PREPARATORY MEETING OF EXPERTS FOR THE FIFTEENTH ORDINARY MEETING OF THE SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE, SAFETY AND SECURITY

AND EIGHTEENTH ORDINARY MEETING OF THE AFRICAN CHIEFS OF DEFENCE STAFF AND HEADS OF SAFETY AND SECURITY SERVICES

9 – 10 MAY 2023
NELSON MANDELA HALL, AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

OPENING STATEMENT
By Alhaji Dr. Sarjoh Bah, Director for Conflict Management Directorate, Political Affairs Peace and Security Department
Experts Meeting, 9 May 2023
Colonel Rafick Soilihi - Chair of the Experts Meeting

Members of the Bureau of the Specialised Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security,

Representatives of Member States,

Representatives of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution,

International Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the Commissioner for Political Affairs Peace and Security H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adedoye, and the AU Commission, let me warmly welcome all our esteemed Member States of the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and International Partners here present to this opening session of the 15th Ordinary Session of the STCDSS and 18th Ordinary Session of the of the African Chiefs of Defence Staff and Heads of Safety and Security Services.

We thank you all for graciously accepting our invitation and warmly welcome your presence to this very important meeting. It is our hope that your participation will enrich our discussions today.

Before we commence with the business of the day, let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to our African brothers and sisters that have paid the ultimate price whilst in service to protect our beloved continent from terrorists and other hostile armed groups that are trying to create a web of conflict across Africa. The African Union strongly condemns attacks by these groups that create the biggest threat to peace and security in Africa.

The Commission also wants to take this opportunity to call on the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to agree on an immediate and unconditional humanitarian ceasefire. The current situation has led to the death of over 300 civilians, thousands injured, and untold destruction of property and vital installations across the country and needs to stop.
Mr Chair of the Experts Meetings, 
Representatives of Member States, RECs/RMs; and 
International partners here present!

Pursuant to Article 14 of the Constitutive Act of the AU (2000), the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS) is mandated to meet annually and provide policy guidance and direction to the Commission on matters of defence, safety and security. This meeting thus serves as a platform for the Commission to provide progress updates on implementation of decisions of the STCDSS and other policy organs and for priorities related to peace and security on the continent for continuous guidance by Member States. It is within this context that the Commission submitted the report of the Chairperson of the Commission which highlights in detail, the progress thus far achieved by the Commission since the 14th STCDSS meeting which concluded on 12 May 2022 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Considering this, allow me to highlight five key milestones achieved since the last STCDSS meeting:

a. **First**, and pursuant to the 14th STCDSS, the Commission facilitated an AU-RECs/RMs-Member States working group meeting from 24 to 26 October 2022 that finalised the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and the RECs/RMs on the ASF and which is being submitted for consideration by this 15th Ordinary Meeting of the STCDSS.

b. **Second**, the Commission conducted the Inaugural Lessons Learned Forum (LLF) from 1 to 3 November 2022 in Abuja, Nigeria which documented lessons and good practices from the conduct of 27 Africa-Led PSOs (over the last 20 years) to guide the reconceptualization of the ASF – pursuant to paragraph 2(e) of the Declaration of the 14th meeting of the STCDSS. Conclusions from the LLF informed the conduct of a workshop on the Reconceptualization of the ASF from 29 to 31 March 2023 to guide the development of a Revised ASF Concept.
c. **Third**, the Commission continues to record significant progress in the enhancement of its Compliance and Accountability Framework to International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law and conduct and discipline for AU PSO. It is within this context, that the AU-EU-UN Tripartite Partnership Project on the AU Compliance Framework was established since 1 February 2022. This AUCF Tripartite project has enabled the Commission to conduct a number of training programmes on the AU Compliance and Accountability Framework Curriculum, including for ATMIS, MNJTF and Somalia National Army (SNA) personnel. Similar training programme is planned for SAMIM in June 2023. Additionally, the Commission has also completed additional policies, processes and mechanisms on Compliance since the last update provided to the STCDSS in 2022. These include three (3) strategic level documents namely, AU Strategic Framework for Compliance and Accountability in PSOs; AU Policy on the Selection and Screening of Personnel for PSOs and the AU Policy on Protection of Civilians in PSOs. The three policy documents are submitted for consideration by this STCDSS meeting also.

d. **Fourth**, as part of efforts aimed at enhancing its operations, I am pleased to inform you that the 36th Assembly of the Union endorsed the Continental Logistics Base as a Specialized Technical Office with 34 positions to be recruited and an estimated budget of US$4,717,606.45. As part of support to address conflicts on the continent, the Commission donated equipment to Niger, Burkina Faso, Sudan and Somalia as well as to the AU Military Observers Mission in Central African Republic (MOUACA), the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), and the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko haram (MNJTF) - including training on the use of these equipment. The Commission is also facilitating a donation of US$63 million as part of the AU Strategic Deployment Stocks and RCD to support AU and Africa led PSOs from the People’s Republic of China, and the inclusion of requested equipment into the shipment of donations to the Group of Five (G5) Sahel countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, Chad) as well as Tanzania, South Sudan and Mozambique. The donation is intended to support the deployment of AU
mandated PSOs deployed by RECs/RMs, and the operationalization of the Regional Logistics Depots (RLDs) and the CLB.

e. **Fifth**, the AU continues to support implementation of the mandates of current AU mandated and authorised PSOs and requests Member States for their unwavering commitment and continued solidarity towards the achievement of their key priorities. This includes Member States’ commitment towards ensuring predictable, sustainable and flexible financing for AU mandated PSOs authorized by the UN Security Council. These commitments and efforts all contribute to silencing the guns across the continent.

**Chair of the Experts Meetings,**
**Representatives of Member States, RECs/RMs and;**
**International partners here present!**

All these efforts fall within the framework of the implementation of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture and are part of the activities aimed at achieving the noble vision of silencing the guns in Africa - to ensure a peaceful and stable Africa in line with the letter and spirit of Agenda 2063. In this regard, we will continue to rely on the STCDSS guidance on how we can further enhance ongoing efforts for the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa.

On this note, let me conclude by profoundly thanking you all for your attention and look forward to the usual constructive deliberations and trust that this meeting will continue to stir us in the right direction to achieve the objectives of the Union.

I thank you for your kind attention!