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**MINISTERIAL COMPONENT OF THE WHITE HOUSE
SUMMIT TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

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WASHINGTON D.C.**

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AFRICAN UNION
COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY, AMBASSADOR SMAÏL CHERGUI**

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Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to take the floor on the occasion of this Summit.

I am grateful to the US Government for inviting the African Union to this event. We are proud of our strong partnership with the US Government in the area of counter-terrorism, as demonstrated, among others, by the support extended to the AU Mission in Somalia, the African Union-led Regional Joint Task Force fighting the Lord's Resistance Army and other cooperative endeavors.

The African continent continues to suffer from the insecurity and terror created by various terrorist and criminal groups driven by different agendas, and operating at times as part of larger networks, including Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. The atrocities committed by Boko Haram and the recent beheading of innocent Egyptians in Libya bear testimony to the challenges confronting us.

The African Union is actively engaged in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Over the years, we have developed a rich normative framework. We have established a center dedicated to the prevention and combating of terrorism. We have undertaken numerous capacity building initiatives, to enhance the capacity of our Member States to address the scourge of terrorism. We have also encouraged the development of regional processes to facilitate the exchange of intelligence among concerned countries. The Nouakchott Process on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region is one of such processes. In the coming week, we will be launching a similar process for the East Africa region, with a meeting of Heads of Intelligence in Djibouti.

The commitment of the African Union was further demonstrated by the holding of a special summit of our Peace and Security Council dedicated to terrorism and violent extremism in Nairobi, last September. We subsequently convened, in Addis Ababa, a forum bringing together the African regional groupings, relevant UNited Nations and other international agencies, in order to elaborate a coordinated implementation plan for the decisions reached in Nairobi meeting.

We know that to sustainably respond to the problem of violent extremism and terrorism, we need to effectively address conditions conducive to terrorism. At its Nairobi Summit, the Peace and Security Council emphasized the need to address all conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism and the importance of comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies empowering civil society organizations, including religious leaders and women, as well as vulnerable groups, and covering not only security and law enforcement, but also poverty eradication, job creation and development.

In this regard, allow me, briefly, to outline what the African Union is doing or planning to do to contribute to countering violent extremism.

First, the African Union will work with Member States, with the support of various stakeholders, to design, develop and implement interventions that aim to address the different aspects of the problem, including counter and de-radicalization programs in prison and detention facilities. In so doing, we aim to rehabilitate disengaged fighters and support their reintegration into their communities. Initiatives are underway in Somalia and will be expanded to other AU Member States.

Second, we will continue to facilitate open discussions and engagement between state authorities and civil society, including religious authorities and women organizations. Within the framework of the Nouakchott Process, outreach campaigns, open fora and consultations are planned to allow communities to air their grievances and contribute actively to efforts to counter extremist ideologies.

Third, we are also engaging the media for it to be an active partner in countering terrorist narratives and delegitimizing violent ideologies. In so doing, we are working through the Network of African Journalists for Peace (NetPeace), established by the African Union, as part of its overall outreach efforts in the area of peace and security.

Fourth, we will continue to provide a platform for victims of terrorist acts to contribute to the overall efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Indeed, they can play a critical role in highlighting the human cost of terrorism and providing a counter narrative. Last October, in Algiers, Algeria, we organized the first AU Symposium on victims of terrorist acts. We are actively following-up on the recommendations made on this occasion.

Fifth, we are planning to step up our efforts in encouraging African Union Member States to ensure the successful implementation of their economic development and poverty alleviation policies and programs. In this respect, and as a follow-up to the Nairobi communiqué, the African Union Commission will work the African Development Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, to provide the necessary support to Member States.

Lastly, we cannot guarantee the effectiveness and sustainability of these interventions without addressing the continued financing and sponsorship of terrorist and violent extremist groups. In this respect, we are planning to hold, in Algiers, a meeting on the financing of terrorist and violent extremists groups.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize three important additional points.

First, and as stressed in Nairobi, let me point out the imperative need, in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, to uphold the highest standards of human rights and International Humanitarian Law. In this respect, the Commission is working closely with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and other

stakeholders to further support Member States efforts to promote and ensure the respect for human rights and international humanitarian law while preventing and combating terrorism.

Second, the only sustainable way to address the threats I referred to earlier is to build strong, responsive and accountable state institutions at the local and national levels that deliver essential services, as well as ensure inclusive political processes, rule of law and public security. This is key to preventing conflicts and consolidating peace building gains. In this respect, I am glad to note that the June 2014 AU Summit and the Peace and Security Council, in October 2014, have endorsed the Report of the High-Level Panel on Fragile States titled “Ending Conflict and Building Peace in Africa: A Call to Action” and requested the Commission to take the necessary follow-up steps.

Third, while the African Union is committed to fully shouldering its share of responsibility in the fight against terrorism, we should be mindful of the fact that conditions that provide a fertile ground for terrorism and violent extremism, have to be addressed globally. Let us all contribute to a more peaceful and just world, as this will go a long way in delegitimizing the terrorists narrative.

I thank you all.