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PRESS RELEASE

**THE AU COMMISSION CONVENES A TRAINING AND SENSITIZATION WORKSHOP ON THE AU OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE NOTE (OGN) ON GENDER AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM (SSR)**



***Addis Ababa, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019:*** From 30 to 31 July 2019, the Peace and Security Department of the Commission of the African Union (AU) convened a “**Training and Sensitization Workshop on the AU Operational Guidance Note (OGN) on Gender and Security Sector Reform (SSR)**”, at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa.

The workshop gathered thirty (30) participants from national security sectors, national focal points of SSR steering committees and gender ministries from The Gambia, Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia and Rwanda. The event was also attended by representatives of International partners from the United Nations Office to the AU and the Embassy of Luxemburg in Addis Ababa. Dr Admore Kambudzi, Director for Peace and Security opened the meeting on behalf of the AU Commission.

The workshop was facilitated by AU Commission senior experts from the Peace and Security Department, the Office of AU Special Envoy Office for Women in Peace and Security, the Gender, Women and Development Directorate and from the Department of Political Affairs with the collaboration of experts from international specialized entities on gender and SSR, including the UN Women Regional Liaison office to AU and ECA, the African Security Sector Network (ASSN) and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

The workshop provided a platform to sensitize Member States and consolidate their knowledge on gender and SSR, while training them on the content and how to use the African Union Operational Guidance Note (OGN) on Gender and SSR. The first day of the workshop focused on discussions on gender and SSR – in theory and in practice – and existing international and regional instruments on the Women Peace and Security agenda. The second day enabled Member States to exchange with international partners and centres of excellence on partnerships and collaboration; to share experiences and best practices of mainstreaming gender into SSR drawn from their specific contexts; to identify general and contextual challenges to the implementation of the OGN on gender and SSR; to suggest follow-up mechanisms to enhance accountability and track progresses on the implementation of the national and international gender instruments, using the OGN; and to express commitments and action points for mainstreaming gender in the security sector in their respective countries.

Recurrent challenges to gender mainstreaming into SSR observed by participants include patriarchal culture, lack of funding, lack of capacities, limited political guidance on the issue, quickly evolving conflict settings and the gap between existing progressive legal and policy frameworks and their implementation. Despite these challenges, Member States have shared a number of good practices on processes of their respective efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming in Security Sector.

To overcome challenges, the participants capitalized on their exchange of experiences and the guidance of the OGN to suggest concrete actions such as: intensifying gender equality sensitization towards the population and advocacy towards religious leaders to

transform the patriarchal culture; involving security sector representatives into sensitization campaigns to promote the “He” for “She” approach and advocacy actions; informing on, and disseminating the AU OGN on Gender and SSR among relevant stakeholders at national and regional levels; strengthening gender focal points’ capacities in ministries and security institution and SSR coordination mechanisms; and, developing mentorship for women in the security sector.

At the end of the workshop, the participants appreciated and confirmed their interest in the African Union OGN on Gender and SSR, its usefulness, and their intention to use it and disseminate it in their respective countries and institutions.

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