Dear readers,

It is my pleasure to share with you this eighth edition of the African Union (AU) Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) newsletter.

As you may be aware, Phase II of the African Union DDR program which commenced in 2017, will last until 2019. Building off Phase I, the expected project impact for the next phase of the DDR program will be the “Increased leadership role of APSA institutions in addressing continental DDR issues”.

The focus in Phase II was determined following a review of Phase I and the identification of lessons learnt. In this regard, key priority areas of engagement have been identified and these include: (i) Providing operational support to national and regional DDR interventions through galvanizing the capacity created in Phase One; (ii) Solidifying the collaboration between the AU-UN-WB to complement the implementation of the DDR program, which is now under the APSA support program; and (iii) Identifying strategic priority areas for the new phase of the DDR program; such as enhancing DDR linkages with the Solemn Declaration on Silencing the Guns by 2020, strengthening DDR programming to incorporate cross-cutting issues and to identify ways in which the AU can take the lead in shaping continental DDR language that reflects the changing conflict context.

I would like to emphasize the importance of institutional strengthening and partnerships in enhancing synergies between stakeholders in DDR, and increased collaboration between AU Commission departments as well as external partners. The Inter-Departmental Task Force (IDTF) on PCRD is a good example in providing both strategic and operational support to the Commission as well as the Member States. Going forward, the DDR program will work closely with existing coordination and partnership modalities to feed into wider post conflict recovery and stabilization efforts.

I sincerely hope that our readers will enjoy this eighth edition and find the information captured both insightful and informative.

Best Wishes,

H.E. Amb. Smail Chergui
Commissioner for Peace and Security
African Union Commission
The 8th meeting of the African Union (AU)-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) was held on 30-31 May 2017 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

On DDR, the meeting noted the substantial support that will be required by MNJTF to handle disengaged Boko Haram fighters considering the regional nature of the operation and urged the AUC to assume a lead role on matters regarding the provision of DDR support to the MNJTF in light of the overlap in RECs membership among participating states. The meeting noted that despite the ongoing conflict situation in Somalia, significant work has been undertaken in handling disengaged combatants and implementing other DDR components. The meeting therefore noted that unstable situations should not preclude DDR and encouraged innovative and gradual approaches that integrate DDR in stabilization operations in a manner that responds to the urgent needs of states and PSOs. The meeting also received a report on Child Protection during armed conflict, and the need for the rehabilitation of all children associated with armed forces or groups.

The meeting discussed the current situation in South Sudan and acknowledged the dire situation in the country. They nonetheless expressed hope that the current AU and IGAD conflict management efforts will reap results and pave the way for stabilization interventions.

On SALW, the meeting expressed concern over what appears to be a spread of craft arms production across several regions. The meeting proposed that the AUC considers this matter in the scope of its soon to be launched illicit arms flows mapping study and provide policy guidance. The meeting reiterated the need to effectively address border security as a critical dimension of illicit SALW control and stressed the need for engaging Member States at both the political and operational levels to address the multitude of associated challenges including lack of political will, poor border control capacities and corruption. The meeting noted the renewed efforts on illicit SALW control at the levels of UMA and CEN-SAD and called on both to support the AU through the relevant policy organs to ensure their integration into future APSA funding programs.

On PSSM, the meeting noted that the tendency to view PSSM in purely security and technical terms has overshadowed the associated political issues. This resulted in a considerable delays in project implementation, and in some cases, the reluctance of national authorities to participate in projects. It was emphasized that PSSM interventions include political consultations at the higher political level, as well as at the lower inter-institutional field level. The meeting also noted that the coordination and follow-up challenges such as frequent changes of interlocutors, both at the level of recipient states and providers of assistance, which results in delays and loss of institutional memory. Issues regarding the involvement and coordination among RECs were also raised. It was noted that the AU-PSSM project has an important role to play in this regard.

On the Arms Trade Treaty, the meeting took note that as of date, 22 AU Member States are parties, 17 are signatories, with another 16 remaining outside the regime. The meeting thus underlined that there is still work to be done to enhance ratification levels in several regions and welcomed the outreach activities planned by the different Members in 2017 and 2018.

The meeting supported the proposal for developing a Continental SALW Plan of Action under Silencing the Guns, and provided valuable inputs to enhance its scope and design, including the incorporation of projects that address the development dimensions of arms proliferation and control, engaging the full range of government institutions to ensure effectiveness and sustainability; and the need to clearly define the scope of implementing agencies that will collaborate with the AU, RECs and Regional Bodies on the implementation of priority interventions.

