STATEMENT

BY

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At the

AU Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)
Capacity Program Donor’s Conference

Addis Ababa – 18 February 2013
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this important Donor’s Conference for the AU Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Capacity Program, and to thank you for the positive response to our invitation. This conference is an important benchmark for the start of the AU DDR Capacity Program, and it is taking place at a time of great concern about the number of armed groups that are destabilizing many AU Member States. It is imperative that the AU and partners take concrete steps to address these challenges, including through supporting robust DDR programs of Member States, because the existence of armed groups threaten not only the African countries concerned, but also entire regions, the whole of the African continent, and the rest of the international community.

The purpose of this donor’s conference is therefore twofold as follows:

(1) For the AU Commission to officially inform partners of the new AU DDR Capacity Program, and how the AU plans to engage with the DDR challenges in Africa, and

(2) To raise funding and mobilize resources, both technical and human, for the AU DDR Capacity Program and also to ask for support for the DDR activities of Member States.
Distinguished Participants

The AU has for a long time supported its Member States with their various versions of DDR processes but in a small way. AU large scale involvement in DDR started in 2006 with the AU Program for the Rehabilitation of Former Child Soldiers in four Great Lakes countries, namely Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and the DRC. The project was supported by the UNDP and the Government of Japan and it ran for two years from 2006 – 2008.

It is with this background that in September 2011, the Peace and Security Department (PSD) initiated the current AU DDR Capacity Program, with assistance from the World Bank, through its Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program, and the United Nations. To take this process forward, the PSD established an interdepartmental DDR Core Team which, with support from the UN and the World Bank, developed the project document and funding proposal, the details of which will be presented to you this morning.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The purpose of the AU DDR Capacity Program is to create and strengthen capacities within the AU, its Member States and regional partners, namely the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RMs), to support national and regional DDR initiatives. Establishing capacity to provide effective support to DDR initiatives by Member States and regional partners is viewed by the AU as part and parcel of its objective to promote peace, security and stability in Africa. Strengthening DDR capacities in the AU and Member States is also a key

From September 2011 up to December 2012, the PSD implemented the preparatory phase of the AU DDR Capacity Program. The program is also informed by input from the RECs and REMs given during the Start – up Seminar in February 2012, and again at the project validation workshop held at the AU in September 2012. Since the start-up meeting of February 2012, the AU has undertaken a series of assessment missions upon request from Member States where DDR processes are ongoing in order to identify areas where the AU can provide assistance. As a result of these assessment missions, the AU is already assisting the Republic of South Sudan, and the Central African Republic in their peace-building initiatives including DDR activities, and is making plans to assist the Comoros.

Phase One of the AU DDR Capacity Program, will be a 3-year project which started in January 2013 and will end in December 2015. This Phase, which will focus on creating the DDR architecture and capacity within the AU, will be composed of a number of components such as the following:

(a) Institutionalizing DDR capacities within the African Union,

(b) Establishment of AU DDR Resource and Research Centre,

(c) AU engagement with RECs and RMGs, and

(d) Assistance to DDR activities of Member States.
Distinguished Participants

Even as we ask for support from the international community for our planned DDR activities, the AU would like to acknowledge the support that we have received so far from some of the partners.

First, the AU would like to thank the Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP) of the World Bank for supporting the preparatory phase of the AU DDR Capacity Program from October 2011 up to December 2012. The AU is also very grateful for the World Bank pledge to support some of the activities in the project document up to June 2013 which I am told may be extended even beyond that date. The AU is again very grateful to the United Nations DDR Unit based in DPKO in New York who assisted us with technical support from September 2011 up to date. We are also grateful to the United Nations Office at the AU (UNOAU) for the DDR expert who is working with the AU on a daily basis, and to the UNDP for equipment and logistical support.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Government of Japan and the UNDP for supporting the AU’s very first large DDR activity in the Great Lakes Region back in 2006 up to 2008.

There are many other partners who have supported the various elements of AU DDR activities and Member States DDR initiatives – we would like to thank all these partners, and we are calling on you to support us again with this new AU DDR Capacity Program.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me again emphasize the following points:

1. The AU would like to encourage partners to continue to provide the financial and technical assistance and human resources necessary for the successful implementation of the DDR programs of Member States. Besides the countries that the AU is already assisting, we are anticipating more requests for support from Member States. One example is the request that has just come from the Somali Government asking the AU DDR Capacity Program to assist with DDR in Somalia.

2. The AU will also lobby other African countries through the African Solidarity Initiative to provide support for the implementation of DDR in Member States.

3. Let me end by again thanking all the partners for the support that has been extended to the AU DDR Capacity Program so far, and again asking you to continue the good work and to provide the technical and financial support for the AU DDR Capacity Program for the next 3 years.

I thank you.