Dear readers,

It is my pleasure to share with you this fifth edition of the AU Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) newsletter. As we usher in the New Year, the African Union DDR Capacity Program (AU DDRCP) completes the implementation of its initial phase (2013-2015), which aimed at creating sustainable DDR capacities within the AU, the RECs/RMs and Member States, in order to support national and regional DDR initiatives. The AU DDRCP was based on three pillars: Developing infrastructure within the AU; Enhancing and creating a repository of knowledge on DDR reflecting African experiences that are relevant to the changing context; and finally, Providing political, logistical and technical support to Member States and PSOs. This issue highlights some of the successes of the program, whilst also setting the foundation for the next phase of the DDR program, which will consolidate, efforts that were laid in phase one.

As we look forward, key priority areas of engagement have been identified for AU and partner support including on: 1) Providing operational support to national and regional DDR interventions through the capacity created in phase one; 2) Solidifying the collaboration between the AU-UN-WB to complement the implementation of the DDR program which is now under the APSA support package; and 3) Identifying strategic priority areas for the new phase of the DDR program; such as enhancing DDR linkages with the Solemn declaration on Silencing the Guns by 2020, strengthening DDR programming to incorporate cross cutting issues and identifying ways in which the AU can take the lead in shaping continental DDR language, to reflect the changing conflict context.

Let me also take this opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation to our partners the World Bank Transitional Demobilization & Reintegration Program (TDRP); the European Union (EU); the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF); the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Governments of Spain and Denmark and last but not least, the United Nations (Department of Peace Keeping Operations - DPKO, United Nations Office to the African Union - UNOAU, United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF, United Nations Children and Armed Conflict - UN CAAC and the United Nations Development Program – UNDP). Without such commitment and support, this program would not have been realized and I look forward to further collaboration. I sincerely hope that you our reader will find this fifth edition useful and that you will continue to engage with us and play an active role in phase two.

Best Wishes,

H.E. Amb. Smail Chergui
Commissioner, Peace and Security,
African Union Commission
On 12 to 13 January 2016, the African Union (AU), United Nations (DPKO) and the World Bank (TDRP) met in Addis Ababa to close phase one of the DDR Capacity Program (2013-2015). The DDR heads from the three organizations: Dr. Tarek A. Sharif (AU), Mr. Simon Yazgi (UN DPKO) and Mr. Abderrahim Fraiji (World Bank- TDRP), together with their team, reviewed the results of the DDR Capacity Program and outlined key steps on the way forward for phase two of the program, building on the successful gains of phase one.

Participants congratulated the AU on achieving the objectives set out in the project document and expressed hope that the capacity created within the AU will be maintained and strengthened in the future. Both the UN and World Bank stated that there continued to be a significant role for the AU to play in DDR on the continent and further expressed their strong desire and commitment to work with the AU in phase two which would have a strong emphasis on operational support to Member States.

As a way forward, in-order to solidify this tripartite collaboration between the organizations in the future, the three parties agreed to sign a cooperation agreement which expresses their commitment to work together, as well as identify the modalities for future cooperation. This cooperation agreement which will be signed in February 2016 will look at ways of complementing DDR activities already included in the APSA support program.

The Sixth Meeting of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on SALW and DDR

From 17 to 18 November 2015, the African Union held its’ Sixth Meeting of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) & Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in Abuja, Nigeria. The meeting was opened, by Dr. Tarek A. Sharif, Head of the Defense and Security Division of the AU Commission, and Dr. Cyriaque Agnekethom, ECOWAS Director of Peacekeeping and Regional Security. In his opening remarks, Dr. Sharif highlighted that insecurity and instability on the continent were linked to the availability of small arms and ammunition, which significantly complicates conflict management and resolution efforts.

On his part, Dr. Agnekethom echoed the same concerns and commended the important role played by the AU in mobilizing and coordinating continental action against illicit small arms. The meeting which provided an opportunity to review projects and initiatives implemented from the last meeting by the members of the steering committee, was attended by: COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, RECSA, SADC and UNREC. The members took note of the
presentation from the AU, which reviewed the activities of the three years of implementation of the DDRCP and commended the AUC for its extensive and comprehensive work. The members reiterated the commitment to providing strategic guidance in phase two of the DDR program and further called on AU to provide vital support present such as South Sudan and DRC.

Participants also welcomed the development of upcoming guidance documents on Countering/ Preventing Violent Extremism and on Foreign Fighters, which would give guidance on these new areas. On Small Arms and Light Weapons the Steering committee agreed that there should be more focus on concrete deliverables that directly address illicit small arms through program design that looked beyond basic operational activities and moves towards assessing the impact and sustainability of interventions.

The members welcomed the initiative of the AUC to submit a comprehensive report to the Peace and Security Council on arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation and further agreed that all members will contribute to the enrichment of this report.

They also took note of the launch of the second phase of the AU-EU small arms program and stressed the need for the active involvement of RECs and other partners in implementation to ensure synergies and coordination; and

Lastly, the members agreed on the establishment of a sub-committee that would undertake activities towards supporting the signing and ratification of the ATT. This will include, inter alia, promotional activities that highlights linkages with the regional and international instruments, supporting the chair of the 2nd conference and the head of secretariat and engaging civil society.