The meeting adopted the report of the 7th Meeting of the AU-Regions Steering Committee, and decided that the 9th meeting will be at the SADC HQ in Gaborone in the 4th quarter of 2017.
On 7 November 2016, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) Retreat held a meeting in Lusaka under the theme: Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020. At the meeting, Council recalled the Solemn Declaration of the AU Assembly, adopted during the Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU in 2013, which stressed the determination of African leaders “to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa, to make peace a reality for all our people and to rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters and violent conflicts and to prevent genocide. Council pledged not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans and undertake to end all wars by 2020.”

The retreat brought together all 15 members of the AU PSC, participants from the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) as well as ECOSOCC and African Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The retreat concluded with the adoption of an AU Master Roadmap on practical steps for silencing the guns in Africa by 2020, through an inclusive and collaborative approach to confronting common peace and security challenges on the Continent.

In line with this, PSD will continue to support Member States in the implementation of a set of strategic security areas covered in the 2004 Common African Defense and Security Policy, the 2006 Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy, and other policy instruments and decisions adopted by the PSC Protocol and the Assembly of the Union. These areas include controlling the illicit proliferation of SALW, DDR and SSR.

The AU and the UN undertook a joint visit to Darfur, the Republic of the Sudan, as part of the Strategic Review of the African Union – United Nations Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). The visit was conducted from 05 to 17 March 2017.

The objective of the Strategic Review was to provide detailed recommendations to the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council on the mission’s priorities, its configuration and to make recommendations on the way forward. The review was conducted in close consultation with the Government of Sudan and other stakeholders on the ground including the diplomatic community and UN representatives in Khartoum.

The AU delegation led by Mr Wuyi Omitoogun, Senior Political Advisor in the AU Liaison Office in Sudan, also comprised of two staff from the AU Commission, Peace and Security Department. The UN delegation was led by Ms Daniela Kroslak, Principal Officer/Team Leader of the Sudan Integrated Operations Team and comprised of ten (10) senior UN officers and experts in various fields.

The main recommendations of the Strategic Review focused on widespread proliferation of weapons in the areas of Internally Displaced Persons and a resulting need for a strong governmental strategy and programme on DDR and arms collection. On SSR it was recommended that there was a need to strengthen capacities of the defence and security institutions and it was therefore recommended that an SSR process be initiated based on the national context, and in line with the AU Policy Framework on SSR adopted in 2013.
On 23 February 2017, the AU PSC convened its 661st meeting, at ministerial level, on the theme “Protecting Children from Fighting Adult Wars: Highlighting the Case of Child Soldiers in Africa”. During this meeting, Council gave clear mandate for DDR/SSR and small arms programs.

In its communique the Council:

“Reiterated its concern over the continuation of illicit proliferation of small and light weapons, a situation which creates the terrible conditions that contribute to recruitment of children into child soldiers”

“Urged Member States to share their experiences, among themselves, in programmes of rehabilitating ex-child soldiers and integrating them into societies”

“Underlined the need for governments to institutionalize the protection of children within their DDR and SSR programmes, as well as to include rehabilitation and opportunities for education to former child soldiers, particularly in countries emerging from conflicts”

“Commended the development by the AU of the Operational Guidance Documents on DDR and children which can be used by all AU peace support operations missions, AU Member States and RECs/RMs, as reference documents highlighting case studies and lessons learnt across the continent.”

Council also applauds all Member States who have established formal demobilization and reintegration processes to ensure a long-term reintegration of children into society.

In line with the PSC pronouncements above, PSD signed an agreement with UNICEF on mainstreaming of child protection into the work of the department focusing on priority areas for 2017. These include enhancing the capacity of the department through recruitment of a Child Protection Advisor, support to AU peace support operations to increase their ability to handle disengaged children and support to Member States in the implementation of treaties signed, in particular the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
Operational Support to the Member States and PSOs

The AU High Level and Technical Multi-Disciplinary Needs Assessment Mission to the Republic of The Gambia

H.E Pierre Buyoya, former President of the Republic of Burundi and AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, led a high level delegation composed of UN, ECOWAS and EU to Banjul, The Gambia, at the invitation of H.E. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of The Gambia, who received the delegation on 16 May 2017.

Other High Level participants included Ms. Ade Mamonyane Lekoetje, UNDP Resident Director/UN Resident Coordinator for The Gambia, H.E Attila Lajos, EU Ambassador to The Gambia and Dr. Cyriaque P. Agnekethom, Director for Peacekeeping and Regional Security of the ECOWAS Commission.

In parallel, the AU delegation through the Taskforce on Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) undertook a technical needs assessment mission in The Gambia from 13 to 19 May 2017, with focus on the Security Sector Reform, economic reforms and national reconciliation. This mission was necessitated by a request from The Gambian Government to the African Union’s Peace and Security Council on the 29th of March 2017.

