MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE AU-EU-RECSA PROJECT ON THE FIGHT AGAINST THE ILLICIT ACCUMULATION AND TRAFFICKING OF FIREARMS IN AFRICA

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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

OPENING REMARKS

BY

DR TAREK A. SHARIF
HEAD OF THE AU DEFENSE AND SECURITY DIVISION
Your Excellency, Mr Theoneste Mutsindashyaka, Executive Secretary of RECSA
Distinguished Representative of the European Union, Mr. ROMANO Giorgio,
Distinguished Members of the Steering Committee of the Project,
Distinguished representatives of the United Nations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the African Union Commission, let me start by welcoming you to Addis Ababa, and to the Second Steering Committee meeting for Phase II of the project, on the Fight against the Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of Firearms in Africa, since its launch in 2013. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the European Union for their continued support to this project over the years. I also wish to express our thanks to RECSA for working towards ensuring the full and effective implementation of this project.

Distinguished Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It can be recalled, that the First Steering Committee meeting of Phase II was held on 16 May 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya. During that meeting we had the opportunity to exchange views, make a number of decisions on the expectations of Phase II of the project and the kind of activities that will be undertaken. It is expected that during the course of this meeting, we will get a briefing on progress of the implementation.

The objective of our meeting today, however, is to review the status of implementation of the Project, discuss the challenges facing its implementation and to agree on effective measures to address these challenges.
Distinguished Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This project is an important one for the AU. Indeed, it’s one of the primary tools that we expect, to address the multifaceted challenges of illicit arms proliferation in Africa. In fact, this scheme is very crucial to deliver substantive assistance and support to our Member States. I would like also to underscore that this project is also in line with the AU aspirations to tackle the increasing problem of insecurity and instability caused by the widespread of small arms and their ammunitions. These aspirations that are clearly demonstrated in Agenda 2063, particularly in the commitment made during the 50th Anniversary of the Organization of African Unity-African Union, by African Heads of State and Government, to silence the guns by 2020 and the called for renewed efforts to address the destabilizing effect of arms proliferation.

Most recently, the African Union, Peace and Security Council in its 584 meeting held in March 2016, considered the report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation. The report highlighted a number of challenges facing the collective African response to the problem of illicit arms proliferation, including in the areas of physical security and stockpile management; arms marking, record keeping and tracing; end-user controls; legislative frameworks; and institutional and financial challenges.

On that occasion, the Peace and Security Council adopted a communiqué in which it renewed its commitment to focus more efforts towards addressing arms proliferation and also called on member states to join and implement the regional and international framework against illicit arms proliferation.
Distinguished Members, Ladies and gentlemen,

Silencing the Guns by 2020 requires a very strong commitment to implement AU policies, frameworks, instruments and this important project. It is in this regard, that I would like to highlight three important points, as follows:

First, the AU recognizes that the project has faced and still faces challenges. Hence, AU collaboration with the EU is of highest importance in this regard, to address these challenges and gaps. Certainly, an effective coordinated between the AU and EU will help RECSA to be more focused and effective in implementing this project.

Second, the Members of the Steering Committee of the Project, during this meeting, are expected to make recommendations to oversee the best solutions in order to overcome the different challenges.

Lastly, the next few months are of highest importance and the issue of information sharing and coordination between AU and RECSA cannot be overemphasized, at this stage. Indeed, this will be important for the AU, in terms of making the necessary follow up and measure the progress of implementation.

In conclusion colleagues, it is important for the AU to continue its efforts to ensure the successful conclusion of this project, as the issue of small arms proliferation, remain at the core of the AU efforts to reduce conflict in Africa. Indeed, we all have a shared responsibility to accelerate actions to achieve a conflict free Africa by 2020.
I therefore trust that our session today will enable us to openly and constructively address the challenges and map a way forward.

I look forward to the exchanges that we will have during this meeting, the opportunities we uncover and steps we agree on to realize our common goals.

Thank you for your kind attention.