From 25 to 26 November 2015, as part of the AU’s support to the stabilization efforts in the Central African Republic (CAR), and as a follow-up to the conclusions of the May 2015 Bangui Reconciliation Forum, the AUC convened a DDR Sensitization Workshop for CAR stakeholders in Addis Ababa. Participants that attended the workshop were drawn from the Ministries of Territorial Administration, Defence and Public Security of the CAR, political parties, the media, academia, civil society and religious groups. the AU Missions in CAR and Central Africa (MISAC) and for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), as well as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) were also represented.

AU DDR in the Field

Central African Republic

Sensitisation Workshop on DDRR for CAR Stakeholders

Mr Herve Hesse (MINUSCA), Mr Betindji Jean Pierre (CAR High Commissioner for DDR/SSR) and Mr El Ghassim Wane (AUC)
The meeting whose main objective was to inform participants about DDR concepts, was opened by Mr El Ghassim Wane, the AU Director of the Peace and Security Department, who welcomed participants and urged all stakeholders to employ all efforts towards finding sustainable solution towards peace and stability in CAR.

The Workshop also aimed at forging a common understanding on the implementation of DDR in CAR and resulted in participants agreeing on the importance of national ownership as a cornerstone for the successful implementation of their DDR program. They also agreed on the need to link DDR to Security Sector Reform (SSR) and to the overall efforts to stabilize the CAR.

Furthermore, the participants stressed the need to complement the disarmament of ex-combatants with community disarmament, given the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country. Looking forward it is expected that, the AU will provide technical and capacity assistance to the High Commission on DDR and SSR in its effort to establish operational structures.

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High Level National Security Round Table in CAR

From 3 to 6 December 2015, the Strategic Committee on DDR and SSR and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) organized a round table on National Security the Bangui CAR. Representatives from national security, civil society, religious stakeholders, political parties, international partners including EU and UN attended the meeting. The round table aimed at building an agreement on declaration of principles to serve as a foundation and reference to the subsequent steps for the preparation of a draft National Security Policy. At the roundtable, individual presentations were made and thematic issues were raised and discussed.

This included the need to put in place an effective national security policy, taking into account various threats and risks as well as the necessary resources required for the protection of the population. Participants also stressed on the need to establish a democratic process in the CAR through the separation of powers, respect for human rights and accountability within the wider human security framework. The outcomes of the key discussions were adopted and follow up activities will be implemented after the national elections scheduled for December 2015 and January 2016.
From the 16 to 17 September 2015, the Defense and Security Division (DSD) undertook a multi-disciplinary assessment mission to meet with AMISOM in order to follow up on recommendations identified in previous activities. These include the training workshop on the handling of disengaging combatants held 30 to 31 July 2015 in Nairobi, the workshop on DDR and Vulnerable Groups in Somalia, from 11 to 12 December 2014, in Addis Ababa, DDR training of 10 Somali Government Officials held 10 to 21 Feb 2014 Accra, Ghana, a South-South Knowledge and experience exchange held in Kigali Rwanda 3 to 7 November 2014 and a joint multi-disciplinary technical assessment mission to Somalia held 24 to 28 June 2013. The assessment mission included four critical aspects of security, stabilization and development namely, DDR including arms management, Security Sector Reform (SSR) and the reception and hand-over of children and women separated from armed groups.

DSD undertook the mission in order to provide vital DDR support to AMISOM, to support the fulfillment of their mandate; and to assist in the implementation of the National Security Stabilization Programme (NSSP). The team concluded its consultation, outlining specific follow-up recommendations through the development of an implementation matrix, which identifies key activities such as: Increased capacity on DDR (staffing and training); enhanced, as well as procurement of arms marking machines which would enable them to effectively implement the provisions of the SOP on the handling of disengaged combatants, whilst also registering and storing weapons collected as part of their offensive actions. In the interim, the team requested for the identification of DDR, Child protection and gender focal points in all sectors, that would form a DDR structure for comprehensive handling of all DDR related matters.

In fulfillment of the joint recommendations the AUC has been able to respond to the deployment of DDR and SSR consultants to AMISOM with support from EU, identification of DDR focal points in the sectors through the support of AMISOM Civil Military Co-operation (CIMIC) and finally, the AUC has embarked on the procurement of five arms marking machines that will be made available for use by AMISOM.
As the AU and its Member States are increasingly faced with complex threats that require new ways of intervention, the AU through its knowledge management component has been developing key tools that can be used as guides in this new context by AU Peace Support Operations, Member States and RECs/RMs.

One of these new areas of concern includes how to tackle issues on Countering/ Preventing Violent extremism as part of the reintegration component of DDR. Closely linked to this phenomenon, is the issue of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) and how this impacts on border security and control. This threat of FTF was most recently highlighted by UN Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) where the Council expressed:

’... grave concern over the acute and growing threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, namely individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict...’

In response to this, the AU with the support of the World Bank – TDRP, are currently developing Operational Guidance Notes on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Foreign Fighters (FF).

These guidelines aim to provide practical and relevant recommendations and guidance on ways of preventing recruitment, facilitating inter-governmental cooperation in repatriation and best practices with regards to reintegration and/or prosecution based on global experience tailored to the unique African context. The two documents will also look into the various roles of the key stakeholders as well as key activities that could support in addressing these issues. These two documents which are currently under review, will be available for expert review in 2016.