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19th MEETING OF AFRICAN CHIEFS OF
DEFENCE STAFF AND HEADS OF SAFETY
AND SECURITY

NELSON MANDELA HALL,
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
4 JUNE 2024
Brigadier General Mohamed El Mocktar Menny - Chairperson of the Meeting of the African Chiefs of Defence Staff and Heads of Safety and Security,

Members of the Bureau of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security,

Representatives of Member States,

Ambassador Adeoye Bankole, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security,

Representatives of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution,

Ladies and Gentlemen

On this auspicious second day of the 16th Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety, and Security (STCDSS) meeting and the 19th Ordinary Session of the African Chiefs of Defense Staff and Heads of Safety and Security Services, I stand before you, on behalf of H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye and the African Union Commission, to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your esteemed presence.

I stand before you with a heart full of gratitude and eyes set firmly on the horizon of hope for a peaceful and stable Africa. The Experts-level meetings have been a beacon of productivity, and I am filled with confidence that the groundwork laid will lead us to a smooth and efficient meeting.

As you commence your deliberations, let us first turn our thoughts to the unyielding spirit of our African brothers and sisters protecting our beloved continent from terrorists, violent extremists and other hostile armed groups. These brave souls, who have made the ultimate sacrifice, are the true custodians of our continent’s future. They stand as a bulwark against the forces of terror and extremism that seek to ravage the peace we hold dear. From the Horn of Africa to the Sahel, the Great Lakes to Mozambique, and elsewhere in the continent, their valour knows no bounds.

The African Union Commission stands in solidarity with these heroes from our Member States in our Peace Support Operations. We unequivocally condemn the acts of terror that cast a shadow over our lands. Our commitment to supporting those in the line of fire is unwavering, and we pledge to continue our relentless pursuit of a continent that is not only peaceful but also secure for all its inhabitants.

Today, as we embark on our discussions, let us carry the spirit of our fallen heroes with us. Let their dedication inspire us to forge ahead with resolve and unity, to combat the forces that threaten our way of life and to emerge stronger together in the face of adversity.
Chairperson, Members of the STCDSS Bureau,

The African Union Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to peace and security across our continent. Through the Chairperson’s Report and policy documents, we have provided comprehensive updates and sought the continued support of the AU Member States. Your unwavering support is the cornerstone of our collective success, and we rely on your support to provide the necessary resources and capabilities to address conflicts effectively.

Despite increased national and international measures to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes regions, and Mozambique, among other places, challenges persist. Our responses must adapt to these evolving threats and tactics by the insurgent groups. We must also learn from our experiences to shape security frameworks and enhance conflict anticipation capabilities.

Since our last STCDSS meeting, the Commission has been actively involved in several interventions, including peace support operations. Notably, ATMIS has seen significant reconfiguration, with troops drawdown and the handover of military bases to Somali Security Forces. The upcoming third phase targets a further drawdown of 4,000 troops by the end of June 2024. In response to the Federal Government of Somalia’s proposal for post-ATMIS security arrangements, the Commission is currently finalizing a comprehensive strategic guidance document for consideration by the PSC. The Commission has been actively engaging with the FGS, taking part in the Somalia Security Conference in New York in December 2024.

In the Eastern DRC, the situation remains critical, with ongoing threats from groups like M23 and FDLR. The Commission supported diplomatic efforts and the deployment of regional forces such as the East African Community (EAC) Regional Force in Eastern DRC, which has since been withdrawn and replaced by SADC Mission Eastern DRC (SAMIDRC) to stabilise the region. The recent endorsement of the SADC Mission in eastern DRC (SAMIDRC) marks a significant step in efforts to stabilize the region. In this regard, the AU PSC and the Commission continue mobilising support for rapid stabilisation in eastern DRC.

Looking ahead, the African Union (AU) continues to enhance its response mechanisms and tools. The operationalisation of the Peace Fund is a testament to your commitment to peace and security, having already supported the budgetary needs of ATMIS, EACRF, and the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in Northern Ethiopia. Furthermore, the 2024 PAPS department programme budget allocated $5 million from the Crisis Reserve Facility of the AU Peace Fund for activities across the three thematic windows.

The Commission is also pleased to report significant progress in ensuring adequate, sufficient and predictable funding for AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs). The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2719 grants the AU access to UN-assessed contributions, providing a reliable financial foundation for our peacekeeping initiatives. While the modalities of this resolution are being finalised, it represents a historic milestone, culminating years of
diligent diplomatic engagements by the AU Commission and our Member States, championed by the A3.

These endeavours resonate with the core of the AU’s Agenda 2063, which represents the AU’s strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of Africa over a 50-year period. It targets inclusive growth, sustainable development, and continental unity. At the heart of this roadmap lies Aspiration 4: “A peaceful and secure Africa.” This vision is the driving force behind the flagship initiative, Silencing the Guns by 2020, embodying the AU’s dedication to cultivating a continent of peace and stability.

In conclusion, the Commission will continue to be guided by the wisdom of our Member States. The insights and deliberations from this esteemed Committee are invaluable, enriching the documents that will be presented to the Ministers of Defence, Safety and Security and, ultimately, to the appropriate policy organs at the forthcoming Ordinary Session of the Assembly.

I extend my deepest gratitude for your time and collaborative efforts in this noble pursuit.