OPENING REMARKS

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AU-GERMANY PROJECT ON ENHANCED SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS CONTROL AND PHYSICAL SECURITY AND STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT IN THE GREATER SAHEL REGION DONOR COORDINATION MEETING

BERLIN, GERMANY
22 MARCH 2017
Ambassador Susanne Baumann, Deputy Federal Commissioner for Disarmament, German Federal Foreign Office,

Excellencies, representatives of the donor community, regional organizations and specialized agencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be back in Berlin and I wish to thank the German Federal Foreign Office for graciously co-hosting this meeting and for being a steadfast partner in this joint endeavour. I would also like to sincerely thank you all for your continued engagement with this project.

Over the past two years this project has provided an important platform, bringing together all stakeholders to foster a common vision and approach towards our shared objective of mitigating and eliminating the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Sahel region. Broadly said, small arms and light weapons contribute to more death and destruction in Africa. Hence the imperative to find effective solutions.

Indeed, the issue of illicit arms proliferation, circulation and trafficking is gaining more attention within the relevant organs of the African Union and concrete steps are being taken to address this problem. The year 2016 marked some important developments in the strengthening of the AU’s conflict prevention and management frameworks, most notably with the development of the AU Master Roadmap for Silencing the Guns in Africa, which was adopted by the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Addis Ababa on 30-31 January 2017.
The Master Roadmap encompasses a number of practical steps and modalities for action, such as preventing the illicit inflow of weapons into the continent and to conflict zones through strengthened enforcement of arms embargoes as well as through continent-wide adherence to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In achieving this, the Peace and Security Council, the AU Peace Support Operations and the Regional Economic Communities will become more involved in arms control issues and more efforts will be geared towards building Member States capacities to implement control measures in line with regional and international instruments. The AU Assembly will review the situation at each of its Ordinary Sessions.

It is important to underline that this joint AU-Germany project will have a direct and positive contribution to the Silencing the Guns initiative as it aims to strengthen controls over government-held arms and ammunition, which are recognized to be among the main sources of weapons in illicit circulation. Therefore, the AU looks forward to your continued support and partnership in implementing the project and the roadmap as a whole.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am glad to provide a brief update on the progress achieved in the implementation of the project. It is to be recalled that at the first meeting of the coordination platform, held on 11 June 2016 in New York, the AU and Germany proposed a set of deliverables that aim to address some of the key gaps that were discussed during the project’s inception phase. These proposals pertain to building sustainable national capacities in the region, providing guidance to Member States and implementing agencies on implementing sustainable and nationally-owned PSSM
projects, and applying the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) and the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) in resource-scarce settings.

In order to further conceptualize these deliverables, the project’s Technical Working Group held its meeting on 12-13 October 2016 in Addis Ababa. I wish to thank the members for sharing their insights and expertise during this exercise. Regarding the establishment of an AU Roster of PSSM experts, the AU has approached member states and regional organizations calling for the nomination of qualified practitioners that could be considered for the roster. Once nominations are received, they will be thoroughly vetted and categorized on the basis of the IATG competencies, while additional training needs for the rostered individuals will be identified and delivered throughout the course of the year. The PSSM Roster will enable the AU and regional organizations respond to requests for assistance from AU member states. It will also be available for use by the various donors and implementing agencies in the region, thereby ensuring sustainable and continuous capacity building of local expertise.

The Technical Working Group also noted that there is currently insufficient guidance on PSSM interventions in resource scarce settings and thus supported the development of the proposed Operational Guidance Notes (OGN) and associated training modules. In this respect, the first OGN will address the necessary preconditions for PSSM, including advice on how to foster national ownership and government responsibility. The second OGN will focus on incremental steps towards the application of the ISACS and IATGs. The terms of reference and outlines of these OGNS have been finalized and the AU and Germany are currently in the process of identifying qualified consultants for their development. A workshop to validate the OGNS is expected to be held in mid-2017.
I would like to take this opportunity to express the AU’s thanks and appreciation to the German Federal Foreign Office and the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) for their financial contribution to these efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we move forward on realizing the objectives of this project, the critical need for effective donor engagement cannot be overemphasized. The AU recognizes that a number of factors are contributing to the decline in support to arms control initiatives in the Sahel region and Africa as a whole, including shifts in international assistance policies, emerging priorities in the middle-east, and general donor fatigue. These factors further highlight the need for effective donor coordination and collaboration in order to maximize both immediate and long-term impacts and to ensure the balanced distribution of available resources. This brings me to the main objectives of today’s meeting.

While the forums that have been held under this project have enabled continued information sharing and networking, there is a need to exert deliberate and well-planned efforts to achieve the ultimate but elusive goal of coordination. Therefore, today’s meeting aims to explore concrete measures in which donors can coordinate their actions beyond information sharing. As outlined in the concept note for this meeting, the aim is to consider how best the different approaches of division of labor, common frameworks and harmonization can be applied in light of the operational realities and institutional constraints.
The second objective of the meeting is more specific to the issue of capacity building. In this regard, the aim is to discuss how coordination and joint collaboration among donors can be made more strategic in order to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the PSSM training courses currently provided. As you are aware, training programs are often delivered on the basis of approaches and modules applied by the respective implementing agencies, but sometimes without an overarching and long term sustainability plan.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I strongly urge you to engage in today’s discussions constructively and with an open mind so we can realize the change required to achieve the desired impact on the ground.

Thank you for your kind attention.