WORKSHOP ON TRANSHUMANCE CONFLICTS IN AFRICA: TOWARDS A CONTINENTAL CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION MECHANISM

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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REMARKS BY AMB. SMAIL CHERGUI
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AT THE WORKSHOP ON TRANSHUMANCE CONFLICTS IN AFRICA
ADDIS ABABA, 18 SEPTEMBER 2018
The Commissioner, Rural Economy and Agriculture,
Ag. Director of Peace and Security,
Director for Rural Economy and Agriculture,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this very important gathering of transhumance experts and practitioners from all over Africa to discuss the causes of transhumance conflict and design appropriate strategies to respond to them with the aim of promoting sustainable peace and security in Africa. This will also contribute to the AU’s Agenda 2020 of Silencing the Guns in Africa and the overall vision of a Peaceful, Prosperous and Integrated Africa.

Let me from the onset express my appreciation for the collaboration between the Departments of Peace and Security and Rural Economy and Agriculture including the AU’s Semi-Arid Africa Agricultural Research and Development (SAFGRAD) in hosting this timely meeting. Indeed, this is in line with our stated goal to deliver as one AU, particularly when it comes to conflict prevention, crisis management and stabilisation.

I am also pleased to learn of the configuration of the participants at this workshop, which comprises experts and practitioners from the five regional farmer’s association as well pastoral networks, relevant departments of the AUC and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and civil society organizations respectively.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is imperative to underscore that farmers and herders have coexisted for centuries with mutually benefiting relationships peacefully or contentiously. To this end, they have both generated enormous wealth and economic independence needed to promote socio-economic development. However, owing to a multiplicity of factors including resource scarcity, adverse effects of climate change etc...; violent conflicts between these groups have intensified resulting in the loss of lives, destruction of properties, displacement of people and retardation of socio-economic progress. Today, conflicts between pastoralists and farmers on the continent take more lives than terrorism. Since 2018, over 1,000 people were reported dead and thousands displaced in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, Central region of Mali, on the border between Mali and Niger, in the Tillabery region of Niger and some parts of the Horn.
While the causes, nature, patterns and trends of these violent conflicts vary from country to country, its consequences on lives and livelihoods are similar with resultant insecurity in Member States with increasing regional and continental implications on peace and stability. The conflicts are further fuelled by the proliferation of arms due to political related violence and the nomad’s practice of moving along with arms, a situation that has changed the dimension of the conflict. Some Member states have and RECs have adopted strategies to address the issues, but daunting challenges abound in their implementation.

The AU has also over the years adopted several normative instruments to facilitate the structural prevention of conflicts. These instruments relate to human rights; governance and the fight against corruption; democratization; disarmament; terrorism; and the prevention and reduction of inter and intra-state conflicts. These instruments represent a consolidated framework of commonly accepted norms and principles, whose observance would significantly reduce the risk of conflict and violence and consolidate peace in Member States. Furthermore, DREA has developed a Policy Framework on Pastoralism; and some of the RECs equally have similar framework, s which I hope would be referenced to guide your deliberations.

Whereas, these policy documents seek to address the conflict dimension of pastoralism, some of them may require advocacy for national domestication to ensure its implementation; while others may require revision to reflect and cater for the specificities on ground.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is in recognition of these, that the PSD and DREA have convened this meeting to interrogate the underlying drivers, trends and patterns of the conflict. It is our hope that this will be a first step in designing a continental plan of action to end these conflicts. We recognize that dealing with these threats will require a comprehensive approach, which would allow a wide range of responses by national, regional and continental actors at social, economic and political levels. As you review these challenges in the next couple of days, it is our expectation that you will be able to recommend practical policy and programmatic interventions to end these conflicts that threatens to erode socio-communal existence.

Let me conclude by stating that Africa is in dire need of practical solutions to respond to the multiplicity of threats confronting peace and security including the transhumance menace. As such, the Peace and Security Department stands ready to work in partnership
with DREA, RECs and Member States to fully implement the Plan of Action that you would collaboratively develop at this forum to set a new direction and enhance synergy in combatting this scourge that has taken so many lives. I look forward to receiving the report of this workshop and wish you a most fruitful deliberation.

I Thank You