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**Preparatory Meeting for the 2019 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial  
on *'Performance'* and *'Protection of Civilians'*  
13-15 January 2019 in The Hague, the Netherlands**

**OPENING STATEMENT  
BY AMBASSADOR SMAIL CHERGUI  
AU COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY**

**Excellencies, Esteemed Guests**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen**  
**I stand on existing Protocols**

Let me on the outset, on behalf of the African Union Commission, and on my own behalf extend my appreciation to the United Nations, the Government of Rwanda and our host - the Government of the Kingdom of Netherlands for organizing this important Preparatory Meeting on 'Performance' and 'Protection of Civilians' ahead of the planned Ministerial Meeting later this year. This meeting is timely and being hosted just few days after USG Lacroix and I undertook joint field visits to Mali, Central Africa Republic and South Sudan. It is an honour to work with USG Lacroix and UN colleagues in conducting peace operations as it is only through strategic partnership that we will be able to be more effective. In this regard, The first hand experiences of the real issues on the ground that we noted during our joint field visits are critical for this platform that aim to ensure continuous enhancement of performance at all levels for protection of civilians in peace operations.

In this regard, let me provide a brief on AU's efforts in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of our Peace Support Operations, including our approaches in ensuring Protection of Civilians (PoC).

**Excellencies, Esteemed Guests**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen**

You will note that over the years the AU Peace and Security Council have entrusted AU Peace Support Operations with **mandates that include protection of civilians and engagement in combat operations**. This is to ensure that mandates meet the type of **robust and comprehensive responses** required to address conflict challenges - in line with AU doctrine, and noting the volatile contexts and asymmetric threats that Peace Support Operations personnel are exposed to.

The AU is also supporting **Peace Support Operations authorized by the AU Peace and Security Council that are coordinated by sub-regional organisations or coalition of states** to also ensure effective performance and protection of civilians. This includes strategic support to the Regional Cooperation Initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army – Task Force, Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram (MNJTF) and the G5 Sahel which is still being operationalized.

The AU has also noted that **rapid deployment and action** is critical for effective performance and protection of civilians. This thus necessitated the establishment of

the African Standby Force to ensure effective training and preparation as well as verification of standby capabilities for deployment at short notice as and when required. Relatedly, the operationalization of the Continental Logistics Base and revitalization of the AU Peace Fund are aimed to ensure availability of resources to achieve rapid and effective deployment to adequately address conflict challenges.

However, the AU recognizes that no one entity can alone be able to address conflict situations adequately and that **predictable and sustainable capabilities and resources are critical to guarantee performance and enhance efforts to protect civilians**. This is why we have hoped for a UN resolution that would have embraced the position of the AU in ensuring a more systematic and reliable strategic AU-UN partnership in preventing conflicts and its escalation as well as in sustaining peace.

Notwithstanding, the AU continues to enhance efforts to guarantee common training and human rights standards in our Peace Support Operations. Accordingly, one of the Commission's priorities has been on **enhancing the AU's compliance and accountability framework for International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law and conduct and discipline**. Partnerships, notably with the UN, have been key to our achievements in this regard. These achievements include the adoption of two policies by the AU PSC on 29 November 2018, respectively on Conduct and Discipline for PSOs, and on the Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse for PSOs.

These policies help to promote professional conduct of AU Peace Support Operations personnel and reinforce AU's comprehensive efforts to protect civilians. They also reinforce the Peace and Security Council's direction (provided in 2012) that the mandates of all Peace Support Operations should include protection of civilians. Additionally, the Peace and Security Council, in May 2018 further directed that the **Kigali Principles are incorporated into the AU's work on protection of civilians** which should be implemented within AU's broader compliance and accountability framework. This enables the AU to ensure a level of comprehensiveness that continues to help us in guaranteeing performance and effectiveness.

### **Excellencies, Esteemed Guests Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my considered view that if we are to achieve performance and effectively protect civilians, we have to ensure two important aspects:

1. **First:** Police and Troop Contributing Countries should provide the best of their personnel and capabilities for peace operations;
2. **Second:** Mandating authorities (like the UN and AU) should provide all necessary means to enable our missions to optimally implement their tasks and effectively protect civilians - whilst assisting countries move from conflict to sustainable peace and eventually engage in exit strategies.

However, we note that the AU alone will not be able to guarantee the highest level of performance and effectiveness alone. This is why **we embrace the UN Secretary General's Action for Peace Initiative** and the call for enhanced strategic partnership which I reiterate should be between the AU and the UN in providing the means for effective performance, and with our Member States who should give us the best capabilities to implement required mandates and tasks. **The African Standby Force represents this type of strategic partnerships, to ensure availability of the best capabilities required for the enhancement of Peace Support Operations performance and in protecting civilians.** It also offers the rapidity and effectiveness required to adequately prevent conflicts and sustain peace – as part of Africa's contribution to global peace and security.

I join USG Lacroix in paying tribute to our personnel in green and blue helmets serving in AU and UN peace operations under extreme circumstances to protect civilians And sustain peace.

**Thank you for your kind attention.**