STATEMENT

BY

H.E MR. TETE ANTONIO,

AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE AFRICAN UNION

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

OPEN DEBATE OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL ON “WOMEN,

PEACE AND SECURITY: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CONFLICT

PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA”

NEW YORK, MARCH 28, 2016.

Check against delivery
Madame President,

On behalf of the AU Commission, allow me to start by congratulating you for convening this timely and very important debate. I would like also to thank you for giving us the opportunity to brief the Security Council and share the African Union’s views on a matter of great importance to it.

Your presence Madame Minister to preside over today’s discussions stresses the critical importance of this debate and bears witness to your country’s commitment to the fundamental principles and objectives of the UN Charter as well as to its determination to make a substantial contribution to the work of the UN Security Council.

I thank the previous speakers for their insightful presentations.

Madame President,
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Today’s debate is an excellent opportunity that we must seize to demonstrate our commitment to take forward the ambitious recommendations emerging from the recent UN policy reviews on peace and security issues.

The role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts must be a reality rather than a statement which dates back several decades. Our discourse on this issue must stop looking at women merely as victims, but rather recognize and encourage their demonstrated capacities to be part of peace and development efforts.

Experiences of many countries have clearly shown that lasting peace cannot be achieved and reconstruction will never succeed with half the population excluded and marginalized. To cite an example, you may recall the decisive role played by the women of Liberia in the signing of the 2003 Accra Peace agreement through the efforts of “the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace”. Africa cannot afford to ignore the role of women, if we are to realize the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent.
Madame President,

The issue of “women, peace and security” remains a priority both on the agenda of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, as well as on that of the AU Peace and Security Council. Indeed, the African Union declared 2010-2020 the “African Women Decade” with the overarching theme of “gender equality and women’s empowerment”. The year 2015 was dedicated to “Women empowerment and development towards Agenda 2063”, while the Year 2016 is “the year of human rights with particular focus on the rights of women”.

By choosing to bring women at the center of the continental deliberations, the Africa Union was reiterating the continent’s resolve to addressing all forms of barriers that impede the emancipation of women and girls in Africa and strengthen their agency and rights, through priority areas such as education, health, participation in decision-making at all levels, economic empowerment and peace and security.

In January 2014, the African Union became the first continental organization to appoint a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, with the specific mandate to “Ensure that the voices of women and children, particularly those affected by conflict are heard and to advocate at the highest levels for the rightful participation and contribution of women in conflict resolution and peace building”.

To enhance the protection of women’s rights, the AU seeks to promote international and regional commitments on peace and security, as well as to strengthen women’s participation in peace and security efforts through the AU Peace and Security Department, the Peace and Security Council and the Panel of the Wise.

Starting with the leadership of its own paramount continental institution, Africa adopted the principle of parity and acted on it. Indeed, the AU Commission has achieved parity in its leadership and is now moving toward 50/50 work force parity in line with the AU Gender Policy adopted in 2009.

Furthermore, to enhance women’s role in peace and security, the AU Commission launched a 5 year Gender, Peace and Security Program (GPSP) (2015-2020). The
Program is designed to serve as a framework for the development of effective strategies and mechanisms for women’s increased participation in the promotion of peace and security. It also aims to enhance the protection of women in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa.

The AU has also conducted training with Member States on women peace mediators, women election observers and gender advisers, and succeeded to deploy female peacekeepers and female police in peace support operation such as in AMISOM.

**Madame President,**

Despite the progress made so far, a lot remains to be done to ensure women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution as well as in post-conflict peace-building. Policies exist in plenty. Where we run short is in their implementation. It is in this perspective that the African union is developing a Continental results framework to strengthen the monitoring of implementation by Member States of their commitments on women, peace and security agenda.

In our view, more effort is needed both from the UN and the AU in the following areas:

1- Increase the proportion of the women in the police component of peace operations.

2- Ensure that the terms of reference of mediation and peace building processes have a clear component of women participation, as the basis of their delivery and accountability towards the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.

3- Make training programs on “women, peace and security” mandatory. The AU has already begun to integrate such training into its ASF program.

4- Invest more in conflict prevention and in women’s prevention initiatives.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**