STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR SMAIL CHERGUI,
COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY, AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE AMANI II FIELD TRAINING EXERCISE,

LOTHALA, SOUTH AFRICA

19 OCTOBER 2015
The Representative of the Distinguished Chairperson of the African Union,

Distinguished Representative of the Republic of South Africa,

Distinguished Representative from the Southern Africa Development Community as the Host of the Exercise,

Distinguished Representatives from EASF, ECCAS, ECOWAS and NARC,

Distinguished Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Allow me pay tribute to the Government and People of the Republic of South Africa as host country of AMANI II Field Training Exercise and for the warm hospitality that we have received since our arrival. I would also like to commend the extraordinary resources that have been provided by SADC as the host of this Exercise, other Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), AU Member States as well as the dedicated support of partners especially, the European Union, UN, NATO, United Kingdom and United States to name just a few. The African Union (AU) Commission is immeasurably thankful for your various contributions toward the conduct of AMANI II Exercise.

2. I would like to also pay a final tribute to our men and women serving in peace support operations across Africa, some of whom have paid with the ultimate sacrifice of the loss of their lives. We remain grateful for your bravery and unwavering commitment amidst the security challenges that we face on the continent.
Eminent Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Today, marks a turning point in the history of Africa in our collective quest in the promotion of peace, stability and security on the continent. From 1997 to 2004, I was the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Algeria to Ethiopia and was part of the transformation from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union. One of our major Pan-African vision, which informed the establishment of the AU, was our dedication to an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena. In my current pre-occupation as Commissioner for Peace and Security of the AU Commission, I am pleased to announce that, through this landmark AMANI II Exercise, we are contributing to the realization of the collection aspirations of the founding Mothers and Fathers of the African Union.

4. The AMANI II Exercise will test the operational readiness of the African Standby Force and its Rapid Deployment Capability (ASF-RDC). Following AU Summit decision to harmonize the ASF and African Capacity to Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) processes, we shall also be employing the pledges capabilities of the ACIRC Volunteering as a second RDC during this Exercise. These combined and mutually reinforcing processes present the Continent with a unique opportunity to translate our conceptual determination to find African solutions to African problems into concrete expression through the possibility of employing the ASF-RDC as a tool for the prevention and response to crisis situation on the continent.
Eminent Delegates,
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5. Africa’s evolving security challenges have further inspired the urgency for the operational readiness of the ASF-RDC. Indeed, Africa has progressively witnessed a steady decline in the number of armed conflicts especially intra-state conflicts. Yet, transnational security threats have emerged, persisted or have become resurgent in some parts of the continent. The ASF-RDC remains an important part of Africa’s conflict management toolbox to address these challenges in a timely and effective manner. This AMANI II Exercise will also provide us with an opportunity to test and adapt the ASF-RDC in order to cope with the contemporary nature of security threats that we continue to face. In this respect, we expect that after the AMANI II Exercise, there will be an After Action Review to determine the operational readiness of the ASF-RDC but more importantly to make concrete recommendations to AU Member States on how to best align this mechanism to effectively deal with unconventional security threats on the continent. At the end of this Exercise, it is hoped that we will validate the ASF-RDC as a multidimensional peace support operations comprising of civilians, police and military capabilities able to rapidly deploy to prevent and respond to various crisis situations.

6. Beyond the AMANI II Exercise, there have been other significant steps that we have taken in realizing the full operationalization of the ASF-RDC. Just a week ago, I was in Yaoundé to sign on behalf of the AU Commission, a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the Republic of
Cameroon, establishing the Continental Logistics Base (CLB). I would like to express my profound appreciation to the Government and People of the Republic of Cameroon for agreeing to host the CLB. The CLB will be a Strategic Development Stocks (SDS) for the storage, maintenance and transfer of equipment that will utilized for ASF operations.

7. I would like to also highlight progressive and improved interactions between the AU and RECs/RMs through the development of capabilities towards the full operational readiness of the ASF as well as in our collaborative efforts in the launching, management and liquidation of recent operations. In 2013, the AU and ECOWAS jointly deployed the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). Similarly, the AU and ECCAS worked collaboratively in the generation of capabilities for the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA). These examples illustrate the successes that have been made in the development and utilization of regional standby forces as building blocks of the continental peace and security architecture. The AMANI II Exercise will further crystallize the gains that have been made in promoting cooperation between the AU and the RECs/RMs.

8. Within the next couple of weeks during the conduct of AMANI II Exercise, we expect all stakeholders to test the level of training of deployed capabilities from the regions and Volunteering Nations, assess the capacity Planning Elements both at a Continental and Regional Levels as well as evaluate Mission Support requirements within the context of rapid
deployment and in the deployment of multidimensional peace support operations. Subsequently, a report on this Exercise will be submitted to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security, in January 2016, to make concrete recommendations to the AU Summit on the state of readiness and how to constantly enhance the ASF-RDC to effectively address the prevailing nature of security threats on the continent.

Eminent Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. I would like to stress that the completion of the AMANI II Exercise is not an end in itself, but rather marks a new phase of contributing to our Continent's vision of achieving a United, Peaceful and Prosperous Africa. Therefore, I would like to underline four fundamental elements that must be concluded as a matter of priority in ensuring effective functioning of the ASF-RDC:

10. First, there is a need for the AU and the regions to conclude all outstanding legal arrangements on the employment of the ASF-RDC. Specifically, I envisage that a Memorandum of Understanding between the AU Commission and the RECs/RMs on the employment of the ASF-RDC, clearly articulating the implementation of the concept of Regional Framework Nation as well as embracing the prospects of interoperability between regions in responding to crisis across the continent, should be finalized without delay. I would like to congratulate the ACIRC Volunteering Nations
for the recent signing of an MoU with the AU Commission on the employment of the ACIRC Force.

11. Second, resource mobilization from within and beyond the continent will remain an important feature of the continuous preparation and deployment of the ASF-RDC. The AU Commission is hopeful that the recent Summit decision to increase Member States assessed contribution from 2016, with the allocation of 25% of this contribution towards peace support operations will be implemented. During my recent consultations during the UN General Assembly, I also re-iterated the AU Common Position on the importance of the utilization of UN assessed contribution for peace operations. Other support from international partners will continue to be required. Through such multi-donor resourcing system of the ASF-RDC, the continent will be guaranteed of flexible, predictable and sustainable funding for the ASF-RDC operations.

12. Third, the independent and joint AU-regional verification of pledged capabilities for the ASF-RDC, on periodic basis, will be crucial. This will allow for training standardization as well as ensuring the compulsory maintenance of minimum essential requirements by all regions for the deployment of the multidimensional components of the ASF-RDC, when required. I would therefore like to urge all stakeholders to work together in putting in place a verification mission in 2016 before the AU Summit in June 2016.

13. Finally, all efforts to operationalize the ASF-RDC will be in vain without rapid and consistent political decision by relevant mandating authorities of
both the AU and regions to deploy the ASF-RDC. I therefore urge AU Member States to work closely with the regions to streamline the decision-making processes at different levels in order to allow for timely decision making for deployment of the ASF-RDC.

Eminent Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. Let me conclude by re-iterating my appreciation to the host country, host region, other RECs/RMs, AU Member States and the wider international community for your unflinching support before and during this Exercise. We must continue to work together towards the actualization of our continental vision for sustainable peace and security in Africa. To borrow from the words of President Nelson Mandela, We have walked a long road to peace...we may have made missteps along the way; but we have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. But we must not linger because our long walk has not ended!

Thank You and I wish you a successful Exercise.