REVITALIZING THE NOUAKCHOTT AND DJIBOUTI PROCESSES: IMPROVED INTELLIGENCE SHARING TOWARDS ENHANCED SECURITY IN THE SAHELO-SAHARA AND HORN OF AFRICA REGIONS

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STATEMENT BY
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His Excellency Hanana Ould Sidi, Minister of Defense of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania,
His Excellency Brigadier General Hanana Ould Henoun Ould Sidi, Director General of the Mauritanian Intelligence Service,
Esteemed Directors General and Representatives of Intelligence and Security Services of the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes and the Accra Initiative,
Ambassador Zainab Ali Kotoko, Executive Secretary CISSA,
Ambassador Khadiejatou Mbareck-Fall, Ambassador of Mauritania to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union,
Distinguished Colleagues, members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union, I welcome you to this meeting on the Revitalization of Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes. Revitalizing these security mechanisms is critical to collectively responding to the security threats in the Sahelo-Sahara and Horn of Africa/East Africa regions.

First, I thank the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for hosting this meeting and their warm hospitality. I would like to give a special word of thanks to Ambassador Khadiejetou, the Mauritanian Ambassador to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union, for the enthusiasm with which she embraced our request to hold this meeting in Nouakchott and the kindness and support she has given throughout the planning and organization of this meeting. Its success will owe a great deal to her.

Nouakchott is the birthplace of these unique security mechanisms, established a decade ago to address the worsening security situation in the Sahelo-Sahara region. In 2015, it was replicated as the Djibouti Process in the Horn of Africa/East Africa region due to increased insecurity, violent extremism and terrorism.

In the Sahelo-Sahara region, despite the expansion of the terrorist threat in the past decade, Mauritania has maintained security within its borders and thwarted the expansion of violent and criminal networks into the country. Mauritania’s success is a lesson to the rest of the region and the countries of the Djibouti Process. We will, therefore, spend the best part of the meeting sharing experiences, lessons and best
practices from other countries to build on these successes and strengthen our collective efforts to prevent and eradicate the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism across Africa.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Establishing the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes was a visionary step in facilitating states’ security cooperation across the regional economic communities (RECs). If adequately leveraged, these mechanisms will contribute to increased information and intelligence sharing, strengthening border control measures, and promoting the full operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture, the APSA, towards our common strategic goal of silencing the guns and ending violent conflict in Africa.

Excellencies, as you are all aware, the Sahelo-Saharan space, the Horn of Africa, and the continent at large have continued to experience a deteriorating security situation, which has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians and the displacement of millions more. For instance, the proliferation of non-state armed groups in the Liptako-Gourma area of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, which is a manifestation of complex security, political, socio-economic and environmental challenges, triggered a multiplicity of states and other stakeholders initiatives, with the support of partners, like the establishment of the Liptako–Gourma Authority. Other initiatives in this region over the years have included the African Union International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), which transitioned to the U.N. Integrated Multidimensional Mission for Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA), the G5 Sahel, the Accra initiative, the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL), and, more recently, the Sahel Alliance. These interventions have had the shared objective of ensuring durable peace and security in the region. However, in spite of these efforts, we have witnessed mixed results as the security situation has worsened.

There are concerns that terrorist groups could spread to the coastal countries and link up with transnational criminal groups involved in piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as with human and contraband trafficking gangs, to fund their operations. States must, therefore, focus on fully operationalizing the maritime security architecture as an integral part of the APSA. This will contribute to fighting arms trafficking through the sea and cutting off sinister financial schemes sustaining terrorist and criminal networks through trafficking and smuggling.
Excellencies,

The experience in the Horn of Africa, with Al Shabaab in Somalia and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) operating in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, is similar. The Eastern Africa Fusion and Liaison Unit (EA-FLU), established under the Djibouti Process, continues to provide a framework for cooperation between and among the states and common strategic partners in sharing intelligence and developing joint strategies against common security threats. This includes support to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), which, in partnership with the Somali Security Forces, continues to degrade the capabilities of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group in Somalia.

All these regional approaches underline the seriousness with which states are joining efforts to effectively combat, degrade and defeat the terrorist and criminal groups operating in the region.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Although these cooperation mechanisms continue to contribute to addressing the security challenges in these regions, they were last convened by the African Union in 2018, even though the intelligence and security services have continued to meet. Hence, the African Union Commission, in collaboration with CISSA, is convening this meeting to revitalize these processes and to link their efforts with those of regional mechanisms such as the G5-Sahel, MNJTF, MISAHEL and ATMIS, established to address insecurity in these regions.

The security situations in the two regions continue to deteriorate, exacerbated by the governance challenges witnessed in some of the countries and the outbreak of the conflict in Sudan, creating a political and security vacuum and triggering the influx of foreign fighters and weapons. There is, therefore, the need for more robust security collaboration and coordination to prevent terrorist and criminal groups from deepening their roots in these countries.

As the MINUSMA is scheduled to exit Mali in two months amidst the ongoing drawdown and final exit of ATMIS from Somalia in December 2024 and faced with the armed conflict in Sudan, there is renewed urgency for the countries of these regions to assume full responsibility for the restoration and maintenance of peace, security and stability. The security threats in these regions are not confined to national boundaries nor the boundaries of the regional economic communities. Therefore, it is critical to
revitalize the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes to strengthen cooperation, intelligence sharing and joint programming.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In the next three days, we must exchange information on the current state of affairs, identify concrete next steps to revive these frameworks and agree on modalities of enhanced cooperation at the strategic and operational levels to ensure sustainability. The routine monitoring to ensure that these mechanisms reverse the negative insecurity trends is critical as we work to silence the guns in Africa. I wish to assure you that the A.U. Commission remains committed to supporting the renewed cooperation between the various states at this meeting.

Security threats will continue to emerge and even mutate. Still, a multidimensional response combining military action, police and law enforcement cooperation, cross-border cooperation, and stabilization and reconstruction efforts will contribute to a holistic response and strengthen governance. The African Union Commission, including through its specialized institutions like the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation and the Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Centre, will spare no effort in providing multidimensional support to the Member States to lay the foundation for durable peace and security in these regions and Africa at large.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to conclude by calling on each of you and the institutions you represent to work with us as we strive to silence the guns for a peaceful and prosperous Africa that is people-driven.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you fruitful deliberations.

**Shukran!**