Dear readers,

I am happy to inform you that the African Union DDR website, will go live in December 2015 and is in the final stages of being approved in preparation for its launch. This website is aimed at serving as the access point for public information on the DDR activities of the AU, RECs/ RMs and Member States and the main public resource facility for disseminating information about the AU DDR activities to all its users.

The site’s homepage welcomes visitors with featured content focused on news highlights, brief country profiles, the main components of the AU DDR Capacity program, as well as guidance documents and information accessing various DDR related e-resources/ publications. The new site is divided into five main sections: HOME, OUR WORK, EVENTS, ONLINE-RESOURCES and PARTNERS which provide a comprehensive overview of the AU DDR Capacity project highlighting latest and upcoming events; DDR publications; useful links and publishes the e-newsletters. One key feature of the website is the database of online DDR electronic resources which will soon be integrated and includes the collation and synthesis of documents on DDR, an exploration of key issues and lessons learned by political and security context, against a number of thematic areas.

On another note, I would like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation to our partners the World Bank Transitional Demobilization & Reintegration Program (TDRP); Social, Urban, Rural & Resilience Global Practice; the European Union (EU); the United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO) and United Nations Office for the African Union (UNOAU); United Nations Children’s Fund; and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (UNICEF- ESARO); special recognition also goes to the AU Liaison Offices and RECs/RMs, for their continuous and sustained support to the implementation of the AU DDRCP.

I sincerely hope that you our reader will enjoy this fourth edition and that you find the information captured both insightful and informative.

Best Wishes,

H.E. Amb. Smail Chergui
Commissioner, Peace and Security,
African Union Commission
From 12 to 13 May 2015, a workshop on the development of an AU DDR compendium and DDR training manual was convened by the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank (WB) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The workshop brought together more than twenty (20) participants, including AU staff from Head Quarters and AU missions, an AU DDR Compendium and Training Standards Workshop on the Development of RECs, Centers of Excellence, UN and WB representatives.

The focus of the workshops was to present and discuss the process, approach and methodology for the development of an AU DDR Training Standards Compendium and Training Standards Manual.

Participants presented their views and contributions on the proposed process/outline, for the Compendium, workshop participants recommended that the process of its development should involve a two-phased approach. The first phase should contain a Desk Review, a repository of available policy and academic literature, and the production of summary analyses drawn from the desk review. Second phase will involve the elaboration of case studies.

For the Training Standards Manual development process, participants recommended that a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) should be conducted, with the aim of collecting shared experiences; gather information from the various DDR training entities in identifying DDR training delivery tools and approaches.

The TNA will also help to identify the strengths, challenges, gaps and deficiencies’ of the current training offerings; and present the AU vision on the training Standards and norms setting for DDR intervention on the
Child Protection Study Tour For Somali Officials in Uganda

From 8 to 12 June 2015 the Peace and Security Department (PSD) in collaboration with UNICEF, facilitated a study tour for Somali government officials, on lessons learned in setting up and operationalizing Child protection units (CPUs), from experiences in different countries, in this case Uganda specifically. This study tour was part of PSD’s efforts to strengthen DDR capacities of Member States under the framework of the African Union DDR Capacity Project (AU DDRCP).

This study tour which was facilitated with the support of the Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF), was convened due to the fact that despite Somalia having the necessary legislation in place for protection of children in armed conflict, child recruitment particularly by al-Shabaab and clan militias, continues on a relatively large scale as evident from the number of children disengaged from the conflict.

The study tour entailed key personnel from the Somali National Armed Forces and other designated officials from relevant Somali government ministries traveling to Uganda to interact with the UPDF, in-order to gain experience on the structures that compliment in the protection of children associated with armed forces and groups.

Delegates were briefed on the key components for setting up fully operationalised CPU, including: Human resource configuration such as designation of child protection focal points; internal normative frameworks such as policy and standard operating procedures as well as highlights of the main requirements for effective and national coordination.

