Welcome to this first edition of the African Union Commission’s (AUC) Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (AU DDR) Newsletter. This first edition is just the beginning of a continued process of communicating with you, our Member States and partners, with the latest information on ongoing efforts to strengthen the Commission’s capacities to effectively engage in providing DDR assistance on the continent. The AU DDR Newsletter will be published quarterly and will particularly seek to bring readers up to date on progress, lessons learnt and important challenges that lie ahead for the AUC in providing DDR assistance in Member States.

The publishing of the DDR newsletters falls under the knowledge management component of the AU DDR capacity program, which aims to establish an AU Resource and Research Centre to coordinate DDR resources and provide opportunities for learning and information sharing. The AU DDR Resource and Research Centre will serve as the focal point for public information dissemination on DDR activities of the AU, RECs/RMs and Member States. The Resource and Research Centre will also facilitate the development, production and dissemination of DDR related publications such as this newsletter as well as other documents including DDR guidance notes, that are aimed at providing practical support to AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RMs) in addressing DDR related challenges as they arise. Also being developed in collaboration with PSD communications is a subsidiary DDR website www.ddr.peaceau.org

As we start 2014, I would like to take this opportunity to wish our readers a Happy New Year. I also sincerely hope readers will enjoy reading this first edition, and we look forward to receiving comments, inputs and suggestions to improve our future editions.

Best Wishes,

Amb. Smail Chergui
Commissioner, Peace and Security Department,
African Union Commission
Overview of AU DDR Capacity Program

The development of the African Union DDR Capacity Program (AU DDRCP) began in February 2012 when the AUC initiated the DDRCP through a consultation seminar with RECs/RMs. The purpose of the DDRCP is to strengthen capacities within the AU in order to utilize the AU Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to support national and regional DDR initiatives on the continent. The AU DDRCP was initiated in collaboration with the UN Office to the African Union (UNOAU), the Department of Peace-keeping Operations/Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (DPKO/ OROLSI) and the Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP)/Fragile States, Conflict & Social Development Unit (AFTCS) of the World Bank. The DDRCP project document was prepared by the AU Peace and Security Department and was presented to the RECs/RMs for validation at a meeting held in Addis Ababa on 28 – 29 September 2012.

The document sets out a three-year program, to be implemented between 2013 and 2015, which will achieve the following objectives:

1. Institutionalize DDR capacities within the African Union,
2. Establish an AU DDR Resource and Research Centre, and
3. Facilitate AU engagement and assistance to DDR activities of Member States.

AU DDR Activities

AU-UN-WB DDR Training and Validation Workshop

The AUC organized a training workshop and validation workshop that took place 24–28 September 2012. The training workshop introduced participants to the AU vision for DDR, it also introduced participants to UN and World Bank approaches to DDR, National ownership and other important principles such as; partnership building, gender best practices, monitoring and evaluation, risk management, effective communication, second generation DDR and dealt with psycho-social issues on DDR.

Subsequently, the validation workshop was held in order to:

- Introduce the first draft of the AU DDR Capacity Program initiative to the RECs/RMs and selected Member States;
- To seek advice, input from experts on the activities of the AU DDRCP;
- To get endorsement from the participants in the implementation of the AU DDR capacity program based on the project document.
First Steering Committee Meeting on SALW and DDR

The 1st Meeting of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and DDR was held 20-21 February 2013, at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The meeting brought together representatives of the Steering Committee including CEN-SAD, EAC, COMESA, ECOWAS, ICGLR and RECSA. Also present were UNREC, UNOAU and the DPKO. In order to harmonize the DDR operational guideline documents that are due to be developed by the Commission with those developed by the RECs, the Commission made a request for all the members of the Steering Committee to submit any documents that they have, that reference DDR. The steering committee members also suggested that the AU try and harmonize the activities of the SALW and the DDR national commissions within the Member States.

The AU also requested that RECs take part in the DDR assessment missions in order to enable efficient follow up on the recommendations made for the Member States.

DDR Donors Conference


The purpose of the conference was to inform partners on the AU DDR Capacity Program, and to harness funds for DDR activities for 2013 – 2015 under the program.

