OPENING STATEMENT

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EXPERTS MEETING, 9 MAY 2022
Major General Mamadou Gaye of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Senegal and Chair of this Experts Meeting

Members of the Bureau of this 14th meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security,

Representatives of Member States, as well as from Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution,

International Partners attending this opening ceremony, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Let me on behalf of the Commissioner for Political Affairs Peace and Security H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adedoye, and the African Union Commission, warmly welcome the esteemed Member States of the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) to this 14th meeting of the STCDSS held at Experts Level.

Let me also welcome our international partners who are attending the opening session of the STCDSS as observers for the first time. This is in line with the objective of the Commissioner to ensure smart partnership.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay tribute to all AU PSO personnel that are in the field contributing to the fight against terrorism and violent extremism from the Horn of Africa to the Sahel, particularly those that have paid the ultimate price as well as those recovering from injuries as a result of terrorist attacks. The attack in Ceel Baraf against our troops in the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia Base is a recent reminder of the sacrifices made by Member States Contributing personnel in support of efforts to fight against terrorism in Africa.

The African Union strongly condemns these attacks by terrorist groups which pose the biggest threat to peace and security in the continent and reaffirms its commitment to continue its efforts in eliminating the scourge of terrorism from our continent. It is within this context that this meeting will be briefed on current efforts by the Commission in ensuring prevention and response to terrorism and violent extremism – leading to the Extra-Ordinary Summit on this issue scheduled at the end of this month in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

Mr Chairperson, Members of the Bureau of this 14th STCDSS
Representatives of Member States and RECs/RMs

As you are aware, the STCDSS is a key Policy Organ of the African Union (AU) established pursuant to Article 14 of the Constitutive Act of the AU (2000). Its mandate is to provide guidance and direction to the AU Commission (AUC) on matters of defense, safety and security. This meeting thus serves as a platform for the Commission to provide updates on previous decisions and priorities related to peace and security on the continent for further direction by this 14th meeting of the STCDSS.
It is in this regard that the Commission submitted the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission which highlights progress achieved by the Commission in the implementation of relevant decision on peace and security issues since the 13th Ordinary and 3rd Extraordinary Meetings of the STCDSS held from 3 to 5 November 2020 and 31 January 2021 respectively.

Noting that the Report of the Chairperson will be presented subsequently, allow me to only highlight very briefly, six key priorities facilitated by the Commission and milestones achieved since the last STCDSS meetings:

1. **First**, the Commission finalized the AU-RECs/RMs MoU on the Employment of the ASF which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the AU and the RECs/RMs in the deployment and employment of the ASF.

2. **Second**, following completion of the implementation period of the Maputo Five-Year Work Plan on the African Standby Force (2016 – 2020), the Commission reviewed progress achieved in its implementation and has developed a successor plan on the Enhancement of the ASF which covers the period 2021 to 2025.


4. **Fourth**, the Commission continues to record significant progress in its effort towards the enhancement of the AU Compliance Framework (AUCF) for PSOs. This includes entry into an AU-EU-UN Tripartite Partnership – with financial support from the EU, for the enhancement of the AU Compliance Framework.

5. **Fifth**, the AU continues to support implementation of the mandates of current AU mandated and authorised PSOs and requests Member States for their unwavering commitment and continued solidarity towards the achievement of their key priorities.

6. **Sixth**, the Commission is also facilitating efforts towards addressing the surge in Unconstitutional Changes of Governments (UCG) in the Continent - which has become a serious concern for the African Union.

**Mr Chairperson, Members of the Bureau of this 14th STCDSS**
**Representatives of Member States and RECs/RMs**

All these efforts fall within the framework of the implementation of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture and are part of the activities aimed at achieving the noble vision of silencing the guns in Africa - to ensure a peaceful and stable Africa in line with the letter and spirit of Agenda 2063. In this regard, the Commission will continue to rely on the guidance provided by the STCDSS to further enhance on-going efforts for the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa.
Let me end by reiterating the importance for this 14th meeting of the STCDSS to provide clear guidance on how to enhance the utilization of the ASF, including a review of the ASF concept to ensure it is in line with the AU Doctrine on PSO adopted by the 3rd Extraordinary meeting of the STCDSS – and aligned to current conflict contexts and realities.

The Commission thus look forward to the usual constructive deliberations and continue to rely on the direction provided by the STCDSS towards achievement of the peace and security objectives of our Union.

I thank you for your kind attention!