REMARKS BY H.E. AMB. SMAIL CHERGUI, AU COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY, AT THE OPENING OF A WORKSHOP ON FINALIZATION OF THE GUIDELINE ON HIV INTERVENTIONS IN AU PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS

6 OCTBER, 2015.
I am pleased to welcome you all to this important workshop on the finalization of the guidelines on HIV interventions in African Union Peace Support Operations. I would also like to thank the AU Medical Services for developing this important document.

I note that you have set for yourselves a very busy meeting agenda. So, let me quickly emphasize three areas that deserve our attention with regard to HIV interventions in AU Peace Support Operations:

**First**, as you are all aware, Africa continues to face challenges with persistence of conflicts and cases of relapse into violence in some parts of our continent. In response to the security challenges, we have developed a number of tools including the African Standby Force that enable Africans to respond swiftly to crises in order to prevent escalation and build peace. As we deploy our peace operations made up of military, police and civilians from diverse background, they will be confronted with mass displacement of populations and other disasters. It is well-known fact that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is also exacerbated by conditions of instability and therefore we must equip our peacekeepers to deal with these new challenges.
This requires developing the capacity of our peacekeepers to become advocates and actors for awareness and prevention of HIV transmission by encouraging relevant training for peacekeepers, pre-deployment orientation, voluntary and confidential testing, treatment of personnel and exchange of best practices and countries policies. This meeting and the document you discuss, will go a long way to strengthen our capacity in dealing with the pandemic especially at this critical juncture with respect to the operationalization African Standby Force and its Rapid Deployment Capability. I am pleased that you are reviewing this document on the eve of AMANI Africa Field Training Exercise, and do hope that this aspect will be incorporated into the exercise.

Secondly, you are not starting in vacuum. This workshop should build on the work already done by the Commission and incorporate some of the plan of actions adopted by the Heads of State and Government in their efforts to fight against HIV/AIDS such as the Abuja plan of actions towards the elimination of HIV and AIDs, tuberculosis and malaria in Africa, in order to finalize a rich document that we will be able to draw upon every time we will be called to deploy a peace support operation.

Lastly, I am convinced that the diverse set of skills and experiences represented here will result in the finalization of the guidelines with concrete recommendations for implementation and provide further inputs and impetus to the attainment of our common objective to enhance peace as well as human security in Africa.

On this note, I would like to officially declare open the workshop on finalization of the guideline on HIV interventions in African Union peace support operations and wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you for your kind attention.