Remarks of the African Union Commission
Chairperson's Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security
At the Launch of the Gender, Peace and Security Programme (GPSP) Workshop

The Commissioner of Peace and Security
Deputy Head of Mission, Austrian Embassy
The Director of Peace and Security
Your Excellencies,
African Union Partners,
African Union Colleagues,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the Gender Peace and Security Program Launching and Implementation Workshop. I am honored to take part in this important and timely workshop, to contribute to the Africa Union Commission Peace and Security Department five year 2015-2020 Gender, Peace and Security Program.

I commend the Peace and Security department and all partners that participated in the wide consultations during the program
formulation stages to lay the foundations for strengthening the program strategy.

It is pivotal that we design a comprehensive program for the development of effective strategies and mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and women increased participation in peace and security in Africa. As noted by the Chairperson H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma during the 2013 AU Summit, ‘Our women must be empowered as a critical ingredient to the continental development’.

I believe that this program will support AUC departments to build the capacity of various AU organs, divisions, RECs and member states to be effective and efficient in delivering the expected services. For this to happen we need to have a continuous process that include planning, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, training program, as well as indicators to assess the progress made.

While we applaud the leadership of the department, ownership participation, monitoring and coordination among units and divisions of AUC and all stakeholders will be necessary for effective implementation. I encourage the evaluation process which will show us good practices lesson learned and way forward. My mandate will also bring the voice of the women. As we are moving towards the 15 anniversary of 1325 we need to move forward to a continental framework to monitor the
implementation and share the work on prevention, participation and protection.

The participation of women is crucial in peace processes and post conflict rebuilding, their involvement ensures their rights are protected and their needs are met. I would like to stress that lasting peace cannot be achieved and reconstruction be a success with half the population excluded.

In Africa, Women are playing a defining role in our development scheme, and make up over 50% of the work force. However, we have not been able to provide them with the tools to prevent violence against them and the protection they deserve from sexual harassment and violence.

In order to address sexual violence against women, men and children, in time of conflict and post-conflict situation, we have to work on preventive measure during peacetime. We have to mainstream gender in institutions, and put in place laws against harassment and abuse. We have to hold the perpetrators accountable. We have to make sure we implement existing laws, and send strong messages that impunity will not prevail.
We need to involve men in our education campaigns, without the cooperation and participation of men we cannot end violence against women. Women also need to be empowered to exercise their rights, their leadership in peace negotiation is crucial for lasting solution.

As part of my mandate, I will continue to raise the voice of the voiceless. The ones you find in refugee camps, the ones that have been raped, the ones that lost their husbands, the ones that saw their children enrolled as child soldiers. We need a Continental Framework for Women, Peace and Security which will include, indicators, directives for implementation and it will be anchored in the three pillars - prevention, participation and protection. It will guide member states on the implementation of UN resolution 1325 and sub second resolution.

I acknowledge the fact that this program recognized the importance of such a continental plan of action to be adopted.

As you know we are sending our troop to peacekeeping operation for the protection of civilians, we recommend guidelines and code of conduct be provided to them before their deployment.

AU has all the necessary policy, structure and instruments however implementation remains a challenge. Our effort should target on accelerating the implementation process and this framework will help bridge the gap and complement the work done by the department.
Sixteen countries in Africa including Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone have adopted national action plan on 1325 and the Great Lakes has adopted regional action plan.

In my recent visits to South Sudan and Central African Republic, I have witnessed the challenges women and children face in post conflict areas and in camps. The hardships these women experience everyday are results of the marginalization of women that where ignored and not addressed at times of peace. We cannot afford to ignore the plight of women who make up half of our continent’s population if we are to realize the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens. I applaud the effort of the regional forces, AU and international bodies on their effort to reduce the daily mortality rate and improve human security.

In conclusion, I wish everyone a productive workshop, and hope by the end of the workshop we will have concrete outcomes that would ensure success on the ground. My office is ready to support the program and scale up the efforts already made.