The Partners were informed that the DDR program would be geared towards empowering the African Union to assess DDR activities on the continent and effectively assist to address existing gaps.

The Commission would also generate DDR documents that will guide DDR practice on the continent. In this conference, TDRP-World Bank pledged $500,000 towards supporting the implementation of the AU DDR Capacity program.
Second Steering Committee Meeting on SALW and DDR

The AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) held its 2nd meeting on the 18-19 November 2013 in Arusha, Tanzania.

The meeting was part of the regular coordination meetings of the Steering Committee to, among others, evaluate the 2013 activities of the Members, and elaborate a vision for 2014 in the implementation of the SALW Strategy, the DDR Capacity Project, and the Arms Trade Treaty in Member States.

The commission will follow up on the recommendations identified in 2013 and will explore new areas of engagement.

AU Consultative Workshop to Review AU DDR Operational Guidance Notes

The Commission of the African Union, convened a two day consultative workshop from 3-4 December 2013, to review the AU DDR operational guidance documents on issues of Detention, Women and Children in armed conflict, Reintegration and developing frameworks for National DDR initiative which will assist the AU’s engagement in DDR and related activities.

These guidelines are aimed at reflecting the wealth of African experiences across the continent whilst also presenting an opportunity for technical input to the AU DDR capacity program. The operational guidance documents are aimed at strengthening the continental peace and security architecture and provide a platform for the AU to provide practical and political support to AU Member States and RECs/ RMs in addressing DDR related challenges as they arise.

These operational guidance documents will assist in standardizing critical elements in any peace support operation on the continent based on experience by Member States, RECs and other partners.
A seminar on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) and UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, was conducted in Addis Ababa, 17 - 19 September 2013 with the support of the EU, UNICEF and AFTCS/TDRP.

The first day of the meeting provided a platform where experts from Member States had the opportunity to discuss and explore how they can learn from each other and contribute to initiatives targeting Children Affected by Armed Conflict. This meeting coincided with the signing of a tripartite agreement between the AU Commission, the UN office of Children Affected by Armed Conflict and UNICEF.

The cooperation agreement will initiate a new capacity program within the AU to enhance its capacity to address the needs of Children Affected by Armed Conflict. The Second and third day of the meeting was aimed at exploring the progress in the ratification and adoption of the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa as well as evaluate the status of implementing the AU Road Map and the protection strategies outlined in UNSC 1325.

This seminar provided a platform for the review of Member States progress in the adoption of National Action Plans, and how the AU and the APSA structure, including the RECs/ RMs, as well as international partners can provide assistance in the implementation of resolution 1325.

Opening Session Right Mr Abderrahim Fraiji (TDRP Manager); Mr Nicola Bellomo (Chargé de Affairs EU); Mr El Ghassim Wane (Director PSD); Ms Elke Wish (Dep. Reg. Director UNICEF); Dr Tarek A. Sharif, (Head DSD)

Left- Mme Porquet Salimata (ECOWAS WPN) Mrs. Litha Musyimi-Ogana (Director WGD) center right Dr Tarek A. Sharif (Head DSD)

Sahrawi Delegates
South Sudan

A joint African Union – World Bank (TDRP) DDR assessment mission was undertaken to the republic of South Sudan, 21 – 25 May 2012.

This assessment was conducted back-to-back with an AU mentoring mission to the South Sudan DDR Commission by a number of DDR experts from the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi, to share their experiences on DDR. This included; Management Information Systems (MIS), Information Technology (IT), M & E, Communications in DDR, Psychosocial support in DDR, vulnerable groups in DDR and the Information Counseling and Referral System (ICRS).

AU Stakeholders Coordination Meeting

As a follow up, the AU and TDRP assisted in the placement of two consultants in developing the Information Counseling and Referral System (ICRS).

