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**WORKSHOP ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NETWORK OF AFRICAN ASSOCIATIONS OF
VICTIMS OF TERRORIST ACTS**

**17-18 November 2016
Addis Ababa,**

Statement by

Dr. Tarek A. Sharif

Head, Defence and Security Division

Peace and Security Department



**Dr. Ozonnia Ojielo, Regional Cluster Director, Governance and Peacebuilding in Africa,
UNDP,**

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you all to the AU headquarters, here in Addis Ababa, to this workshop on the establishment of a network of African associations of victims of terrorist acts. Your presence shows the importance your governments and organizations attach to the efforts towards working with victims of terrorist acts, as part of the overall efforts in the prevention and combating of terrorism and violent extremism.

Allow me, at the outset, to thank the Japanese government for the financial support it has provided through the UNDP, which has made it possible to hold this meeting. We look forward to continued cooperation with the government of Japan in the broader prevention and combating of terrorism and violent extremism.

I also wish to thank the UNDP for partnering with the AU, not only in holding this meeting, but in supporting the broader efforts of the AU to assist the member States to meet their obligations in the prevention and combating of terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This workshop is a follow-up to the AU Symposium on victims of terrorist acts that was held in Algiers, Algeria, in October 2014, in which participants called for the establishment of a Network of African Associations of Victims of Terrorist Acts. It's in this regard, that we are meeting here to exchange views, experiences and good practice on how best to tap

into the niche of the associations of victims of terrorist acts, not only to support their course of protecting their rights and interests, but also work with them in the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization in Africa, through the promotion of constructive dialogue. Indeed, Member States represented here have the experience and firsthand information, which will enable us to have successful outcomes.

I wish also to note that the world has, in the recent past, witnessed a growing awareness of the fact that the fight against terrorism lies not only in military might, but also in the field of words, stories, narratives and propaganda to discourage individuals from getting radicalized.

It can be recalled that in the 2004 Protocol to the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, AU Member States commit, among others, to establish a mechanism to use funds and assets confiscated from terrorists to compensate victims of terrorist acts or their families. The AU also participated at the 3rd Biennial Review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that was held in New York in 2012, and strongly supported resolution GA/11261 adopted on the occasion that, among others, emphasized the need to promote worldwide solidarity in support of the victims of terrorist acts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Associations of victims of terrorism are, therefore, an important tool to speak out against extremist violence. This remains a key area for the AU agenda for the prevention and combating of terrorism and violent extremism. In fact, it is essential that we join our efforts to counter the narrative of terrorists and extremists, while testifying to the negative effects of terrorist attacks on the lives of ordinary people. Working with victims

strengthens their voices and feeds into the prevention of terrorism, including changing the perceptions of society.

I wish to emphasize that victims of terrorist acts are not just one big group, but rather can be divided into direct victims, those who are survivors of terrorist acts, and secondary victims, those who are part of the immediate affected family of the casualties from terrorist acts, or the wider society. Each of these groups offers a unique opportunity to educate society through providing a counter-narrative that discourages radicalization and violent extremism.

In the aftermath of a terrorist attack, the immediate attention is often turned to the perpetrators, leaving traumatized survivors to grieve and suffer in silence. Strengthening cooperation between Governments and victims' associations is, therefore, essential in order to give hope to survivors.

This also leads to community resilience while addressing the grievances of communities, including identifying vulnerable individuals. These remain some of our key concerns. This approach does not only seek to enhance the resilience of the communities to resist the appeal of extremist ideologies, but also community-based information. I wish to add here that emphasis should be put on the role of women in countering violent extremism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The AU strongly believes that countering terrorism, radicalization and violent extremism lie at the heart of the efforts to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. This is the reason preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism

remain at the core of the quest for a prosperous and peaceful Africa, as set out in the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063.

Whereas terrorism continues to exhibit dynamism, changing in nature, scope, motive, target, actors and methodology, the AU remains committed to support its Member States to tackle the root causes and factors that contribute to terrorism and violent extremism, including addressing drivers and enablers of terrorism, as part of the prevention element of its counter-terrorism framework. A better understanding of the threat will contribute to enhanced prevention of violent extremism and terrorism. The AU also continues to build and strengthen the capacities of the relevant agencies of the member States.

Over these two days, we will deliberate how Governments and victims associations can work together, as part of the efforts to counter terrorist and extremist narratives. Establishing an institutional mechanism that brings victims associations together is critical for the success of this endeavor, and so the establishment of a network of associations of victims of terrorism is essential.

We look forward to the adoption of the conclusions that will present a concrete way forward for the African Network for Associations of Victims of Terrorist Acts. It is hoped that the network will contribute to ensuring that no victim suffers alone. It will also contribute to mobilizing the participation of victims' associations in effectively putting forward their own counter-narratives to messages touting violent extremism. On its part, the AU will continue to build and strengthen the capacities of Member States to work with victims' associations in order to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism.

I thank you all for your attention.

