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**VALIDATION WORKSHOP OF THE DRAFT  
AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE  
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

**ADDIS ABABA, 22 NOVEMBER 2016  
AFRICAN UNION HEADQUARTERS (CR II)**

**STATEMENT BY DR. ADMORE MUPOKI KAMBUDZI,  
ACTING DIRECTOR FOR PEACE AND SECURITY DEPARTMENT**

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**Ambassador Jean Mfasoni, Senior Advisor to the Chairperson of the AU Commission,  
Mr Désiré Y. Assogbavi, Head of Oxfam International Liaison Office to the African Union,  
Press Attachés of the AU Member States,  
Communication Officers and focal points in the Commission, in the AULO and Field Missions,  
Invited Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to join you in this timely workshop to validate the draft African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Communications Strategy. The APSA, from a working definition point of view, can be described as an *“African-conceived and African-driven continental blueprint for the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa, as well as for systematic conceptualisation, planning and implementation of post-conflict stabilisation, peacebuilding, reconstruction and development in the continent.”* It is therefore critical that we develop a communications strategy that educates all its stakeholders in the region and beyond about what it stands for. I believe the draft developed thus far proposes compelling actions, activities and informative public information products aimed at supporting, enhancing, and publicizing the efforts of the AU, within the framework of the APSA.

We are all here today to fine-tune and produce this dynamic and progressive strategy to better reach out to our target audience and achieve our ambitious goal of silencing the guns in Africa by 2020. Your presence here gives credence to the process of strategic communications in helping raise to the visibility of the AU’s peace and security efforts as well as inspiring and invigorating renewed confidence in the AU’s ability to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts.

At present, we have more means to communicate than ever before in human history. But without a strategy, we would be engaging in a wasteful and ineffective exercise, a *“throw it on the wall and see if it sticks”* approach, which is bound to fail. A communications plan expresses clearly, what you want to say about your work. It identifies key channels and the most appropriate audience to engage. In the same token, if you want to ensure the effectiveness of the APSA, it is crucial to raise awareness about the values and principles that it stands for. In this light, a comprehensive communications strategy jointly formulated by all communication experts and focal points gathered in this August House is a priority for the Department’s Communication drive. This improves the implementation of APSA in addressing challenges facing Africa.

As you are aware, it has been fourteen years since the African Union (AU) started implementing the APSA as articulated in the 2002 Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union. Since then, the Union has made significant progress, not only in establishing the APSA institutions and mechanisms, but also in increasingly utilizing them for the purpose of conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as post-conflict

reconstruction. This is with a view to promoting “peace, security, and stability on the continent”, as envisaged by the 2000 Constitutive Act of the AU and in line with the aspirations of Africa’s people. The Commission has recently published the APSA Roadmap 2016 – 2020, a strategic document, which builds on the achievements and challenges resulting from the implementation of the previous APSA Roadmaps (2011-2013). The Roadmap, which will be presented during the workshop manifests the continued determination to ensure further progress, and paves the way for future collaboration between the AU, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to effectively address security issues and contribute to a more peaceful Africa.

Even though the key components of APSA are now more or less fully operational and the number of violent conflicts has been significantly reduced in the past few years, a number of countries still remain trapped in a vicious cycle of violent conflict and its deadly consequences, aside from fresh conflicts and crises that have arisen. While I am pleased to point out successes in the operationalization of the APSA, there are still significant gaps, especially as it relates to our capacity to communicate in a timely and effective manner. This, therefore, calls for a renewed commitment by all of us to prioritize communication with a view to strengthening our work within the AU.

#### **Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

By adopting a strategic framework across the AU, communications and advocacy can directly support the AU to implement its Agenda 2063 vision ‘*Towards The Africa We Want*’ and to accomplish its goals towards silencing the guns, which is a pre-requisite for realizing a conflict-free Africa by the year 2020”. That said, public perception, trust and confidence in the AU and its programmes, rest upon how well we communicate about our work. Communications should not be perceived as a supplementary add-on, but as an essential and value adding component of all activities undertaken by the Commission. Because, greater visibility of our programmes can help us meet our objectives and mobilize future resources. Favorable public opinion and a trusted public image informs of who we are, what we do and why we do it and can strengthen our relationships with our stakeholders and key partners. In addition, understanding our target audience, documenting our experiences, and establishing networks improves the overall effectiveness of the work we do. With many voices competing for media time and resources, it is critical that we manage our communications well.

This strategy outlines the following core activities that will be implemented throughout the year, namely: Maintaining quality, consistency, accuracy and reliability and in adherence to existing AU communication policies and guidelines when communicating our programmes to the public; Strengthening the existing ties with media organizations and news outlets and keeping the media informed of progress as well as the challenges we face in the implementation of the APSA; and utilizing the wide array of tools at our disposal to reach out to African Citizens through the channels most accessible to them.

The two-day deliberation provides a unique collaborative platform to discuss options for coordination and integration of efforts, and an opportunity to re-evaluate our public information capabilities in order to enhance communication for concise and effective messaging across our liaison offices and field missions. The discussion is expected to assess the current communications context at the Commission and the public information work of the AU field missions and liaison offices. I believe that the open exchange of views will lead to a shared understanding of the APSA and more importantly the respective roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in its implementation.

On a related matter, I would like to inform you that the Peace and Security Council held a retreat from 7 to 9 November 2016, in Lusaka, Zambia, to deeply reflect on means and ways to silence the guns/end wars in African by year 2020. The PSC will be coming upfront with the outcome of the Retreat, which will be presented to the AU Assembly in 2017.

To conclude, I would like to encourage all of you to make the term “APSA” a household name all over the continent, especially as Africa has now embarked on implementation of Agenda 2063, one of the maiden goals of which is to ‘Silence the Guns/end wars in Africa by year 2020.’ I appeal to all of you to give your honest feedback, so that we have in our hands a navigation tool to help us define where we are going and how we are going to get there.

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