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

**10 FEBRUARY 2017
MOMBASA, KENYA**

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. Jean-Pierre Bardoul,
Distinguished Members of the Steering Committee of the Project,
Distinguished Representatives of the United Nations and INTERPOL,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Welcome to the third meeting of the Steering Committee of the joint AU-EU-RECSA project on the Fight Against the Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of Firearms in Africa. Your presence here today demonstrates your continued commitment to meeting the objectives of the project.

I wish, at the outset, on behalf of the AU Commission, to thank the European Union (EU) for financing the project, and the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) for spearheading its implementation. I would also like to thank all of you for embracing the project and for being co-implementers. Indeed, this project would not have succeeded without your support.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It can be recalled that the initial discussions, in 2008, that led to the establishment of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), also highlighted the need for a continental initiative on the fight against illicit SALW. I would like to thank the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) for the useful insights, and RECSA for pursuing the idea of developing a continental project on the fight against Illicit SALW on the continent.

We have come a long way since the project kick-off in March 2010, and as the project come to an end, it is important that we strengthen our efforts to ensure that we accomplish the planned activities in a satisfactory manner. You will agree with me that we have learned enormously from this project, on how to design and implement a continental initiative like this one. We have also seen the advantages of working together and learning from each other, on how to address a transnational threat like the illicit trafficking and circulation of arms. The lessons learned from this project will certainly inform similar initiatives.

This meeting will enable us to review the status of implementation of the project, discuss the challenges facing its implementation and agree on the way forward that will enable smooth implementation of the remaining activities of Phase 2 of the project.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Concerns over illicit SALW on the continent remains relevant. The effective and efficient management of SLAW, therefore, requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders across the board. It is as part of these efforts that we are gathered here in Mombasa. We all have one goal in mind: the proper management of SALW in Africa.

I wish to take this opportunity to also make reference to the Solemn Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the AU, at the 50th Anniversary of the AU in 2013, in which they resolved not to leave the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans and undertake to end all wars in Africa by 2020. This is to be achieved through the 'silencing the guns' initiative, also known as 'Vision 2020'. This Solemn

Declaration, also referred to as 'Agenda 2063', is a strategic framework for socio-economic transformation for Africa over the next 50 years. Central in achieving this is for all guns to be silent in Africa by 2020.

In order to give practical expression to this vision, the Peace and Security Council of the AU, in a retreat held in Lusaka from the 7th to the 9th of November 2016, developed the Master Roadmap for Silencing the Guns, which was subsequently adopted by the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Addis Ababa 30th -31st of January 2017.

The Master Roadmap encompasses a number of practical steps and modalities of action, such as preventing the illicit inflow of weapons into the continent through monitoring, detecting and responding to illicit trade and violations of arms embargoes, including through the framework established by the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In so doing, the Master Roadmap also puts forward steps and action points regarding building member States' capacities to implement legislative and operational measures, in line with the ATT and other regional and international instruments. The implementation of the roadmap is the responsibility of all AU organs, Regional Economic Communities, and other regional bodies. It is, therefore, my hope that we shall continue to cooperate in the fight against illicit SALW on the continent, as we work towards silencing the guns in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This AU-EU project is an indicative approach in cooperating towards achieving the AU agenda of Silencing the Guns by 2020, which requires a very strong commitment in

the implementation of AU policies, frameworks, instruments in spite of the challenges faced. Allow me reiterate the need for enhanced cooperation and collaboration between the AU, EU, RECSA and the RECs in order to address some of these pitfalls.

I trust that we will openly and constructively address these challenges and map out a way forward for the project. I, therefore, look forward to constructive deliberations during this meeting, as we identify opportunities for the next steps to realize our common goal for a gun-free continent by 2020. The Project Coordinator will present proposed activities that have been amended in light of the prevailing challenges, as well as new activities that are meant to respond to emerging needs. These should set the tone for our deliberations

In conclusion, colleagues, let me highlight that we all have a shared responsibility to accelerate the implementation of activities to achieve a conflict free Africa by 2020.

Thank you for your kind attention.