In pursuit of coordinated and sustained international efforts, the AU delegation collaborated with the joint ECOWAS, EU and UN fact-finding mission to explore measures to effectively support the Government. The findings of the assessment and fact-finding missions contribute to the enhanced coordination of international partners’ efforts to support the Government and people of The Gambia.

In his remarks, H.E. President Barrow expressed appreciation to the international community for the continuous support to the country, which he alluded, reassures the Government and people of The Gambia in their journey on democracy, governance, economic recovery and pursuit for truth, justice and reconciliation. In this regard, the President appealed for financial and technical support in the areas of training and professionalizing of the justice, defense and security sectors. He emphasized the significant role of the ECOMIG troops in securing and stabilizing the country and the imperatives of adequate support to enable them to execute their mandate.

Key observations include the imperative for SSR to restore the confidence of citizens on security agencies, addressing a potential constitutional crisis over the transitional arrangement for President Adama Barrow to rule for three years, a need for clarity on modalities for the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission as well as heavy indebtedness by the government of the Gambia.

On the way forward, the AU is working with the government of The Gambia to address the situation.
Regional Stabilization Conference for MNJTF Program

As part of the military advancement made by the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad region, the terrorist group has been progressively losing ground with the erosion of its capacities. Due to this, large numbers of Boko Haram fighters are surrendering and denouncing their allegiance to the group, together with their families. In addressing this situation, the Lake Chad Basin Commission requested the AU Commission for support in the following activities:

- Convening of regional consultation processes which comprise three gradual conferences in N’Djamena (Chad), aimed at providing a platform to harmonize DDR activities of affected Member States; and
- Development and implementing of an AU data management system which will be used for registration of disengaging combatants through which biometric data of defectors and their families will be captured in all the 4 operational sectors.

In order to provide the vital DDR assistance to MNJTF in its current capacities of securing the surrendered or captured Boko Haram combatants, and to assist Member States who are implementing DDR activities, PSD intends to support the convening of the first regional stabilization conference that will be held in N’Djamena, Chad.

This conference will support the establishment of DDR mechanisms and assist in the creation of DDR structures within MNJTF as they deal with disengaged combatants, as well as enhance the capacity of Member States implementing DDR activities. The conference will also provide a platform towards ensuring better regional coherence among all affected Member States as they undertake DDR activities. The conference is scheduled to be held in October 2017.

AU Support to the Government of Guinea Bissau Through The Renovation of Bandim Prison, Bissau and Assistance to INTERPOL NCB

The AU Liaison Office in Guinea-Bissau was allocated funding for the implementation of Peace Strengthening Projects in 2016 focused on two projects: The renovation of the Bandim prison in Bissau and operational assistance to the Guinea Bissau INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB).

The two projects started in November and December 2016 and were completed in the first quarter of 2017.

In support of the justice pillar of SSR, the AU supported the renovation of Bandim prison by increasing the number of cells to accommodate more inmates, building separate confinement quarters for female inmates as well as improvement to indoor plumbing and building of a kitchen. The prison was also equipped with an open air facility, an ante room where inmates will be receiving guests as well as Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) in the prison cells so that prison warders can monitor activities of the inmates in all the cells. A new office was also built for the Director of Prisons to enable him to perform his duties efficiently.

The AU also provided assistance to the NCB which was experiencing mobility challenges through the provision of a Toyota Hilux double cabin vehicle and three motor cycles (one each for the border posts). Towards the operationalization of their offices, they were also provided with solar panels, inverters, laptop computers, stationery and cameras to enhance their capacity to monitor border control movements at the three international border posts in Pirada, Jege near Sao Domingo and Bubaque, one of the 88 Islands in the country. The installation of all equipment and training of staff on how to operate the system specifically for immigration control, is currently ongoing.
Arms Marking Training and Development of Weapons Management Structure for AMISOM

In the report on Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation, submitted to the 584th meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), held on 29 March 2016, the Chairperson of the Commission noted that illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) pose a great threat to the safety and security of AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs) personnel, and impacts negatively on the implementation of their mandate. The report also notes that while PSOs are required to undertake disarmament and stabilization operations, they do not always possess the required operational and technical capacities.

Moreover, SALW and ammunition owned by PSOs often run the risk of theft and looting and could be later used to attack troops and civilians or enter into illicit circulation. The report thus recommended that PSOs be capacitated to undertake interventions relating to illicit SALW control as required by the environments in which they operate.

In line with this, the PSD has been and continues to provide support to AU PSOs, and particularly AMISOM, in the areas of SSR, DDR and arms control. This support included an assessment mission undertaken to Mogadishu, Somalia, in September 2015, to consult with the AMISOM leadership and staff on these issues. As part of the recommendations of this mission, PSD was requested to assist in the procurement of arms marking machines, and the subsequent training on the use of these machines as part of the establishment of a weapons management system. In addition, PSD was also requested to assist with DDR/SSR capacity support for AMISOM through the deployment of staff, and assistance in the dissemination of the AMISOM SOP on disengaging combatants through training of AMISOM colleagues.