Based on the request from the South Sudan DDR Commission (SSDRC), on 17th September 2012, the Commission hosted a coordination meeting, in Addis Ababa in conjunction with AFTCS/TDRP. This meeting was held to convene the principal stakeholders to address the implementation modalities of the new phase of DDR program. The primary objectives of the meeting were to outline clearly:

1. the position of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan’s on DDR;
2. the status of the new program focusing on its national strategic direction;
3. the key features of the primary program components, including the DDR stages; and
4. the funding mechanism and proposed structure for administration of funds.

During this meeting, the SSDRC requested the African Union to provide guidance on the ideal funding modality that can be used in their DDR program, which aims to support 150,000 ex-combatants. In response, the Commission formed a DDR technical committee comprising of: the SSDRC commission; the African Union; the UN; Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) as technical advisor to SSDRC and EU as a representative of the donor community.

The technical committee convened its first meeting on 14 February 2013 and subsequently the second meeting was held on 25 March 2013. The technical committee requested TDRP for support in the hiring of a consultant who would review various funding modality options and advise the technical committee on the most ideal funding mechanism for South Sudan DDR program. The final draft of the report was presented to SSDRC.

Launch of The DDR Pilot Program Re-scheduled

The official launch of the Pilot Phase of the National DDR program did not take place as planned, the launch was therefore postponed to a later date to be advised by the Government of the Republic of South Sudan. However, the technical work for the reintegration of ex-combatants started on the ground in Mapel.

AU remains committed to supporting the SSDRC and is exploring ways on how to further collaborate under the AUDRCP in support of the DDR program. Next steps will be identified.
Central African Republic

Pursuant to a request from the Government of Central African Republic (CAR), the AU conducted a joint AU-World Bank (TDRP) – UN assessment mission to the capital city, Bangui from 2-11 June 2012. The assessment mission considered four critical aspects including DDR, SSR and Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) and dealt with illicit mining and regional security stabilization-recovery issues related to the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). With the support of TDRP, the mission resulted in the AU deploying a DDR consultant to assist the AU Liaison Office in Bangui in order to organize a Mentoring Mission to forge a way forward. The mission also resulted in the AU developing a program to support LRA returnees in Obo through a local NGO.

Unfortunately, after the suspension of CAR from the AU following the 24 March 2013 coup, these projects were suspended. The AU has since re-engaged and has now placed a DDR-SSR Officer deployed in Bangui to support MISCA and is assessing how to proceed forward in the new situation.

Somalia

Pursuant to a request from the AMISOM, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission, Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the AU convened a consultation meeting 24-29 June 2013 on issue of disengaged combatants, in Nairobi, between AMISOM, the Somali Government, the World Bank and the UN.

The meeting focused on assessing the current situation on the ground regarding the handling of disengaged combatants and identifying steps to be taken to harmonise the current reality with the newly approved Somali National Strategy on Disengaged Combatants. Among the steps currently being followed up on include:

• Finalizing a project proposal to assist AMISOM in establishing reception units in each of its four Sectors;
• Supporting the Somali DDR Secretariat with furniture as well as training;
• Supporting the Somali government, with the support of UNICEF, in improving its Child Protection Units (CPUs);
• Amending the MoU between the Somali Government and AMISOM to describe the handover process for disengaged combatants.

After progress is made in accomplishing these recommendations, the AU will convene another meeting with the stakeholders to evaluate progress.
Pursuant to a request from the Government of the Union of Comoros, the AU conducted a joint assessment mission with the UN and the World Bank (TDRP) from 8-12 February 2012. The mission assessed needs in the areas of DDR, SSR and PCRD as well as the current state of affairs in the National reconciliation process.

The mission found that the DDR process had largely been completed but that support was needed in the area of SSR as well as National development. In September 2013, the AU deployed a SSR Officer to Comoros to work with the AU Liaison Office in supporting the SSR process. The AU also discussed the issue of development projects with COMESA. The Cabinet Chief of Staff told the AU-led delegation that the mere visit of the AU to the Comoros and its visitation to all three islands had, in itself, contributed to calming tensions in the country.

The AU delegation received in warm cultural celebration on the Island of Anjouan

AU delegation meeting with the high level authorities in the Union of Comoros