



PRESS RELEASE:

STRATEGIC HEADQUARTERS TRAINING SESSION OF THE AMANI AFRICA II FIELD TRAINING EXERCISE OPENS IN HARARE

Harare, 3 November 2014; The African Union Commission has moved a step closer to the planned conduct of the AMANI AFRICA II Exercise and in effect the realization of the African Standby Force following the start of the Strategic Headquarters Training in Harare. The training, which comes at a pivotal moment in the exercise cycle aims to provide participants with a better understanding of Peace Support Operations planning and management and prepare them for the Main Exercise, which is scheduled for April 2015. This simulated exercise will play a significant role in evaluating the readiness of the African Standby Force to respond swiftly to ensuing conflicts unhampered by any heavy political and instrumental burdens.

The European Union Representative, Lt. Col. Anton Gash made this observation quite succinctly in his opening remarks. *“We have done a lot of theorizing, planning and scenario development, including quite a number of briefings, but really, this is where the work starts and we are here to construct the working platform for the exercise. A lot of the people seated here today, will on day one of AMANI AFRICA II, be wearing some form of uniform, or a badge, for the civilians that indicates that they are part of the core staff of the Strategic Headquarters. This training therefore must be the most concrete, practical and pragmatic stage of the exercise cycle.”* The European Union under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy is supporting the initiative and Lt. Col. Gash reassured participants of the EU’s continued political will to support, Africa, the African Union and the AMANI AFRICA II Exercise.

The two-week Strategic Headquarters Training brings together planners from the AU Commission, with officers drawn mainly from the Peace Support Operations Division as well as participants from Member States, Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution (RECs/RMs), the European Union and various experts.

The overall objective of the Exercise is to validate the capacity of the African Union to mandate and employ a Rapid Deployment Capability of the African Standby Force (ASF) as a start up operation, and to run a full multidimensional peace support operation.

The exercise, which is one of the main tools deployed to support the development of the ASF will serve to evaluate the state of readiness towards the achievement of Full Operational Capability in 2015. The final field training exercise will be hosted by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which is why it was ideal to hold the Strategic Headquarters Training in Zimbabwe, one of it’s member countries. Speaking during the opening, Brig. Gen. Christopher Chella, Commandant Southern African Development



Community (SADC) Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre said, *“We are greatly humbled to have been accorded the great honor to host this exercise, on behalf of our continent, and also to host two pre-exercise courses at our Regional Centre of Excellence.” This for us goes to show the immense trust that the AU holds for our region. For this, we are sincerely grateful and pledge to do the very best in our strength to ensure that both courses that we host, and indeed the final exercise itself are a great success,*” he added.

When the ASF is finally operational, it will consist of standby arrangements within Africa’s five sub-regions, composed of multidimensional capabilities, including military, police and civilian, on standby in their countries of origin and ready for rapid deployment. The enormous responsibility of directing peace support operations at the continental level falls squarely upon the AU and calls for a coherent and coordinated response to any potential crisis as the Exercise Director, General Iliya observed in his statement. *“This aspect of training is very important because this is where the highest direction for Peace Support Operations on the continent takes place. If our Member States are going to place their peacekeepers under our direction, then we must strive to gain the utmost confidence of all the African countries.”*

It is anticipated that at the end of the training, exercise participants will be well equipped with the relevant tools to enable them play their respective roles successfully during the Main Exercise in April 2015. During the opening session, participants observed a moment of silence in memory of the late President Michael Chilufya Sata of Zambia followed by a minute’s silence in memory of the many African peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the cause of duty.

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2014-11-03

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