As a follow up to these recommendations, PSD deployed two consultants (DDR and SSR) to AMISOM for two months: December 2015 – January 2016, procured five arms marking machines and is currently planning a training workshops on the use of these machines, which will be conducted in Mogadishu during 2017.

As part of this training on the use of arms marking machines, a unique code for AU PSO’s will need to be agreed upon which will be used for the training, as well as for official tracing and recording of collected arms. In-order to complement these efforts, PSD with DSD and PSOD to assist PSOs in developing integrated measures and implementation capacities for effective and sustainable arms and ammunition management in mission areas, in line with PSOs respective mandates and the applicable international best practices. This project, in addition to its immediate and medium term impact of improving arms and ammunition management in mission areas, will further establish the foundations and good practices for future operations undertaken by the African Standby Force (ASF).

Couth MC2000 dot-­peen percussion marking machine in use.
(C) Nikhil Acharya/ BICC
Consultative Planning Meeting with DDR focal Points

As part of the PSD efforts to support Member States, RECs/RMs and AU Peace Support Operations in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), PSD has recently embarked on Phase II of its DDR program (2017 - 2019).

In order to ensure that DDR support provided to the Member States is in line with Phase II of the AU DDR program, PSD undertook a consultative planning meeting with all DDR and SSR focal points in the field offices from 9 to 11 May 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The purpose of the meeting is to sensitize on Phase II of the DDR program, as well as jointly prioritize activities for 2017 which can receive funding from HQ. This meeting which brought together DDR/SSR focal points from MISAC - CAR, AULO - Guinea Bissau, AMISOM and MNJTF, created a platform for the identification of priority activities to be implemented in the field, allow for newly appointed DDR and SSR officers to be sensitized on the DDR operational guidance documents and introduce the new DDR program to field officers.

This Consultative meeting was organized to improve the internal coordination and information sharing mechanism between the Headquarters and country field offices on DDR and SSR projects. The AU also took the opportunity to give briefings to new DDR focal points on: Components of Phase II of the AU DDR program; Status updates on the DDR and SSR situation in the field and identifying operational needs on SSR and DDR; and the AU DDR Operations Guidance notes on: Children, Women, Detention, National Frameworks and Reintegration.

As a way forward, work plans for each respective field office were developed for 2017-2018 and the available budget for 2017 was shared for colleagues to begin implementation of activities. Participants also established a communication structure between HQ and field offices deciding to send regular reports and have monthly calls.

The AU DDR Compendium Is Now Live

The PSD is happy to present to you, Compendium of DDR experiences in Africa, a component of the DDR Program accessed via the following link: http://www.peaceau.org/en/page/68-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr

This compendium includes the collation and synthesis of documents on DDR, an exploration of key issues and lessons learned by political and security context, against a number of thematic areas and country.
Working Level Meeting on the Development of DDR Training Standards and on the Review of Updated Operational Guidance Notes

From 6-7 June 2017, a working level meeting was held by the Peace and Security Department at the African Union Commission on the development of DDR training standards and on the review of the updated Operational Guidance Notes. This working meeting was attended by the Peace and Security Department (DSD, PCRD, PSOD and Conflict Management), Political Affairs, Economic Affairs, Department of Rural and Agriculture (DREA), World Bank and ICRC as partners.

One of the core components under Phase II of the AU DDR Programme is work to further strengthen Knowledge Management, Component C of the Project Document, under which there are several interrelated subsidiary objectives (i) Operational Guidance Notes: All OGNs revised and updated with Human Rights Approach incorporated (ii) Training Materials based on OGN developed and training standards harmonized. (iii) Knowledge Management products effectively disseminated to key target audiences and further developed as appropriate.

Towards implementation of the three objectives mentioned above, the meeting discussed: the Revision and finalization of a draft implementation plan which will support scoping of existing practice and undertaking a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) for the development of DDR training standards; and to discuss a draft AU DDR Knowledge Management strategy and validate present revisions made to existing DDR Operational Guidance Notes incorporating human rights issues.

Going forward, participants agreed that there is need to continue to work together and strengthen existing frameworks and structures such as the PCRD Inter departmental Task Force and that the inclusion of Human Rights was an important part of this. Other actions related to the bridging of staffing gaps and the alignment of work plans amongst the various divisions and departments involved are also important.

Strengthening of the knowledge management component for the DDR program should be linked to the further development of the PSD Resource Center and aligned with Commission wide knowledge management initiatives and policy development. It was noted that, it will be important to anticipate the challenge in harmonizing emerging work on CVE/PVE, including the use of terminology and approaches.