

Africa Union Slams ICC Trials against Africans



Addis Ababa, February 3 (RHC)-- The African Union has called on the International Criminal Court to stop criminal proceedings against sitting African presidents, urging AU member states to "speak with one voice" against the ICC.

The 54-nation organization made the remarks in a statement issued on Saturday following a summit in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa attended by 34 leaders.

The African Union said the United Nations Security Council disappointed it by not disregarding its request to defer the trials of African leaders. The African body has sought the deferral of criminal proceedings against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto.

The ICC has charged Bashir with committing genocide during Sudan's seven-year conflict in Darfur while the Kenyan leaders face charges of crimes against humanity for allegedly inciting post-election violence that left over 1,000 people dead in late 2007. All men deny the charges.

One African Union member, Botswana, opposed the stand taken by the AU against the ICC. African leaders have recently strongly criticized the ICC, accusing it of racism in indicting only African leaders. Some African countries have also threatened to sever ties with the court.

Every year, the African Union convenes two summits, one in January and another in June. During the summit in Addis Ababa, African Union leaders discussed ways to end two spiraling conflicts in the continent -- the conflict in the Central African Republic and the ongoing violence in South Sudan.

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