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**OPENING REMARKS BY DR. ALHAJI SARJOH BAH,
DIRECTOR OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE,
AT THE INDUCTION VISIT OF MAJ GEN GODWIN MICHAEL MUTKUT**

ADDIS ABABA, 10 MARCH 2025

Major General Godwin Michael Mutkut, the Force Commander, MNJTF

It is with great pleasure that, on behalf of Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, I welcome you and your Chief of Staff, Navy Captain J B Ngbwa to the African Union Commission Headquarters. I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your new post as Force Commander of the Multinational Joint Task Force, a force that has significantly rolled back the threat posed by Boko Haram and other armed groups in the LCB.

The African Union commends the efforts of the MNJTF in degrading Boko Haram. Your previous role as General Officer Commanding the 8 Division Nigerian Army and Force Commander Joint Task Force North West (NW) OP HADARIN DAJI highlight the immense value and rich experience you bring to the MNJTF. The Commission pays tribute to the troops who lost their lives during the implementation of the MNJTF mandate and reiterates its commitment to continue support MNJTF, including through stabilizing interventions

The Commissions acknowledges the tremendous successes of MNJTF especially the cohesion of the Troop Contributing Countries in their resolve to eradicate the threat of Boko Haram and other armed groups, dislodging it from territories it previously occupied, facilitating the return of Internally Displaced Persons and refugees and forcing the massive surrender of Boko Haram combatants and their families.

To consolidate these achievements, the Commission has, since August 2018, collaborated with the Lake Chad Basin Commission in the implementation of the Regional Stabilisation Strategy. Two out of the four strategic areas of the Revised strategy, as adopted by Council of Ministers on 27 February 2025, puts the MNJTF in a central position in the stabilisation of the LCB areas affected by Boko Haram by ensuring peace and security, achieving durable solutions and the protection of civilians.

Furthermore, the 5th meeting of the Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilisation, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development, held in Maiduguri, Nigeria, from 29 to 31 January 2025, commended the significant contributions and achievements of the MNJTF in combating Boko Haram and other armed groups. The Governors offered to strengthen their strategic support to, and operational capacity of the MNJTF in order to completely eradicate the threats posed by Boko Haram and other armed groups in the region, particularly through the effective occupation of Islands in Lake Chad that are currently serving as the last enclaves of Boko Haram.

Therefore, the AU looks forward to your leadership and command of the MNJTF in ensuring the successful execution of the MNJTF's authorised mandate which has been extended by the AU PSC for 12 months until 31 January 2026. The European Union (EU) has also agreed to extend financial support through the AU Commission for the implementation of the EU-AU additional support to the MNJTF until 31 December 2026. The provision of Level 3 medical treatment, air mobility and C3IS as well as supply and delivery of petrol oil lubricant and the payment for Headquarter running costs and MSA to staff officers at the MNJTF Headquarters, are part of the AU additional support package. The AU staff will take you through the details of the implementation, and overall utilization of the funds mobilized to support the MNJTF.

The AU commits to go beyond support to the military efforts. We remain committed to supporting the full implementation of the revised Regional Stabilization Strategy (RSS) in the Lake Chad Basin. The Commission has recruited a Senior Stabilisation and Recovery Officer who assumed duty last week and will be the link between the force and the LCBC's RSS secretariat in the implementation of the MNJTF mandated tasks to facilitate stabilization programs. Achieving a balance between Kinetic and non-Kinetic operations is critical to the overall success of MNJTF.

There are indicators that terrorist activities in the greater Sahel are progressively tending to fuse with the terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin region. The Commission encourages the MNJTF to coordinate and cooperate where possible with regional mechanisms and forces to create the desired synergy to defeat radical extremists in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin.

I am confident that the presentations during this induction would shed light on the political and operational support to enhance better understanding of the Commission's support to the MNJTF.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you fruitful deliberations.