It is my pleasure to share with you this sixth edition of the AU Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) newsletter.

In this issue you will find mention of other peace and security initiatives that are intrinsically intertwined with the implementation of DDR activities. We see the role that DDR plays in galvanizing efforts in PSO’s like the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram (MNJTF), the AU-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA (RCI-LRA), and in the control of small arms and light weapons circulation as countries transition from conflict to post conflict settings.

This issue highlights how other areas of focus impact on the successful implementation of DDR. Indeed in recent years we see how a wide range of activities fall under the heading of DDR, as the global face of conflict changes. In this evolving stabilization context, we see a lack of classic pre-conditions for DDR, including the absence of signed peace agreements. Previously clear, traditional military structures have also now expanded to include members of informal armed groups, gangs and militias, and a proliferation of small arms which may require disarmament programs covering entire community.

DDR now incorporates programmes involving weapons reduction, community violence reduction, and multi-dimensional reintegration that focuses not only on the economic aspects of reintegration, but which also places strong emphasis on social reintegration and the necessary supporting structures, including psychosocial support.

By looking at other activities being undertaken within the Peace and Security Department that are linked to DDR, we see linkages that support our broader efforts, giving you, our readers, insight into this ever expanding area of engagement. As we try to keep abreast with emerging trends, we continue to employ every effort to ensure that Member States and the RECs/RMs receive as much support from the AU and partners, as we can offer.

I sincerely hope that you, our readers, will enjoy this sixth edition and that you find the information captured both insightful and informative.

Best Wishes,
H.E. Amb. Smail Chergui
Commissioner, Peace and Security,
African Union Commission
As the AU DDR Capacity Programme moves into its second phase (2016-2018), the emphasis will be on consolidating AU and APSA capacity, with a focus on providing operational support through consolidating existing capacity.

It can be recalled that the DDR Capacity Program completed its 3-year startup phase (2013-2015) and its main purpose was to strengthen capacities within the AU in order to utilise the AU Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to support national and regional DDR initiatives. Building off phase one, the project impact for the next phase of the DDR plan is “Increased leadership role of APSA institutions in addressing continental DDR issues”. Key priority areas of engagement which have been identified for AU and partner support are:

i. Providing operational support to national and regional DDR interventions through galvanizing the capacity created in phase one;
ii. 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
iii. 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, and strengthening DDR programming to incorporate cross cutting issues and to identify ways in which the AU can take the lead in shaping continental DDR language which reflects the changing conflict context.

To ensure that these focus areas are implemented in the project, the following outcomes were developed:

i. Strengthened support in the area of DDR planning;
ii. Increased engagement in the joint implementation of DDR, including the increased relevance of the AU resource center for DDR practitioners and dissemination of these knowledge products;
iii. Increased capacity of institutions to provide expert advice on DDR;
iv. Strengthened AU partnerships on DDR;
v. AU contribution to creating, updating and harmonizing of DDR training;

Moving forward, the AU will continue engagement on the planned activities and will continue to collaborate with other stakeholders, with particular emphasis on the role of AU field missions.

Collaborative partnership meeting between AU Head DSD and UN Ag. Chief of DDR

On 8 June 2016, during a side meeting in New York, Dr Tarek A. Sharif Head, Defense and Security Division (AU), met with Mr. Thomas Kontogeorgos Ag. Chief of the UN DDR section (Department of Peace Keeping Operations).

This meeting which took place as part of partnerships strengthening between the AU and the UN presented an opportunity for the two partners to discuss the current AU DDR Work plan, and to elaborate on key issues including the strengthening of information sharing, and the organization of joint missions to active DDR operations and priority countries of focus.

The AU and UN have worked collaboratively on the planning and implementation of phase one of the AU DDR program and are looking into ways on how to solidify this partnership in phase two. This meeting, held in New York, follows on the back of the strategic and technical planning meetings held in January and February 2016 respectively, between the AU, UN and World Bank.

This partnership is of great importance particularly due to the need for the partners to engage in a complementary manner, ensuring that there is no duplication of efforts.

Priority areas of engagement were identified and practical measures on how to improve information sharing from the field were suggested. The AU and UN took this opportunity to renew their commitment to the implementation of phase two of the DDR program and will continue to work closely together to ensure harmonisation of activities.
Workshop on the review of DDR procedures and capacity for the returnees of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA)

From 3 to 4 March 2016, the Commission of the African Union (AU), in collaboration with the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), held a two-day workshop on the “Review of Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement Procedures and Capacity for the Returnees of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA)”. The workshop, held at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, was convened as a follow up to the recommendation of the bi-annual LRA Focal Points meeting held in Entebbe, Uganda, on 8 - 9 September 2015.

The workshop brought together representatives from the four LRA-affected countries: the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, and Uganda, as well as other stakeholders who discussed the challenges being faced in regard to sensitization efforts, extraction of victims, family tracing, reunification, and reintegration of LRA returnees. This in turn bears direct influence on inducing further defections among LRA commanders, fighters and abductees.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Tarek A. Sharif, Head of the AU Defense and Security Division, underlined the importance of ensuring the safe return, repatriation and reintegration of ex-combatants as an essential component of efforts to restore and safeguard inter-communal relationships, including cross-border ties that have been damaged by activities of the LRA. During the closing of the workshop, Mr. Sivuyile Bam, Head of AU Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) commended the collaboration that went towards convening this workshop and further stated that with appropriate follow up, the required capacity within the AU Regional Task Force against the LRA and also in PSOD, would be generated to contribute to efforts towards this endeavor, leading to the eventual elimination of the LRA as a threat to the continent.

As a way forward, a clear process map of the various stakeholders will be developed with particular focus on all the different steps involved in a DDR program for LRA returnees. Additionally, to effectively undertake these DDR activities, appropriate resources will have to be fundraised to address the gaps identified in the workshop.
ICRC Roundtable on the Operationalization of Obligations to Ensure Respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

From 26 to 27 May 2016, a roundtable was organized in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the Operationalization of the obligations to ensure respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). This roundtable presented an opportunity for participants to exchange on practices and challenges in multinational operations, sharing legal but mostly operational points of view, relating to the scope of the obligation to ensure respect for IHL.

One of the main considerations when implementing a DDR Program is detention and the handling of Ex-combatants. This requires that appropriate procedures and required capacities are put in place in order to ensure compliance of the authorities in line with international norms and standards.

With the increased presence of multinational operations in Africa such as in: Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and in the Lake Chad Basin, participants focused on the broad mandate of Multinational operations which often requires that they intervene to put an end to ongoing IHL violations and to create an environment ensuring that such violations will not re-occur in the future, whilst also ensuring respect for IHL by their own forces.

Dr Tarek A. Sharif, Head of the Defense and Security Division highlighted the role that AU documents play in increasing capacity towards adhering to international norms and principles and further urged participants to be conversant with them. He specifically mentioned the DDR Operations Guidance Documents on Detention, Children and Women as important reference documents that should be used as part of capacity enhancement within AU PSOs.

Donors’ conference for the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram

Since 2014 the threat posed by Boko Haram has affected not only the North-east of Nigeria, but also Chad, Cameroon and Niger. This led to a decision by the Peace and Security Council at its 484th meeting, on the establishment of a Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad area, aiming at improving joint coordination, planning and implementation of operations between affected Member States.

In order for MNJTF to carry out its mandated operations, which include DDR activities, certain resources need to be put in place to support the planning and implementation processes. Unfortunately, financial constraints have led to gaps, including on how to reintegrate and repatriate Boko Haram defectors. Towards addressing these financial constraints, a donor’s conference was held on 1 February 2016 in Addis Ababa, for MNJTF, which was opened by H.E. President Idriss Deby Itno, the Chairman of the African Union (AU), together with H.E. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. This donors conference brought together high level representatives such as Amb. Smail Chergui, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Mr. Haile Menkerios, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General (SRSG) to the African Union, the Head of the UN Office for West Africa, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa, Abdoulaye Bathily, the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Head of Mission of the MNJTF, Engr Sanusi Innnar Abdullahi, as well as the representatives of AU Member States and partners.

