First Meeting of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on
Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

20 – 21 February 2013
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

REMARKS BY DR. TAREK A. SHARIF
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Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the AU Commission, let me start by welcoming you to Addis Ababa, and to this first meeting of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). I thank you all for the commitment you continue to show by participating in the Steering Committee meetings.

As you may recall, the proposal to have one steering committee to handle SALW and DDR was reached at the validation meeting for the AU DDR capacity program that was held in September 2012. This was informed by the fact that it is the same officers handling the matters of SALW and DDR in the RECs. This was also in order to avoid duplication since the two are related fields. This proposal was formally endorsed at the 6th Meeting of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons that was held in November 2012 in Libreville, Gabon. This is the first meeting of the reconstituted Steering Committee that is now called the AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR).

I would like to underscore that this meeting is important, as it is going to set the pace for the Steering Committee in terms of setting its expectations for 2013 and beyond. In this regard, I wish to highlight what I consider some critical issues relating to the work of the Committee. The Steering Committee is expected not only to coordinate the various aspects related to the fight against illicit SALW and DDR, but to monitor their implementation, and evaluate their impacts as well. It should be in our common interest to strengthen this Committee with a view to consolidating our oversight role.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to inform that the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments, at its Twentieth Ordinary Session that took place from 27 – 28 January 2013 here in Addis Ababa, adopted
decision Assembly/AU/Dec.472(XX) in which it noted with satisfaction the finalization of the AU-Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, and **encouraged Member States to make use of the Strategy and its Action Plan.** With this decision, we are ready to roll out the activities included in the Action plan, but in a coordinated manner. It is therefore imperative that we use the Action Plan to strategize our activities so that we deliver in accordance with what is set out in the Action Plan.

It can be recalled that the Steering Committee developed the African Union Common Position on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in order to assist AU Member States during the negotiations for the ATT. In the same decision, the Assembly also encouraged Member States to make use of the Common Position to further Africa’s concerns and interests during the Final UN Conference on the ATT which will be held in New York in March 2013. I wish to encourage all the members to participate in this final Conference to mobilize Member States so that their interests are taken on board in the Final ATT. On its part, the Commission will make a presentation of the key elements of the Common Position to the African Group in New York to strengthen the participation of the Member States.

On the other hand, your participation in the validation workshop of the AU DDR Capacity Program held in September 2012 is greatly appreciated. As we are all aware the program is intended to strengthen the capacity of the AU to work with Member States in DDR. Indeed, strengthening capacity within the AU regional security architecture to provide effective support to DDR initiatives is viewed by the AU, as essential to its objective of promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. The importance and mandate of the AU Commission to support DDR processes was made in the 2004 Common African Defense and Security Policy (CADSP) and then subsequently in the 2006 Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) and the 2010 African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Roadmap. I would like also to highlight that throughout this DDR capacity enhancement process, the AU is being supported by the World Bank Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP), the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO). Both the UN and the World Bank view the enhancement of AU capacity
to address security needs on the continent, as being strategic to achieving sustainable peace and security on the continent.

To this end, a Donor’s Conference was held just two days ago to introduce the AU DDR Capacity Program. I am pleased to report that the programme received statements of support from our partners, representatives of donor countries, and AU Member States present. I would like also to take this opportunity to call upon all of us to ensure that we play our respective roles to ensure the success of the program.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my hope that the Steering Committee will strengthen its work in coordinating SALW and DDR activities in the Member States. This will not only contribute to conflict prevention, but also in peacekeeping, and post conflict situations.

I am therefore encouraging you to take this into consideration in your plans for 2013

I thank you for your kind attention.

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