SIXTH BIENNIAL MEETING OF STATES TO CONSIDER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

NEW YORK, USA
6-10 JUNE 2016

STATEMENT BY

DR TAREK A. SHARIF,
HEAD OF THE AU DEFENCE AND SECURITY DIVISION
ON THE CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION
Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentleman,

It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the African Union and wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as the Chair of the 6th Biennial Meeting, and commend you for the manner in which you are steering the meeting. The African Union assures you of its full support.

Mr. Chairman,

The African Union fully aligns itself with the statement made by the African Group and wishes to underscore that Africa is among the regions most affected by the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons. These weapons have caused unspeakable death and suffering over the decades and remain a serious impediment to peace, security, stability, and development on the continent and globally. This is why the AU is strongly committed to regional and global efforts to eliminate illicit small arms, and we firmly believe that the Programme of Action remains a critical and comprehensive policy framework to achieve this end.

The Member States of the AU have made significant progress in implementing the different components of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. In this regard, I wish to express the AU’s sincere thanks and appreciation to all the international partners for their continued commitment to support our Member States.
Mr. Chairman,

The AU recognizes that some challenges to the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument still remain. These include limited financial and human resources and also the declining levels of international assistance and the lack of effective assistance coordination at the regional and global levels.

The AU wishes to seize this opportunity to call on all international partners to re-boost their assistance in order to preserve the gains that have been made thus far. It is also imperative that the international community re-considers and improves the current funding modalities. While the AU commends the support provided through the UN Disarmament Trust Fund and UNSCAR, these funds do not match the existing and growing needs and gaps.

In this regard, the AU will support regional coordination and synergies in the implementation of the PoA, the ATT, and other regional instruments. The AU is also particularly keen to promote and support sustainable action that is fully owned and led by Member States. It is, therefore, critical that the relation between donors and recipient countries is transformed into a strong partnership that is based on a shared understanding of the priorities and where both parties are committed to institutional and capacity building and long term impact, in accordance with best practices and mutual agreements.
Mr. Chairman,

The important role of regional and sub-regional organizations in combating illicit small arms cannot be overstated. Over the years, their programmes and initiatives against illicit small arms have led to significant milestones. This makes them key potential partners in global efforts, and their role should be capitalized on in order to close the gaps in implementation as well as coordination.

The AU calls upon international partners to ensure that regional and sub-regional organizations are consulted and involved in project planning and implementation in order to ensure that regional dimensions and border security aspects of illicit proliferation are considered and addressed. Furthermore, the AU encourages a central role for regional and sub-regional organizations in coordinating resource mobilization and assistance.

Mr. Chairman,

On its part, the AU is ready to provide a regional forum for States, the UN and international partners to discuss modalities to enhance the capacities of Member States to meet their obligations under the POA and ITI as well as on the strengthened role of regional and sub-regional organizations in this regard.

In concluding, the AU delegation hopes that this meeting agrees on substantial and results-oriented recommendations to reinforce the Programme of Action.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman