African Defense, Safety and Security Experts begin meeting in Addis Ababa

Within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and in preparation for the 10th Meeting of African Chiefs of Defense Staff and Heads of Safety and Security Services, on 12 January 2014, and the 7th Ministerial Meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security (STCDSS), on 14 January 2014, a two-day meeting of Experts on Defense, Safety and Security started at the African Union (AU) Headquarters in Addis Ababa today, 10 January 2014. The meeting was opened by the AU Director for Peace and Security, El-Ghassim Wane, who emphasized the urgent need for Africa to enhance its capacity to respond to crises. Participants observed a minute of silence in honor of late President Nelson Mandela and all African soldiers and security forces who have fallen in the line of duty in peacekeeping missions across the continent.

Two key issues are scheduled for discussion at the Meeting, namely: i) The Report of the recently concluded assessment of the African Standby Force (ASF), and ii) Progress made towards the operationalization of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC), which was established by African leaders at the 22nd Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly, in May 2013. The ACIRC is intended to serve as a transitional arrangement pending the full operationalization of the ASF and its Rapid Deployment Capability, in order to provide the AU with a flexible and robust rapidly deployable force to effectively respond to emergency situations in the Continent.

With regard to the ASF, the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security, at its 6th Ordinary Meeting, on 30 January 2013, in Addis Ababa, requested the AU Commission, in collaboration with Member States and relevant Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the African Standby Force, including its RDC, as an important step towards the full implementation of the decision of the 20th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The Chairperson of the Commission appointed an Independent Panel of Experts to conduct the assessment.

The ASF Assessment Panel consisted of a multi-disciplinary Team of peace operations experts headed by Prof. Ibrahim Gambari, the former Joint Special Representative of the United Nations - African Union Hybrid Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and former Foreign Affairs Minister of Nigeria. Professor Gambari and his Team conducted the Assessment from July to December 2013, during which period they visited the AU Commission and met with all the Planning Elements of the RECs/RMs. The Panel also
consulted AU member states, the United Nations Office to the AU (UNOAU) and a large number of external partners, and submitted a comprehensive report on the progress made towards the operationalization of the ASF and its Rapid deployment Capability (RDC).

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