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AFRICA FORUM ON SECURITY SECTOR REFORM (SSR)

ADDIS ABABA
24-26 NOVEMBER, 2014

<u>**CONCLUSIONS**</u>

1.   The African Union (AU) hosted the Africa Forum on Security Sector Reform (SSR), from 24 - 26 November 2014, at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The Forum was organised in collaboration with the Slovak Republic, the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the African Security Sector Network (ASSN), the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and its International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT). The Africa Forum on SSR brought together representatives of AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional Mechanisms (RMs), the Pan African Parliament and senior government officials and experts engaged in SSR across Africa, as well as partners.

2.   The aim of the Forum was to complement and build on the recent normative developments, in particular the adoption of the AU Policy Framework on SSR in 2013 which "**URGES** Member States to take advantage of the Policy, and **ENCOURAGES** the Commission to avail the required assistance to Member States in this respect". The Forum also discussed the UN Security Council Resolution 2151 of 2014, and highlighted the role of the UN and the AU in supporting SSR in conjunction with other sub-regional, regional, and multilateral organizations. The Forum offered a platform of dialogue for stakeholders and experts to consider the unique challenges and opportunities in engaging and supporting sustainable SSR programmes in Africa. Participants explored further, the application of the growing myriad of lessons and good practices identified across successful SSR programmes and processes in Africa.

3.   The participants had in-depth discussions on a number of thematic issues, including the role of SSR across the cycle of development, the importance of governance, SSR as a political process, inclusiveness, the role of non-state and customary or traditional security and justice institutions, planning for sustainability, partnerships, coordination, the need for a holistic approach, coherence in support (underpinned by a commitment to national ownership), and the importance of monitoring and evaluation.

4.   The following key issues emerged from the discussions:

- **National ownership cannot be imposed from outside**. It must be home grown, taking into account broader needs of all stakeholders in a particular context, with a view to transforming rather than strengthening already broken security institutions. Participants took particular note of the role of informal/traditional/customary security and justice institutions and stressed the need to better integrate them into reform processes.

- **The importance of political leadership in SSR processes.** The need for political leadership was highlighted in all SSR stages including in the conception, resource mobilization, implementation, and coordination of national SSR processes, taking into account the fact that SSR can have far reaching political implications.

- **Limited capacity was identified as a major challenge to building effective and accountable security and justice institutions in conflict and post-conflict contexts**. Participants emphasized strengthening linkages between SSR and DDR efforts as well as effectively integrating them into broader development and good governance priorities for reconstruction. They also stressed the need for incorporating gender as part of the process and expected outcomes of reforms.

- **African Union capacities in SSR need to be reinforced to better support the growing requests from its Member States.** Participants highlighted the potential for technical SSR support that could be delivered by the African Union in light of the growing number of requests currently being directed to the AU by Member States. This support to Member States can only be delivered if there is adequate SSR capacity at the African Union.

- **Coordination remains a key challenge to implement SSR effectively**. While coordination of SSR is a national responsibility, in practice, countries emerging from conflict often lack the capacity to coordinate international assistance. Participants identified some good practices in coordination including joint situation and needs assessment by partners to support countries in formulating their own vision for reforming the security sector.

- **Implementation of SSR must place an equal emphasis on the effectiveness of core security providers as well as their oversight and proper management**. SSR involves not only building effective security institutions in a coherent manner, but it also involves laying down the foundations of good governance upon which they must stand. The latter remains a gap area for international support. However, the AU should not lose sight of the need to develop capacity to stop the violence and the atrocities in conflict areas before any SSR plans are put in place.

- **Good security sector governance, oversight and management, including in the area of public financial management, should be key priority areas for international support**. There is a need to rebalance processes and programmes from predominant focus on capacity building to equal prioritization of effective, efficient and accountable use of existing and planned resources invested in reform initiatives. Participants agreed that security sector reform could be a significant expenditure burden to countries, which if left unchecked may crowd out other development priorities. Participants noted that reforms should therefore, be supported by robust public financial management laws and policy frameworks in order for them to be accountable and sustainable. Participants also identified innovative approaches and tools for transparent human resource management and procurement.

- **SSR is an important peace-building tool**. SSR can enhance security for both the state and its people, bring peace and foster development and economic prosperity for all. Participants further identified important ingredients for success including inclusive structures for piloting reforms with the participation of civil society organizations and women. They further agreed on the need to build on quick wins that could lock-in momentum for long-term reforms.

- **SSR is also a critical stabilization instrument**. The ability of SSR to address underlying causes of conflict comes from its commitment to dialogue. Parties to conflict can find power sharing solutions on national security issues through inclusive dialogue that does not necessitate the continuation of violent conflict

and tragic pursuit of purely military solutions. In this regard, SSR may be used as a political tool to address violent security challenges, in particular in stabilization contexts.

▪ **The crucial role of regional and sub-regional organisations in SSR.** Participants highlighted the important role that regional and sub-regional organisations can play in SSR processes in view of the cross-border nature of many peace and security challenges. At the same time, they noted the central role of the United Nations in all global peace and security issues, and the responsibilities of AU Member States to provide security for their own states and citizens.

▪ **Focus on implementation of SSR activities on the ground.** It was pointed out that the AU has developed numerous policy frameworks, but a number of these policies are not being effectively implemented. The call was made to focus on the implementation of the AU Policy Framework on SSR as the way forward.

5.   Representatives of AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities, the Pan African Parliament and Civil Society Organizations held frank and open discussions on the added value of establishing an African Group of Friends of SSR. Participants felt that the idea was potentially interesting but they would need further information— on its constitution, mandate, and how it would complement other existing structures— before any decision could be taken. It was then suggested that the AU Commission does more ground work in assisting the various stakeholders to understand the concept, rationale and the value added for a specific Group of Friends of SSR for AU Member States. The AU Peace and Security Department was tasked to take the lead in this consultation process.

2014-11-26

Africa Forum on Security Sector Reform (SSR) Addis Ababa 24-26 November, 2014

Peace and Security