The AU/AMISOM and partners such as UNICEF and UNSOM will aim to continue to support the FGS in mainstreaming child protection issues particularly towards the development of an Action Plan that will assist in the implementation of the Somali National Army SOP and policy on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC).
From 23 to 24 June 2015, the AU – Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Lights Weapons (SALW) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) concluded, its fifth meeting at the AU Headquarters.

The Steering Committee brings together the AU Commission, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Bodies with a SALW mandate, to enhance synergies in the control of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking in SALW, as well as in DDR initiatives across the continent, through sharing of information, identifying gaps and priorities and exploring avenues and opportunities for enhanced coordination and collaboration in support of Member States’ efforts.

The meeting discussed a number of pertinent issues in the area of illicit SALW control. It emphasized the growing need for enhanced efforts in the area of Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) to prevent misuse and diversion of government held stockpiles. The meeting also agreed on the need to integration of arms and explosives management in the mandate of AU-Led Peace Support Operations.

The meeting took note of the status of ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in light of the First Conference of States Parties, due to be held in August in Cancún, Mexico and welcomed the initiative of the AU Commission to convene the senior government officials meeting on the ATT, expected to be held in Addis Ababa on 25-26 June 2015.

The meeting also reviewed the Action Plan for the implementation of the AU Strategy on the control of illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of SALW, adopted by the 20th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union in January 2013. The review exercise enabled the meeting identify priority areas for medium and long term action.

On DDR, participants had in-depth discussions on the challenges faced in implementing traditional DDR programmes and called for approaches that integrate DDR into wider stabilization efforts to ensure sustainability and durability, as well as the optimum use of resources in post-conflict, reconstruction and development settings.

The meeting noted the need to integrate DDR efforts; including undertaking a feasibility study on how to develop community based DDR programs in close collaboration with Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development unit. Participants also highlighted the need to revise the concept paper presented on Non State Armed groups collaborative study and to ensure inclusion of the challenges paused by foreign fighters and element on Repatriation.

As way forward, the meeting agreed on a set of action points and activities to be implemented by the members of the Steering Committee in the areas of illicit SALW control and DDR over the next six months.
From 25 to 26 June 2015, the Commission of the African Union convened a Senior Government Officials Meeting, at the AU Headquarters, to discuss issues relating to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The meeting was held within the framework of the relevant AU instruments that aim to support Member States in addressing the illicit proliferation, circulating and tricking of conventional weapons, including Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

The objective of the meeting was to assist Member States in making informed decisions regarding the ratification and implementation of the ATT, thus contributing to national and regional efforts to address the illicit trade in, and diversion of, conventional weapons. The meeting discussed in depth the objectives and provisions of the ATT and how it is expected to contribute to international efforts towards preventing the diversion, the illicit and irresponsible trade in conventional weapons, as well as towards preventing conventional weapons trade from violating international human rights and humanitarian law and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The meeting also discussed the synergies and complementarities between the existing regional and international instruments and the ATT, acknowledging that there are opportunities to harmonize the implementation of these instruments in cases they provide diverging standards.

The meeting stressed that States should aspire to the highest standards enshrined in these instruments, in order to achieve the greatest impact in addressing the problem.

The meeting received detailed briefings from Mexico, in its capacity as Provisional Secretariat of the ATT, as well as from the facilitators and co-facilitators of the working groups created as part of the preparatory process for the First Conference of States Parties. These are France, Ghana and Sweden. These briefings covered a number of issues on the agenda of the Conference, including the rules of procedure, the structure and location of the Secretariat and financing aspects, as well as reporting pursuant to the ATT.

The meeting encouraged Member States to actively participate in the Conference and related events, to ensure that the views of African States, Parties contribute constructively to the ongoing discussions and that their expectation of the Conference and ATT are met.
From 15 to 25 June 2015, as part of the AU Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Capacity Program (AU DDRCP), the Peace and Security Department (PSD) supported the training of eight participants from RECs/RMs and AU Staff to attend Advanced Stabilization and Reintegration course, at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Centre (KAIPC) in Accra, Ghana.

