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**Planning Meeting for the First General Assembly of African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL)**

**12 December 2016**

**Algiers, Algeria**

**Statement**

**by**

**Dr. Tarek A. Sharif**

**Head, Defence and Security Division**

**Peace and Security Department**

- **M. Hachichi Mohamed Tahar, General Inspector of National Security, Algerian Police,**
- **H.E. Crispin Ondo Nkulu Mbasogo, General Director of Equatorial Guinea Police and Chair of the Central African Police Chiefs Cooperation Committee (CAPPCO),**
- **Distinguished Representatives of the Chairs of the Eastern African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO) and the Southern African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO),**
- **Distinguished Representative of INTERPOL,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the African Union (AU) Commission, to the Planning Meeting for the First General Assembly of African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL).

I wish to, first and foremost, thank the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for the support it continues to accord to the course for a speedy and effective operationalization of AFRIPOL.

This is an important meeting, as it will give us the opportunity to plan for the First General Assembly of AFRIPOL, that is expected to be held early 2017. It is noted that the First General Assembly is critical in adopting key legal documents for its functioning, including the draft Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly and draft Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee. The meeting will also propose the agenda for the General Assembly. The General Assembly is the highest organ of AFRIPOL and so it needs to set the highest standards

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to update that since we held the Consultative Meeting on the Startup of AFRIPOL, here in Algeria, in April 2016, the Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, meeting at its Second Ordinary Session in Lome, Togo, on 9 September 2016, adopted the AFRIPOL Statute, and submitted it to the AU Policy Organs for consideration. The Statute will be presented to the Policy Organs, at the next Summit that will be held in January 2017. It is expected that the Assembly will adopt it, effectively launching AFRIPOL, as a specialized AU institution. The First AFRIPOL General Assembly will then be convened, as a first step in its operationalization.

With the increasing threat of transnational organized crime, the impetus for a robust AFRIPOL is a necessity. Cooperation among the police and law enforcement agencies will enable police officers to be more aware of legal systems of other Member States – thereby enhancing cooperation with other police forces in border areas. This will be a challenge to criminals and their networks. Indeed, AFRIPOL will provide a legal framework for cooperation among the Police and will be the basis for sharing of information, intelligence and data bases. It is also hoped that AFRIPOL will enable a shared perception of the serious crime threat. It is noted that the efforts towards easing movement of people and goods across borders leaves Member States also vulnerable to cross border crime. These are all essential in combating transnational organized crime and terrorism, and an agenda that ensures that the draft frameworks allow the Chiefs of Police to provide the requisite oversight of AFRIPOL is essential.

As African countries continue to increase access to broadband internet, issues relating to cybersecurity and related cybercrime will also continue to be a challenge, as criminal networks and terrorists groups exploit its efficiency for their criminal activities. There is no doubt that developing and enhancing information, intelligence sharing and cooperation

tools and networks will help to facilitate such an initiative. It will also contribute to enhancing the capacities of Member States in combating cyber threats.

The continent is also faced with the new threat of returning and fleeing terrorist fighters from the wars in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya. Enhanced cooperation among police and border agencies in the affected countries would contribute to illicit cross border movement of armed groups and individuals.

It can be recalled that the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), at its retreat held in Lusaka, Zambia, from 6-9 November 2016, adopted an AU Master Roadmap on practical steps for silencing the guns in Africa by 2020. The Master Roadmap lays out practical steps for ending conflicts and tackling the emerging threats such as proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, transnational organized crime, drug and human trafficking, and terrorism. It can be seen that AFRIPOL has a central role to play in the delivery of the expectation of silencing the guns by 2020 – thereby contributing to the desired peace, security and stability on the continent, which are preconditions to economic development.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

Let me again reiterate the commitment of the AU Commission to assisting AU Member States in their efforts to achieve effective cooperation in policing. The Commission will share the draft Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly and the Steering Committee. The instruments will be revised and updated according to the comments and observations received, and will be submitted to the General Assembly for consideration.

In conclusion, you would agree with me that we have come a long way in the efforts towards the operationalization of AFRIPOL, and the light at the end of the tunnel is now brighter than ever before.

Finally, and on behalf of the AU Commission, I wish to thank H.E. Major- General Abdelghani Hamel, The Director General of the Algerian National Security, for his personal commitment and follow-up on the operationalization of AFRIPOL.

I look forward to fruitful deliberations.

I thank you.