Methodology Workshop on a Collaborative Assessment of Non-State Armed Groups and Advancing Stabilization, DDR and Cross Border Security and Development Efforts on the African Continent

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OPENING REMARKS BY
DR TAREK A. SHARIF,
HEAD DEFENSE AND SECURITY DIVISION
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
Distinguished Participants,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this methodology workshop on sharing experiences on process, approach and tools to support a Collaborative Assessment of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) and Advancing Stabilization, DDR, SALWs control and Cross Border Security and Development efforts on the African Continent. A platform that brings together practitioner and researchers as well as representatives from think thanks and international organizations, at a time when we are facing so many new security threats and challenges posed by NSAGs on the continent. It demonstrates that the international community remains strongly commitment to understanding ways by which non-traditional stabilization, DDR, SALWs Control, Border Security and Development and concepts and practices can be adopted in order to tackle threats these new NSAGs pose to peace, security and development on the continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the three years that the AU in partnership with the UNDPKO and WB/TDRP has run its DDR capacity program, certain challenges have been experienced particularly with the third component that relates to the direct support of AU Member States in their DDR activities. We have found that instability and up rise of conflict have hampered our DDR efforts, and in certain cases have constrained international stabilization and peace support operations and activities evident in our intervention in Somalia, CAR, Mali, Libya, Sudan and South Sudan.
The major cause of these constrained international efforts is the activities of non-state armed groups. It has increasingly become evident that in our interventions, we need to consider how to engage with NSAGs in-order to ensure sustainability and efficiency of stabilization strategies and peace support operations. It has become vital that we identify the behavioural patterns of NSAGs if we as external actors are to develop tools which will assist member states, REC/RMs on how to effectively approach and engage with NSAGs in order to advance stabilization, DDR, SALWs control, border security and development interventions.

**Distinguished Participants,**

Non-state armed groups are not a new phenomenon in conflicts anywhere in the world. Since the end of the Second World War the majority of armed conflicts have no longer been fought between states or rather take place within the territory of a single state. Civil wars and other intrastate violent conflicts, which by their nature are characterized by the participation of NSAGs on at least one side, have dominated warfare so much so that war between states has increasingly become the exception rather than the rule. We continue to witness how violence and organized armed entities involved in internal armed conflicts seem to be primarily motivated by ideological objectives, operating outside State control territories. In such conflicts, NSAGs directly affect peoples’ physical security and undermine state authority.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This brings us to why we are here today, as we consider phase two of the DDR program that we have been running with great support from our partners the World Bank Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP), the
United Nations Office at the African Union (UNOAU) and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO), we need to take stock of the challenges faced and identify lessons learnt that can guide our future interventions.

This sharing methodology workshop which was agreed at the 4th African Union SALW/DDR Steering Committee Meeting held in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2014, will help the African Union and its partners, to shape the analytical guidelines particularly on approach and methodology outlined in the concept note for the study. Recommendations from this workshop will be translated into revising the approach and methodology for the collaborative assessment to support country efforts in peace negotiation, stabilization and peace support operations.

**Distinguished Participants**

As we continue to enhance our efforts towards stabilization, DDR, Border Security and development in areas affected by NSAGs, we must ensure that we take all parameters into consideration and develop policy that will equip practitioners with the tools that they require.

As I look around the room I see participants that are experienced specialists who can greatly move this process forward. By engaging multiple partners with different institutional mandates the study will seek to explore a better understanding of approaches to engaging with NSAGs in advancing stabilization strategies and peacebuilding efforts on the African continent. We are particularly grateful to the European Union Commission for providing timely support for the workshop to take place.
In closing, I look forward to your valuable contribution during the next two days to ensure the AUC and our partners, in rolling out such an ambitious and comprehensive well thought out collaborative study of the activities of NSAGs to support policy and programming needs in our member states and across border regions.

I thank you for your attention.