DECADE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AU SSR-POLICY FRAMEWORK: SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

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Opening Remarks
By
H.E Ambassador Bankole Adeoye,
Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security
Excellencies Representatives of AU Member States

Esteemed Representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms,

HE, Mr Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union,
Esteemed representatives from the diplomatic community,
Mrs Niagale Bagayoko, Chair of the African Security Sector Network (ASSN),
Esteemed colleagues from Political Affairs Peace and Security Department
Distinguished international partners,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure, to welcome you all to this conference on "Decade of implementation of the AU Security Sector Reform (SSR) Policy Framework".

Security Sector Reforms and Governance remains an vital element of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and is recognized as an essential precondition for good governance, conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building.

Security sector reforms and repurposing of security institutions and agencies is also a critical enabler of the efforts required “to Silence the Guns” in Africa, to create the peaceful and secure Africa, envisioned in Aspiration 4 of the AU’s Agenda 2063.

In this respect, the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2030 placed emphasis on security governance. It acknowledges that the limited progress in transforming African defense and security forces into professional and disciplined national security institutions that are subject to accountable national government oversight and control has often led to eruption of, or relapse into conflicts. This inevitably leads to cyclical intercommunal violence, disrupting stabilization and peace-building efforts.
Re-establishment, reform, and strengthening of security institutions, through comprehensive and complete Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) along with SSR constitute key priorities of the AU Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy (PCRD) of 2006.

This paved the way to the adoption of the AU Policy Framework on SSR by the 20th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in January 2013.

**Distinguished participants,**
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Since the adoption of this AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform, the Commission has persistently worked to promote and support its implementation. The work of the Commission has revolved around three pillars: 1) **providing direct assistance to Member States embarking on security reform processes;** 2) **production of knowledge tools and building human capacities;** and 3) **facilitating coordination and dialogue among regional and international actors providing SSR support in Africa.**

Recently, upon request, the AU Commission has provided SSR support to Member States in political transitions and in Post Conflict contexts, as well as in the framework of conflict prevention, including the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, the Gambia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, South Sudan and Somalia, among others.

The support ranges from designing, implementation and coordination of nationally led SSR processes. All support factored-in the essential role of women in security governance and sustaining peace. In this regard, the Commission has developed an Operational Guidance Note (OGN) on Gender mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform, and rolled out its dissemination to Member States and RECs.

As part of the efforts to enhance coordination in SSR on the African Continent, the AU Commission established a triannual SSR Africa Forum and an annual Steering Committee, where the AU, Regional Economic Communities, the UN, and international partners can jointly identify priorities, align their approaches, and provide guidance to Member States on
ways and means to enhance and streamline security sector governance in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution.

**Distinguished participants,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish also to underscore that on its part the Commission has given particular attention to engaging the civil society on SSR within the AU SSR Policy Framework, and the principles and objectives of the **“Livingstone Formula”**. In this regard, the Commission has enhanced collaboration with the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) and the Africa Security Sector Network (ASSN), and launched, a project to build the capacity of civil society organizations (CSO) to effectively participate in Security and Justice Sector Reforms.

The role played by civil society, particularly the ASSN, in supporting the development of the AU SSR Policy Framework prepared the ground for continued cooperation in the implementation phase. We take this opportunity to thank ASSN represented here by Dr. Niagale Bagayoko, for the role played by ASSN in supporting AU in the designing of this robust policy and in its implementation.

However, I wish hasten and register that; despite the efforts deployed in the implementation of the AU SSR Framework, for the last ten years, its effectiveness faced a number of socio-political and technical challenges, resulting in its slow implementation and limited impact in improving the delivery of security services that contribute to resolving the growing security threats, particularly terrorism, violent extremism, and unconstitutional changes of governments (UCG).

Subsequently, the 16th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, on 28th May 2022, also raised concern in the increase of aforementioned security threats which are mostly related to security governance deficits.

In framework of UN and AU partnership on peace and security, the AU Commission attended the UN Security Council Meeting held in March 2023 under the Chairmanship of Mozambique, which focused on Security Sector Reform in the context of international peace and security.
During the meeting, the AU Commission recommended the need to undertake a critical analysis of concrete outcomes and challenges after ten years of implementation of the AU SSR Policy Framework, which I am pleased to note that today’s conference will delve into more substantively and receive updates from Member States undertaking security sector transformation and reforms.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to partners who collaborated with the Commission to organize this event, particularly the UN office to the African Union (UNOAU), the African Security Sector Network (ASSN)/ Just Future Alliance, the Institute for Security Studies/Training for Peace (ISS-TfP) and the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF).

I would particularly, also with acknowledge the commendable efforts of the Member States including The Gambia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali and South Sudan who shared their valuable experiences in implementing SSR in their countries, in the recently concluded study conducted with support of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

The outcomes of the study will be discussed in this conference and final recommendations shall feed into a briefing to Peace and Security Council (PSC), that the Political Affairs Peace and Security (PAPS) intends to hold early 2024, in response to the communiqué of the 874th PSC meeting held on 5 September 2019. It is expected that the PSC will provide necessary strategic guidance and the way forward.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the AU Commission I thank all Esteemed Member States who accepted our invitation to attend this important conference and to share their experiences and lessons learned, in order to promote the principle of finding African solutions to African security threats and challenges.
Our gratitude also goes to international partners who played and still play a key role in the AU SSR Policy implementation, including the United Nations, European Union, the Geneva Centre for Security Governance (DCAF) among others.

I look forward to receiving practical conclusions from the Conference, which should enable us to provide technical and material support to Member States’ security governance initiatives.

I thank you all.