TRAINING WORKSHOP ON ELABORATION BY STATES PARTIES TO THE TREATY OF PELINDABA OF THE INITIAL ANNUAL NATIONAL REPORT

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OPENING STATEMENT

BY

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HEAD OF THE DEFENSE AND SECURITY DIVISION
Distinguished delegates and representatives of States Parties to the Treaty of Pelindaba,

Distinguished delegates and representatives of AU Member States

Your Excellency, Chairperson and Commissioners of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Chairperson of the Commission, the Depositary of the Treaty of Pelindaba, I have the great pleasure to welcome you to this important training workshop on reporting by States Parties pursuant to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, or the Treaty of Pelindaba.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African Union has always been committed to global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Indeed, as early as 1964, when the the 1st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the landmark Cairo Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa. This Declaration formed the basis and origin of subsequent efforts that culminated in the adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which established the continent, as a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone.

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones remain an instrumental approach to strengthening global nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament norms and consolidate international efforts towards achieving the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons – the NPT.
I wish to seize this opportunity to underscore that the African Union remains strongly committed to the three NPT pillars of disarmament, nonproliferation and peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology – all which are mutually reinforcing and equally fundamental for the authority and effectiveness of the regime.

Indeed, since the entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba, in 2009, the African Union Commission has spared no effort in advancing its full implementation through taking concrete steps towards the operationalization of its mechanism for compliance; the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE).

The important role that AFCONE will play cannot be overstated. Its work will not be only limited to ensuring States Parties compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations, but it will also have a critical role in enhancing regional and international cooperation to advance the peaceful applications of nuclear sciences and technology to advance socio-economic development, particularly in the areas of health, agriculture, industry and energy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The objective of this meeting is to offer participants with the opportunity to exchange views and information on the issue of reporting, as the workshop will provide a number of presentations that will lead to a greater understanding of the issue.
Indeed, reporting remains an important element to ensure transparency. In fact, the principle of transparency in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation cannot be over emphasized. This was recognized in Article 13 of the Treaty of Pelindaba regarding Report and exchanges of information which states that each Party shall submit an annual report to AFCONE on its nuclear activities as well as other matters relating to the Treaty. Pursuant to this Article, AFCONE developed detailed guidelines for States Parties to facilitate the annual reporting process which were circulated to States Parties in 2014 as well as prior to this workshop.

It is important to stress, here, that the national annual report will not only serve to provide assurances that States Parties are complying with their non-proliferation obligations, but will provide a clear picture of the progress being made at the national level in the area of peaceful applications of nuclear sciences and technology. This in turn will enable AFCONE to assist the States Parties in building their national capacities to enhance the peaceful applications and facilitate inter-state and inter-regional exchanges in this area.

Therefore, is it important not to view national reports, as a burden on States Parties, but as a key tool to enhance cooperation and exchanges in the area peaceful applications in the areas of health, agriculture, industry and energy.

I would like to mention at this juncture that all sessions of this training workshop will be facilitated by the very able Commissioners of AFCONE. I urge you to take this opportunity to benefit from their expertise and to exchange views, concerns and
expectations regarding the implementation of the Treaty of Pelindaba, at the national level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding, I wish to welcome you once again to the AU Headquarters and wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.