H.E. President Idriss Deby Itno, reiterated the important role of MNJTF in the fight against Boko Haram as expressed in its approved mandate and the necessity to support MNJTF Troop Contributing Countries in their efforts to fight Boko Haram. On his part, the Commissioner for Peace and Security expressed gratitude for all the support provided to MNJTF that complements existing efforts by Member States to fight against Boko Haram. He welcomed additional contributions in cash and in kind to allow the swift constitution of the AU Trust Fund for MNJTF operations against Boko Haram. The total contributions pledged to the support of MNJTF, since its inception, and to provide humanitarian assistance as well as development support amounts to $250 million (USD). This Donor’s conference was a follow up on these pledges but also provided a forum for other stakeholders to contribute to the financial needs of MNJTF.
AU and the 6th Bi-annual Meeting of States to Consider Implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

From the 6 to 10 June 2016, the 6th Bi-annual Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in all its Aspects (UN-PoA) was held in New York.

Substantive agenda items were discussed, pertaining to the implementation of the PoA at national, regional and global levels including: 1) implementation of the International Tracing Instruments (ITI); 2) impact of recent developments in SALW technology; and 3) consideration of international cooperation and assistance. It was emphasized that there continued to be a divide regarding illicit SALW control, particularly as they pertain to ammunition and the status of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). On this matter, the AU maintained strong positions on the intrinsic nature of these two.

Other issues that were extensively discussed include: the limited international assistance for implementation of the PoA, exacerbated by the lack of a mechanism for assistance matchmaking; the formulation and inclusion of references to ammunition and the ATT, the trust funds and other funding modalities, Security Sector Reform, Security Council resolutions, end use/end user certification, the Sustainable Development Goals, border security and increased participation in the upcoming 2018 Review conference of the PoA and ITI, due to its critical importance, given the entry into force of the ATT and the emerging issues confronting the implementation of the PoA.

As a way forward, the meeting adopted an outcome document, which outlined key areas of follow up, and the various commitments made by Member States and partners. This meeting and the recommendations mentioned in the outcome document are of vital importance to the work of the Commission, in fulfillment of the 2000 Bamako Declaration on a Common African Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of SALW, which call on Member States and the AU Commission to take a number of steps to strengthen its efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW. Implementation of the PoA and indeed the follow up provisions of the Common African position will assist in the realization of silencing the guns by 2020 and in line with the aspirations of the “Africa we want” in Agenda 2063.

On its part, the AU Commission, outlined the assistance that can be provided by the AU to its Member States, and further called on Member States to designate national focal points highlighting the need to enhance synergies between the PoA and relevant sub-regional instruments. The Commission also pledged to play an active role in resource mobilization and coordination, through working closely with the UN and international partners to support assistance matchmaking on the continent. It will also engage with Member States and encourage their attendance at the upcoming 2018 Review conference of the PoA and ITI.
The first meeting of African Chiefs of Police, held in Algiers, Algeria, from 10 to 11 February 2014, adopted the Algiers Declaration on the establishment of the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL).

The Declaration was endorsed by the Executive Council at its 25th Ordinary Session held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 20 to 24 June 2014, triggering the process of the establishment of AFRIPOL.

AFRIPOL is expected to provide a platform for enhanced cooperation for the police and law enforcement agencies from the Member States in combating transnational organized crime and terrorism. Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) remain the weapons of choice for organized crime networks and terrorists as evidenced by their use in various terrorist attacks, not only in Africa, but globally. Enhanced cooperation among police and law enforcement agencies will, therefore, go a long way in degrading the ability of organized crime networks, terrorists and traffickers and smugglers to function with ease, through combating the proliferation, circulation and trafficking of SALW. AFRIPOL will play a critical role in this regard.

It is recognized that for police cooperation to be effective, it should not be limited to the continent, because of the transnational nature of criminal networks and terrorism today.

This is the reason why the AU Commission convened, in Algiers, Algeria, from 27-28 April 2016, functioned as brainstorming meeting bringing together African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organizations and other regional organizations for police cooperation, including Asean Chiefs of Police (ASEANAPOL) for Asian Nations, the European Union’s law enforcement agency (EUROPOL) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

AU Commission continues to exert efforts towards ensuring the speedy operationalization of AFRIPOL.