SIXTH MEETING OF THE SPECIALIZED
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON DEFENSE,
SAFETY AND SECURITY

PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE
CHIEFS OF DEFENSE STAFF

ADDIS ABABA, 29 APRIL 2013

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR RAMTANE LAMAMRA,
COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY
I am pleased to welcome you all to the Commission of the African Union for this gathering of the African Chiefs of Defense Staff, convened to prepare the sixth meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security.

I would like, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Commission and on my own behalf, to extend our most sincere appreciation to all the Chiefs of Defense Staff or their representatives, as well as to the Regional Standby Forces Leaders, for having responded to our invitation. Your participation illustrates, once again, your commitment and that of your respective countries to the cause of peace, security and stability on our continent.

This meeting is taking place amidst lingering challenges in the area of peace and security on the continent. It is also taking place on the eve of the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU, a unique opportunity for the continent to redouble its efforts towards the achievement of the goals set by the Founding Fathers of the OAU.

Our armies have continued to play an important role in the efforts aimed at ending conflict and sustaining peace, in particular through their involvement in various peace support operations across the continent. From Darfur to Mali,
The Democratic Republic of Congo to Somalia, South Sudan to Liberia, Abyei to Western Sahara, to list but a few, African armies, either under the authority of the African Union or that of the United Nations, are making an important contribution to the achievement of our long cherished objective of a conflict-free Africa.

It is only fitting for me, at this stage, to reiterate AU’s appreciation for the role the African military is playing in peace support operations. I wish to pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. In this regard, I would like to request all of you to stand up and to observe a minute of silence for the men and women who lost their lives in the pursuit of peace, security and stability on our continent.

[Observance of minute silence]

Generals, Officers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting is being convened as a follow-up to the decisions adopted by the Summit meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council and the Assembly of the Union, last January. In those decisions, both the PSC and the Assembly stressed the need to operationalize the Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) of the African Standby Force (ASF), within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and requested the Commission to submit a report on progress made and the difficulties faced.

In adopting that decision, the Heads of State and Government were mindful of the fact that the operationalization of the RDC of the ASF would significantly facilitate the promotion of African solutions to Africa’s problems, and enhance
The January decisions were made against the background of the then evolving situation in Mali and our inability, as Africans, to swiftly respond to the request for assistance made by the Malian Government following the offensive launched by the armed terrorist and criminal groups against the positions of the Malian army in the area of Konna. This necessitated the launching of the French-led Operation “Serval”, which stopped their offensive and, with the support of the Malian Armed Forces, made it possible to recover the northern part of the country.

Over the years, both at continental and regional levels, sustained efforts have been made to operationalize the African Standby Force. Notably, these efforts led to the adoption of three Roadmaps to guide both the efforts of the Member States and those of the Commission. Roadmap III, which was adopted by the Ministers of Defense, in October 2011 and endorsed by the Executive Council in January 2012, urged the AU Commission and the Regional Standby Forces to spare no efforts to ensure the timely implementation of the provisions contained therein, so that the ASF could attain Full Operational Capability (FOC) in 2015. More specifically, Roadmap III articulated three main objectives: (i) finalization of the pending actions under the Roadmap II, in the operational, legal, logistics and structural areas; (ii) review the ASF Vision to ensure its coherence with Africa’s needs, as determined in APSA; (iii) identification of new priorities and challenges: RDC, humanitarian action, management of the Police component and coordination of the civilian component. A number of steps are underway toward the implementation of Roadmap III.
In this process, particular attention has been paid to the Rapid Deployment Capability of the ASF. In March 2008, the Ministers of Defense, Security and Safety recommended that the RDC should be an integral part of the different Regional Standby Forces, on the understanding that it would be deployed as an entry point, as a precursor to the deployment of a larger mission. Subsequently, the Commission, working with the Regional Standby Forces, prepared a harmonized Concept Note defining the parameters and timelines for the operationalization of the RDC in five Regional Standby Forces. Roadmap III of the ASF recommended that the RDC be tested, evaluated and operationalized by 2012. This objective could not be attained.

As part of the AMANI AFRICA II cycle, launched in September 2011, the Commission is planning to organize a field training exercise (FTX) in 2015, to "validate the capacity of the African Union to grant a mandate for the use of a Rapid Deployment Capability, as an initial operation (Scenario 6) and to lead, in the process, a fully-fledged multidimensional peace support operation (Scenario 5)".

Generals, Officers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend all those concerned for their efforts towards the operationalization of the ASF. Clearly, progress has been made. Key ASF documents have been developed and agreed upon. The Planning Elements have been established both at continental and regional levels. The ASF has attained its initial operational capability as demonstrated by Amani Africa Exercise in October 2011.
acknowledge that the pace of progress has not been commensurate with the challenges at hand, as clearly demonstrated by the slowness of the deployment of the African Troops in Mali and the recourse to external forces to deal with the sudden escalation of the crisis brought about by the offensive of the armed, terrorist and criminal groups in mid-January.

There is no doubt that the initial concept of the ASF and its RDC, which is based on the mobilization of 2,500 troops per Regional Standby Force, and the parameters governing its deployment remain valid. As such, no effort should be spared towards the implementation of the concept and the pursuit of the objectives that have been set.

However, judging from the current status of their establishment and, given the existing disparities in terms of capacity among the regions and between the Member States, it is doubtful that the RDC will reach the required operational readiness within a envisaged timeframe, to enable the continent respond effectively and with the required urgency to situations such as the one that Mali experienced in January 2013 and which could occur at any given moment between now and the time when the RDC would be fully operational.

For this reason, the Commission which is guided by the guidance given by our Heads of State proposes a transitional formula likely to expeditiously provide Africa with an urgently needed tool to enhance the continent’s capacity to promote "African solutions to the Africa’s problems”. Such a formula will have to be based on "collective self-reliance" and, as much as possible, on the equitable basis of contributive capacity of Member States. The formula will have to assume the appellation and shape of «African Capability for
Immediate Response to Crises - ACIRC.

The report before you outlines the proposed formula. I have no doubt that your deliberations will make it possible to enrich the formula, so that concrete and action oriented recommendations can be submitted to the Ministers of Defense and, subsequently, to both the PSC and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government at their forthcoming Summit.

Generals, Officers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In our deliberations, we have to keep in mind the imperative for the AU to effectively address the shortcomings highlighted by the Malian crisis. Urgent steps have to be taken to address them, while working towards the full operationalization of the ASF and its Rapid Deployment Capability. What is at stake is our political credibility and the capacity of our continent to assume the leadership and ownership required for the promotion of lasting solutions to the challenges facing the continent.

Let me hasten to stress that by promoting as much as possible Africa’s collective self-reliance, the AU is not discarding the assistance of the international community, particularly that of the United Nations, whose Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Rather, our objective is to ensure that Africa contributes in a more active and substantive manner to collective security, as provided for in the United Nations Charter and the AU Constitutive Act, in a spirit of partnership with other international stakeholders and based on the principle of burden sharing.

I thank you for your kind attention.