This training was aimed at enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of DDR practitioners by providing them with a holistic approach to stabilization and reintegration in post-conflict settings, paying particular attention to the many specific contexts and influencing factors in which DDR activities are implemented. Sessions were delivered through practical hands-on learning techniques, lessons from previous experiences and cross-learning, which works to deepen understanding of stabilization and reintegration frameworks and practices. Participants were able to share their own experiences with each other as well as learn from the broad experience of the trainers. This in turn fed into the thinking around current strategies and activities that participants and trainers worked on during the course. Different perspectives, constraints, realities and opportunities in countries in transition from violence to peace were brought together through practical group work. Participants have thus been able to leave the course with a valuable toolbox of techniques, ideas and approaches to put into practice in their daily work.

The skills and understanding of the participants were developed and tested, through the cooperative learning techniques used throughout the course, ensuring that by the end of the course participants were better equipped to cope with the challenges of stabilization and reintegration processes they face in their professional lives.
Methodology Workshop on the collaborative Assessment of Non State Armed Groups

From 13-14 July 2015, African Union Commission (AUC) convened a methodology workshop on the collaborative assessment of non-state armed groups in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting was organized as follow up from the main outcomes agreed upon from the 4th African Union Small Arms Light Weapons/Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Steering Committee Meeting held in Lusaka, Zambia from 8-9 December 2014; where a concept paper on “Assessment of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) and Advancing Stabilization, DDR, and Cross Border Security and Development Efforts on the African Continent” was presented, and discussed.

This workshop is intended as the first in-depth consultation on the methodological framework for conducting a collaborative assessment of NSAGs on the African continent. It brought practitioners from the AU, RECs/RMs, UN, WB/TDRP and academic scholars from think tanks and centers of excellence drawn from the field of conflict and security studies, stabilization, DDR, Border security and development, to share experiences on methodologies and tools relevant for exploring a better understanding of the nature, size, composition and activities of NSAGs on the Africa continent.

The workshops help the AUC and its partners, to shape the analytical guidelines, provided conceptual clarity and outlined the approach and methodology in the concept note for the study.

A detailed Operational plan of the study was also being presented, and the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the SALWs/DDR Steering Committee (SCM) Task Team/Sub-Committee to serve as a Critical Review Panel for the execution of the study was also discussed. These intended outcomes will support the final review and adjustment of the scope of the study accordingly, and will also help to enhance a collaborative and coherent engagement strategy by all partners interested in the study and its future outcomes.
From 04 - 11 May 2015, the Central African Republic (CAR) went through a National Reconciliation Forum, an opportunity for Central Africans to find solutions to sustainable peace and stability to decades of insecurity in their country.

The National Reconciliation Forum is a follow up to the Brazzaville Forum (21 – 23 July 2014) and the Nationwide Popular Grassroots Consultations (January – March 2015) which were aimed at creating room for negotiations and enhancing community participation in the peace process.

The National Reconciliation Forum brought together more than 600 Central African delegates representing all the sectors of the society including the Transitional Authorities, Civil Society Organizations, Political Parties, Armed Groups, Youth Organizations, Women Organizations and Religious Organizations among others.

One major achievement of the National Reconciliation forum was the signing of a Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation (DDRR) agreement between the Transitional Government and nine (9) armed groups on 10 May 2015 in Bangui.

The signing of this agreement was an indication of the commitment of the armed groups’ to participate in an inclusive DDR process and their willingness to denounce all acts of hostilities.

The AU and its mission MISAC, in close coordination with the UN, World Bank and other partners, is looking to support the national government in the creation of an inclusive mechanism to implement the evolving DDR process as well as to support the finalization of the national DDR programme.
AU DDR Upcoming Events

- Experts Workshop on Countering Violent Extremism and Foreign Fighters dates TBC
- Joint follow-up assessment mission to Somalia dates TBC
- Sensitization Workshop in CAR dates TBC
- Sixth Steering Committee for SALW/DDR Meeting dates TBC
- DDR training for Memberstates dates TBC