MNLA and its allies (AQIM and ANÇAR DINE) committed atrocities tantamount to war crimes when they summarily executed 70 Malian soldiers who had surrendered to them. The Co-Presidents present their condolences to the Government of Mali and to the families of the victims.

The Co-Presidents believe that this crisis is a direct consequence of the Libyan conflict which has caused the movement of hundreds of heavily-armed fighters into Malian territory, and are deeply concerned that this crisis could spread to the entire Sahelo-Saharan area, and even to other regions of Africa.

Re-affirming their commitment to the principle of the intangibility of borders that existed at the time of accession to independence, as enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Co-Presidents are strongly opposed to any attacks on Mali’s territorial integrity and national unity.

The Co-Presidents strongly condemn the attacks carried out by armed groups in the north of Mali and call for the immediate and unconditional cessation of these attacks and the protection of the civilian population.

The Co-Presidents wish to express full solidarity with the government and people of Mali and urge the international community, and the European Union and humanitarian organisations in particular, to support the Malian Government to enable it to bring an end to the conflict, secure the integrity of its national territory, improve the living conditions of Malian refugees and organise their return to Mali as soon as possible. They also call on the Malian authorities to proceed with the Presidential elections in the country as scheduled.

Brussels, 21 March 2012