FIRST MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON PHYSICAL SECURITY AND STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT (PSSM-TWG) FOR THE AU-GERMANY PROJECT ON ENHANCED SALW CONTROL AND PSSM IN THE GREATER SAHEL REGION

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
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OPENING REMARKS

BY

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Mr. Matthias Schauer, Deputy Head of Mission of Germany in Addis Ababa

Distinguished representatives of the United Nations, international organizations and non-governmental agencies

Distinguished colleagues from the Bonn International Centre for Conversion,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the AU Commission, let me start by welcoming you all to Addis Ababa, and to this First meeting of the Technical Working Group of the AU-Germany Project on enhancing physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Greater Sahel Region. Indeed, many of you have been actively participating in this project since its inception in 2015, and so, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your commitment and valuable contribution to this project.

At the outset, I would also like to express the African Union’s sincere thanks and appreciation to the German Federal Foreign Office for the strong partnership and continued commitment and support to this project.

Distinguished participants,

As you are aware, this joint pilot project for the Sahel region aims to improve the coordination of small arms PSSM initiatives; identify and address capacity shortfalls; and better link the needs of Sahel States with the resources of donors in a coherent and sustainable manner.
It can be recalled that in June 2016, the Coordination Platform of the plenary meeting held in New York identified a number of problems associated with PSSM and discussed practical ways to improve joint action on PSSM and small arms control initiatives. In this regard, the meeting identified three main elements. The First, was that implementing agencies are delivering much needed trainings on PSSM to individuals from Member States. However, the content and standards of these trainings vary from one agency to another, which in turn results in uneven capacities that do not always meet the highest standards. Second, the meeting recognized that there is no common mechanism to keep track of trained personnel that could be used by stakeholders in the region, when needed.

The meeting, therefore, agreed that there is a need for substantive technical discussions among experts on how to address this problem and to try to envisage common standards in PSSM trainings, and other means to ensure sustainable indigenous capacities. This includes the creation of an AU Roster of PSSM Experts. The roster can help identify experts that can serve in implementing different aspects of PSSM projects in their home countries or neighboring States as required.

Third, the plenary meeting of the coordination platform also acknowledged that national authorities often do not possess the institutional and technical capacities to assess and articulate their needs to the donors and implementing agencies; while the implementing agencies often operate in environments where stakeholders are poorly defined and national ownership is not fully realized.

It was therefore agreed that training programs for national counterparts should exist at the different strategic, operational and technical levels. Furthermore, implementing agencies and national practitioners should be provided with the necessary tools to identify the institutions and capacities that are necessary for effective and sustainable PSSM
interventions. Hence, the development of an operational guidance note was identified as one of the tools that could contribute to addressing this problem.

Distinguished participants,

In light of all the above, the main objectives of this meeting can be envisaged in three main points. The First is centered on assessing the types of PSSM courses that are currently being provided by different agencies. This assessment will help us identify the minimum modules that each course identified should contain. Importantly, we should also consider how these standards can be broadly applied by all stakeholders operating in the region while taking into consideration the critical framework provided by the International Small Arms Control Standards and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines.

The second objective of this meeting is to seek your views on establishing an AU roster of PSSM experts. This should include developing eligibility criteria, vetting and accreditation, and training requirements. The Third and last objective is to identify key thematic areas and topics for inclusion in the operational guidance note on PSSM, which will be developed and validated during the course of 2017.

Distinguished participants,

In terms of the next steps, the report and recommendations of this meeting will be considered by the coordination platform in its plenary meeting, which is expected to be held early next year. In addition, to endorsing and enriching our recommendations, we expect to agree on the modalities for their implementation in partnership with you and other members of the platform. The African Union will also undertake consultations with Member States on minimum standards for PSSM trainings and on the administrative and logistical issues concerning the deployment of the AU Roster of PSSM experts.
Let me conclude by saying that this meeting will significantly strengthen our understanding of all the above issues, streamline contacts and lay down new direction to harmonize our PSSM efforts and interventions.

Once again, let me thank all the partners involved in this project, and wish you all fruitful deliberations.

I thank you for your kind attention.