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UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

**AFRICA REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON UNIVERSALIZATION OF THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER
MUNITIONS (CCM)**

**4 – 5 AUGUST 2016
ADDIS ABABA**

**AU OPENING REMARKS DELIVERED BY
MS. EINAS MOHAMMED, SENIOR POLICY OFFICER**

Distinguished representatives of African Union Member States,
Distinguished representatives of the International and Non-Governmental Organizations,
Excellences, ladies and gentleman,

It gives me great pleasure to join you today at this event on behalf of the African Union. I wish at the outset to express our thanks and appreciation to the Coordinator on National Implementation Measures – New Zealand – and the Coordinators on Universalization – Zambia and Ecuador – for convening this workshop. I also wish to express the African Union’s sincere thanks to Switzerland for the generous financial contribution made, and to the Implementation Support Unit for organizing all aspects of this workshop.

The AU has remained deeply concerned over the devastating impact of landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war on civilians, as well as on socio-economic development, post-conflict reconstruction and regional integration. As such, the African Union holds a strong and principled position against weapons that are deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects.

This is evident by the various decisions adopted by the AU since as early as 1995 on anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war. In March of this year, and the Peace and Security Council of the AU adopted a communiqué under the theme “*disarmament, arms control and nonproliferation*” in which it called upon Member States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and appealed to States Parties to spare no effort in meeting their respective obligations.

Distinguished representatives,

This week, as we mark the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention, we should look back and take pride in the active role that African countries played during the Oslo Process to Ban Cluster Munitions. The fact that 43 AU Member States have joined the Convention testifies to that role. But more importantly, we must candidly reflect on why the current status of Convention’s implementation is yet to match the commitment that was shown at the time of adoption.

Therefore, this workshop provides us with an ideal opportunity to be reminded of the critical importance of this regime, take stock of the progress made, and assess the gaps and challenges to its universality and full implementation. The presentations that will be provided by the experts during the course of those two days will enhance our knowledge about the Convention and its current status. And so, I strongly encourage all of you to take advantage of this opportunity to seek clarification, voice your perspective, and share your experience.

While the subsequent sessions will discuss the different aspects in more detail, I wish to stress a few points from the perspective of the African Union. First, the universality of any regime is critical to its authority and the confidence building measures it is meant to provide.

Therefore, and while it is recognized that a number of States that are yet to join the Convention do not produce or possess cluster munitions, it is nonetheless important that they join the Convention and adhere to its transparency measures to strengthen it, not only regionally, but globally.

Second, it is important that all states recognize that while the Convention requires them to abide by a set of obligations, it also provides them with a framework to seek and acquire technical and operational assistance in meeting these obligations, including in the areas of stockpiles destruction, clearance of contaminated areas and victims assistance. In this respect, reporting becomes an important tool as it not only serves the goal of transparency but also allows the Implementation Support Unit and other international partners to identify needs and channel assistance.

Last but not least, we must not lose sight of the civilian populations and individual civilians that remain at the heart of the Convention. Disabilities, loss of livelihoods and adverse social and economic effects require sustained and long-term interventions to guarantee medical care, rehabilitation, psychological support, as well as social and economic integration. Therefore, the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions must go hand in hand with the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the African Union Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities.

On its part, the AU, working through its Strategic Framework on Mine Action and Explosive remnants of War, will continue to work towards promoting the universality of the Convention and assisting Member States in meeting their obligations, including through providing the necessary training and capacity building, as well as through mobilizing, coordinating and channeling international assistance.

Distinguished representatives,

In concluding, I wish to reiterate the African Union's thanks and appreciation to the conveners and the Implementation Support Unit, and to all of you for your time and commitment. I wish you fruitful deliberations and I look forward to the positive outcome of the workshop. Thank you for your kind attention.