CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON ENHANCING ASSISTANCE AND COORDINATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 5 OF THE APMBC AND ARTICLE 4 OF THE CCM

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
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OPENING STATEMENT BY

DR. TAREK A. SHARIF,

HEAD OF DEFENCE AND SECURITY DIVISION
Ms. Diane Misenga Kabeya, Deputy Head of Delegation, ICRC

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the AU Commission, to the consultative meeting on enhancing assistance and coordination in the implementation of article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and article 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Thank you for responding favorably to our invitation. I recognize and appreciate that many of you have joined us directly from Santiago where you attended the 15th Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, held last week. Your presence here today signals your continued commitment to eliminating the scourge of landmines and cluster munitions in the continent.

I also wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women deminers who continue to work in difficult and dangerous conditions to save lives and clear our path to development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting is a follow-up to the workshop co-hosted by the AU and ICRC, from 5 to 7 March 2013, here in Addis Ababa, which provided AU member States with the opportunity to highlight their experiences in meeting their respective obligations under the two Conventions, and to consult with donors and humanitarian demining agencies on how to address some of the gaps and challenges.
Hence, the objective of this meeting is to assess the progress made by African States Parties since then and determine if they are on track to meet their clearance deadlines. The meeting also aims to provide a forum to discuss the specific challenges and bottlenecks facing clearance and how States Parties, donors and humanitarian demining agencies, can work together effectively in addressing them. The different sessions of the meeting will allow all stakeholders to share their perspectives on the challenges and the way forward, and foster a dialogue to strengthen our partnership.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The AU continues to be deeply concerned over the devastating impact of landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, on civilians, as well as on socio-economic development, post-conflict reconstruction and regional integration. This is evident by the decisions and commitments made by the AU and its predecessor, the OAU, since 1995, calling for a continent-wide ban on the production and use of antipersonnel landmines on the African Continent, and for Africa to be a mine-free zone.

More recently, and in March of this year, the Peace and Security Council of the AU, at its 584th meeting, adopted a communiqué under the theme “disarmament, arms control and nonproliferation” in which it called upon Member States that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and appealed to States Parties to spare no effort in meeting their respective clearance obligations. The Council further requested the AU Commission to assist Member States in their clearance activities, as well as facilitate the exchange of expertise and resources among them.
Therefore, this meeting is in response to the request made by the Council and is a continuation of this efforts to implement the AU Strategic Framework fully and effectively. The meeting will also enable the AU to determine how best it can serve coordination among Member States and partners, facilitate the channeling of assistance and foster inter-African cooperation. Your views and recommendations in this regard would be highly welcome.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

It can be recalled that, in 2014, the AU Commission launched the Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War Strategic Framework. The objective of the Strategic Framework is to support AU Member States in reducing the threat posed by conventional weapons, mines, explosive remnants of war, cluster munitions and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), in accordance with the relevant international instruments and best practices.

The Strategic Framework promotes the concept of national ownership and recognizes that while substantial regional and international support and assistance is required, national governments hold the primary responsibility for developing and implementing mine action and explosive hazard management programs. The Strategic Framework consists of three components:

The first is to raise awareness on explosive threats among Member States, including landmines, cluster munitions, IEDs and unstable ammunition stockpiles; and to mobilize technical and financial assistance. The second component aims to assist Member States conduct explosive threat reduction activities such as demining, physical protection and management of conventional weapons and munitions stockpiles, as well
as developing counter-IED capacities. The third component focuses on delivering technical support to the AU Peace Support Operations to ensure adequate training and equipment to respond to all types of explosive threats in mission areas, including IEDs.

It is important to indicate that the AU has already made significant progress in implementing the Strategic Framework. Activities in this regard, include consultative and capacity building workshops on program management and victims’ assistance. The AU also supported the training of 23 practitioners from four affected countries in undergoing training on Explosive Ordinance Disposal at the International Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya. Moreover, the AU provided a number of affected states with de-mining equipment to meet their national training needs and mines clearance deadlines.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to end by calling upon all of you to engage in the discussions openly and constructively, bearing in mind the need to focus on concrete measures and activities that can bring us closer to the goal of completing clearance by the year 2025, in line with the Maputo commitment, as well as the provisions of the CCM. Thank you once again for joining us today, and I look forward to the fruitful deliberations and concrete outcomes of this meeting.

Thank you for your kind attention.