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**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE AU-REGIONS STEERING COMMITTEE
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALW) AND
DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION (DDR)**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
30 – 31 MAY 2017**

OPENING STATEMENT BY DR. ADMORE KAMBUDZI
AG. DIRECTOR, AU PEACE AND SECURITY DEPARTMENT

**Distinguished Members of the Steering Committee,
Esteemed Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms,
Distinguished representatives of the United Nations and the European Union,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Welcome to the eighth meeting of the Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. I would like to thank you for making it to Addis Ababa and for your continued commitment and valuable contribution which greatly enriches this forum.

Our collective work is becoming increasingly vital as we witness another year of the unrelenting violence plaguing our continent, a plague sustaining itself through the wide availability of small arms and light weapons in Africa. These concerns are further multiplied as illicit weapons find their way to the hands of rogue non-state elements, including terrorists and criminals, who are displaying and suffering, on a nearly daily basis, their ability to cause large scale death and grave injury among innocent civilians.

I wish to begin by highlighting an important development that that took place since our last meeting. On 8 March 2017, the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and all Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly – also known as the Kinshasa Convention - entered into force nearly seven years after its adoption. It is our hope that this milestone will serve as a catalyst for renewed and strengthened action against illicit arms proliferation in the Central Africa region and beyond. In this respect, the AU wishes to express its full support to the ECCAS Secretariat as it assumes even greater responsibilities in overseeing and advancing the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention.

Our meeting is taking place against the background of various important developments taking place at the continental level. Earlier in January of this year, the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union adopted a decision [*Assembly/AU/Dec.630(XXVIII)*] endorsing the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020. The Roadmap aims to provide a holistic and multi-dimensional approach to sustainable peace and development on the continent and thus encompasses the full range of political, social, economic, environmental and legal aspects.

The Roadmap recognizes that while key decisions have been adopted to address the range of security and development challenges confronting the continent, and that these decisions have often been supported through programs and initiatives led by RECs, the Commission and other specialized bodies of the AU, achieving sustainable progress has often been undercut by the implementation deficit. Lack of implementation remains a key obstacle to realizing African goals as spelt out in various policies and projects. Thus, for the Roadmap to make the desired impact on Africa's security and development, a set of principles form the foundation for its implementation. It is strongly recognized that the implementation of the Roadmap must be guided by a strong sense of national ownership. While the various continental and regional organs will play a critical support role, progress cannot be achieved without the full engagement of AU Member States at all levels.

To further address the implementation deficit, the policy organs of the AU and RECs/RMs will develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Roadmap underpinned by the principles of accountability and transparency. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which is currently being developed for adoption in the coming months by the relevant AU Policy Organs, is expected to provide a framework that will enable Member States regularly report on the progress made, as well as identify gaps and lapses in implementation. Critical to the overall success of the Roadmap is its effective implementation through evidence-based policies and programs that focus on results rather than processes. Additionally, common approaches to implementation and robust inter-state cooperation will ensure the elimination of gaps in state practice which is often exploited for illicit and subversive activities.

The Roadmap encompasses a number of practical steps and modalities of action to prevent 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 Roadmap puts forward steps and action points for building member States capacities to implement legislative and operational measures in line with the ATT and other regional and international instruments.

In support of these provisions, the Commission will launch, later this year, a multi-year continent-wide support project through which technical and operational assistance will be extended to all Member States to enhance the implementation of the UN Program of Action, the International Tracing Instrument, the ATT and the respective regional instruments adopted at the level of RECs and Regional Bodies. The envisaged project will build on the progress made through, and the lessons learned from, the two phases of the AU-EU Project entitled "*The Fight Against the Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of Firearms in Africa*", implemented with the support of RECSA.

A session of this meeting will be dedicated to discuss and obtain your views on the scope and priorities of the project and its implementation modalities. The Commission greatly looks forward to your views to enhance the project design and build a strong sense of ownership among all stakeholders.

In relation to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, the Roadmap recognizes that incomplete or ineffective DDR processes have undermined the success of various peace agreements on the continent and contributed to the recurring cycle of armed violence which some of our Member States state are trapped in. The Roadmap, therefore, promotes national ownership of DDR programs and provides for the convening of regular open sessions of the Peace and Security Council to consider related matters at the political, technical and operational levels. It also calls for developing modalities of effecting amnesty programs that could positively contribute to community disarmament and incentivize combatants to lay down their weapons. In this respect, I am pleased to inform you that the AU Commission has launched the Second Phase of its DDR program, covering the period 2017 to 2019.

Against this background, our meeting today will allow us to consider how our work is contributing to the AU Master Roadmap's implementation and discuss priority action to undertake in the coming phase to address existing gaps.

Allow me to thank all RECs/RMs for the efforts thus far deployed to provide inputs for the report of the AU Peace and Security Council report on Silencing the Guns in Africa, to be submitted to the next AU Summit, in July 2017.

Once again, I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention.