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PRESS RELEASE

THE REVIEW AND ASSISTANCE CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1540 IN AFRICA CLOSES TODAY AT THE AU HEADQUARTERS IN ADDIS ABABA

Addis Ababa, 6 April 2016: The Commission of the African Union (AU) is organizing a two-day assistance and review conference on the implementation of United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa. The conference is being held in collaboration with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to the resolution and with the support of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

The conference is organized within the framework of the decision of the 20th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held from 27 to 28 January 2013 in Addis Ababa, which requested the Commission to take the necessary steps, in collaboration with the 1540 Committee and other stakeholders, to further promote and enhance the implementation of the resolution in Africa. The conference also comes as a follow-up to the 584th meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council, held on 29 March 2016, which considered the report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the theme “*Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation*”.

The conference brought together AU Member States, the 1540 Committee, Regional Economic Communities, and a range of regional and international bodies specialized in chemical, biological and nuclear disarmament, as well as in science and technology. The conference focused on addressing the assistance requests submitted by AU Member States to enhance the national implementation of resolution 1540 at the national level. The conference also served as an opportunity to gather the views and inputs of Member States to the 2016 Comprehensive Review of the status of implementation of resolution 1540.



NOTE TO THE EDITORS

About Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)

On 28 April 2004, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1540 (2004) under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter which affirms that the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The resolution obliges States, inter alia, to refrain from supporting by any means non-State actors from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring or using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivery systems.

Resolution 1540 (2004) imposes binding obligations on all States to adopt legislation to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and their means of delivery, and establish appropriate domestic controls over related materials to prevent their illicit trafficking. It also encourages enhanced international cooperation on such efforts. The resolution affirms support for the multilateral treaties whose aim is to eliminate or prevent the proliferation of WMDs and the importance for all States to implement them fully; it reiterates that none of the obligations in resolution 1540 (2004) shall conflict with or alter the rights and obligations of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention, or the Biological Weapons Convention or alter the responsibilities of the IAEA and OPCW.

On 20 April 2011, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1977, which reaffirms that the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery constitutes a threat to international peace and security, and extends the mandate of the 1540 Committee for a period of ten years to 2021. The Security Council thus recognizes that full implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) by all States is a long-term task that will require continuous efforts at national, regional and international levels. Resolution 1977 (2011) also provides for two Comprehensive Reviews, one after five years and one before the end of the mandate. Additionally, the 1540 Committee is mandated by resolution 1977 (2011) to continue to strengthen its role to facilitate the provision of technical assistance and to enhance cooperation with relevant international organizations. The Committee is also mandated to continue to refine its outreach efforts, and to continue to institute transparency measures.

About the AU's role in regional disarmament and nonproliferation

The Common African Defense and Security Policy (CADSP), adopted by the 2nd Extra Ordinary Summit of the AU on 28 February 2004, recognizes that the accumulation, stockpiling, proliferation and manufacturing of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and their means of delivery, pose a threat to regional security and call for collective efforts by Member States to address their threat. The CADSP therefore mandates the relevant AU organs to promote and encourage the implementation of the regional and international conventions and treaties on

arms control and disarmament. Working within this framework, the AU has remained strongly committed to the multilateral disarmament and nonproliferation regimes.

The AU's role is centered on the principle that universal adherence to the disarmament and nonproliferation regimes will serve to strengthen their effectiveness and authority and provide the required transparency and confidence-building measures. This would consequently ensure that regional and international resources are effectively channeled to enhance international cooperation where all states can equally benefit from the peaceful applications of nuclear, chemical and biological sciences and technology.

In 2002 the Assembly of the Organization of African Unity adopted a decision in which it expressed its commitment to the global chemical weapons disarmament and nonproliferation efforts and encouraged the call to achieve universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Africa and encouraged its full and effective implementation. This position was reaffirmed by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, in 2006, between the AU Commission and the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The Memorandum aims to establish an effective mechanism for collaboration and joint action between the Commission and the OPCW in assisting States Parties meet their obligations under the Convention as well as benefit from the peaceful use of chemistry for industrial and socio-economic development.

The AU has also taken the lead in advancing the implementation of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba). In this regard the AU Commission is working towards the timely and effective operationalization of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) established by the Treaty of Pelindaba and mandated to monitor states parties' compliance with their obligations as well as to promote the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.

Since the entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba in 2009, AFCONE has made notable progress, including the development and adopted its programme of work, and establishing working relations with the relevant regional and international bodies as well as with other nuclear weapons free zones in order to consolidate efforts towards the full elimination of nuclear weapons and strengthening inter-regional cooperation in the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.

In January 2013, the 20th Summit of the Assembly of the Union, held in January 2013 adopted a decision requesting the AU Commission to take all necessary steps, in collaboration with the 1540 Committee and the relevant partners, to support Member States in their efforts in the implementation of the resolution. The AU has since taken a number of important initiatives including the organization of sensitization workshops and trainings for the national points of contact designated by Member States pursuant to the resolution. The AU is also working closely with the 1540 Committee and the relevant regional and international partners towards organizing an assistance conference in early 2016.

The AU is also actively engaged in conventional arms control issues. As early as 2000, the AU adopted the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons in preparation for the UN Conference which adopted the UN programme of Action.

More recently, the AU adopted, in 2013, the AU Strategy and Action Plan on the Control of the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons which was developed through a series of consultations with Member States' experts and Regional Economic Communities. The Strategy and Action Plan outline the roles of the AU, the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Bodies with a Small Arms mandate, and the Member States which must all work together in a coordinated and reinforcing manner towards a continental, sustainable and effective approach to addressing illicit small arms.

The Strategy was adopted in tandem with the African Common Position on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which formed the reference for Member States that have participated in the final UN Conference. This common position was based on the principles of the recognition of the full responsibility of all States to regulate the manufacture and transfer of conventional arms in their simultaneous and changing roles as exporters or importers; the prohibition to transfer conventional arms, including SALW to unauthorized non-State armed groups and/or unauthorized non-State actors; the obligation and accountability of all States to fully comply with UN Security Council and AU Peace Security Council arms embargoes; and the respect for international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The AU continues to sensitize Member States on the ATT and promote its universality.

In the area of mine action, and since 1995, the OAU/AU, launched a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the scourge of anti-personnel landmines and other explosive remnants of war. These initiatives include the Kempton Park Plan of Action adopted by the First Continental Conference of African Experts on Landmines, held from 19 to 21 May 1997. This was followed by the African Common Position on anti-personnel mines, adopted in preparation to the First Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) which took place in late 2004.

In April 2014 the Commission launched the Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War Strategic Framework project Document for the period 2014 to 2017. The objective of the Strategic Framework is to support AU Member States in reducing the threat posed by conventional weapons, mines, explosive remnants of war, cluster munitions and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in accordance with the relevant international instruments and best practices. The Strategic Framework promotes the concept of national ownership and recognizes that while substantial regional and international support and assistance is required national governments hold the primary responsibility for developing and implementing mine action and explosive hazard management programs.

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The Review and Assistance Conference on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 in Africa Closes Today at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa , 6 April 2016

Peace and Security

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