STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR SMAIIL CHERGUI

COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY
Your Excellency Chair of IGAD,
Excellences Heads of State and Governments,
Honorable Ministers,
Chairperson of Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission,
Special Envoys,
Ladies and Gentleman.

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to thank the Chairperson of IGAD for convening to this very critical IGAD Summit meeting on South Sudan.

The AU is deeply disturbed by the scale of violence in several parts of South Sudan. While we express our concern over the security situation, we do not overlook the recent positive developments in the country. Therefore, we commend President Salva Kiir Mayardit, for swearing in the National Dialogue Steering Committee, declaring a unilateral ceasefire, releasing political prisoners and the promising to protect opposition members taking part in the National Dialogue process and relinquishing the National Dialogue patronage to the two co-Chairs of the Steering Committee.

Given these developments, we are duty bound to strongly urge the armed opposition to also cease hostilities and contribute positively to the National Dialogue. These announcements stand to facilitate an environment conducive for political engagement, as well as permitting the speedy deployment of the Rapid Protection Force (RPF) in the country.

Let me repeat again that the AU is of the view that there can be no military solution to the crisis in South Sudan. Therefore any individual or party that pursues such options is not interested in peace and stability in South Sudan. The security situation consistently exacerbates the grave humanitarian situation on the ground, leading to loss of life.

We remain convinced, beyond doubt, that the National Dialogue process remains a critical initiative that holds hope for resolving the incessant challenges of South Sudan. However, we
should underscore the need to have an open processes that accommodates all South Sudanese citizens to ensure broad acceptance of the process and its final outcomes.

**Excellences**

The AU holds the view that the Agreement of August 2015 remains the only viable option to addressing the innumerable challenges faced by South Sudan. In this regard, the AU is encouraged by neighboring states efforts to bring various political forces together to consider their participation in the implementation of the Agreement and to encourage wider participation in the National Dialogue.

I wish to add my voice to the statement made by the Chairperson of Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), former President Festus Mogae, in urging for the revitalization of the peace process.

In this regard, I believe that the full implementation of the Agreement, by the signatories, will eventually lead to empowering South Sudanese through universal suffrage, as envisaged in the Agreement. Unfortunately, the current security environment continues to impede the full implementation of the Agreement, thus resulting in delaying the people’s right to democratically choose their leaders.

I cannot conclude without recalling that, on 29 January 2017, the African Union, United Nations and IGAD agreed to work more closely to assist the situation in South Sudan. The AU Commission intends to ensure that such cooperation and coordination is formalized in the interest of progress. At this defining moment, unity of purposes is required amongst us all!

Let us focus on the National Dialogue which conclusion should address all the issues on the talk and promote heading, reconciliation and justice. This can only happen if all parties hear the appeal of their people and all of us to silence the guns for good.

Lastly I wish Your Excellences successful deliberations as we plead for peace!

I thank you.