EXPERIENCE SHARING WORKSHOP ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANs
ON YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY AND AWARDS
CEREMONY

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
WEDNESDAY 12 APRIL 2023,

DRAFT OPENING REMARK BY DR. ALHAJI SARJOH BAH,
DIRECTOR OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE
Representatives of AU Member States,
Excellency, Dr. Ezechiel Nibigira, Minister of East African Affairs, Youth, Sports and Culture of the Republic of Burundi
Excellencies, Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives to The African Union,
Representatives of Partner organizations,
Dear Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here today to recognize and celebrate the vital contributions of youth and women in promoting peace and security in our communities and the continent. It is with great honor that we acknowledge the tireless efforts of African citizens particularly youth and women who have dedicated themselves to building a safer and more peaceful Africa.

While we recognize that conflict has a devastating impact on women and youth, we also recognize that they continue to work tirelessly to promote peace, prevent conflict, promote human rights, and advancing gender equality, women's and youth empowerment, which are essential for achieving sustainable peace.

It should be recalled that Women Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were the prime movers behind the original Women, Peace and Security Agenda and remain the main driver of this issue at the national, regional, and international level. It is therefore important to recognize the often invisible, informal, and unrecognized role that these organizations play in conflict prevention and resolution. In this regard, the AU PSC in its 491st meeting of 9 March 2015 whilst recognizing the role of CSOs in the promotion of peace and security in Africa called on them to play a more active role in implementing the WPS agenda.

Similarly, with regard to youth, the AU PSC in its 933rd meeting held on 23 June 2022, underscored that the enormity of interventions undertaken by youth across the continent on peace and security, is worthy of recognition and reward, and encouraged Member States and other African institutions to introduce non-monetary awards for young peacebuilders in the continent. Today we are actualizing that call.

Excellencies,

In the African Union, we applaud the courage, resilience, and commitment of women and youth to building a better Africa, and we are proud to recognize their achievements. This award is also in line with the AU’s commitment to “leaving no one behind,” as part of its aspiration to build a people-centred community and deliver on the aspiration of Agenda 2063 for shared prosperity and well-being.

Permit me to also welcome participants to the experience sharing workshop on the development of National Action Plans for Youth, Peace, and Security taking place today and tomorrow.
As we all know, young people have been disproportionately affected by conflict and violence, and their participation in decision-making processes related to peace and security needs to be encouraged and strengthened. With the adoption of the African Youth Charter of 2006, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security in 2015 (and other related decisions), the finalization and endorsement of the Continental Framework on Youth Peace and Security in 2020, there is a growing recognition of the important role of youth in peacebuilding and the need to support their meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and security.

To be functional, the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security needs to be domesticated at the Member State level through the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs). The NAPs on YPS provide a framework for governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to integrate youth perspectives and priorities into peacebuilding and security efforts. They are a critical tool for advancing the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making processes related to peace and security. The process of developing and implementing NAPS on YPS also provide the requisite platforms to engage diverse stakeholders that are required to collaborate to ensure that Africa’s peace and security challenges are mitigated in a way that keeps the continent’s youth demographic at the core.

I would like to acknowledge Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo who have already developed their NAPs and encourage all Member States which are represented here to learn from their experiences as they go through the process of developing their NAPs. We should take advantage of the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences, including from outside Africa, notably Finland and The Philippines that will also share best practices, whilst identifying opportunities for collaboration and partnership in implementing NAPs for YPS.

I encourage all of you to actively participate in the discussions and to engage with each other and the experts present here today.

I hope that by the end of this workshop, we will have gained valuable insights that will enable us to strengthen our efforts to promote youth participation in peacebuilding and security in Africa.

On behalf of the Commissioner of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, I would like to express my gratitude to the AU Champion on Youth, H.E. President Évariste Ndayishimiye of the Republic of Burundi for his leadership and tireless efforts on this critical agenda for Africa’s peace and stability.

I wish you fruitful and productive deliberations.