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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

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### African Union Hosts Workshop on Mainstreaming Disability Issues in the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts



**Addis Ababa, September 19, 2011 -** A two-day workshop dubbed “Debut Disability Inclusive of Peace and Security” opened today, Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011, at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Organized by Secretariat of the African Decade Persons with Disability in collaboration with the African Union Peace and Security Department (AUPSD-SADPD), the workshop is aimed at mainstreaming disability issues and persons with the disabilities in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

The main objective of the workshop is to introduce the conceptual approach and implementation modalities of disability inclusive of Peace and Security project in order to reach consensuses on the way

forward.

Speaking on behalf of African Union Peace and Security Department (AUPSD) Mr. Olatokunbo Moshood Aremu, Expert on Post Conflict Reconstruction, reminded all the participants of the commitment of the African Union to undertake actions in favour of persons with disabilities, especially in the context of conflicts and emergency situations. He recalled that, a platform for discussion was created in 2010 with the Secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (SADPD) and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed on 6 June 2011 between the SADPD Regional Office in Addis Ababa and the AU Commission. Mr. Olatakunbo called on the participants to brainstorm and come up with concrete proposals or measures in the course of the workshop.

Addressing the participants at the opening session, Mr. Anton Johnston Cancellor, Regional Affairs officer of the Embassy of Sweden in Addis Ababa reiterated the historical context of the decade for persons with disabilities in Africa. He congratulated the AU for instituting the new decade in order to address the issues affecting person's with disabilities problems and their involvement in the process of peace and security within the continent.

In this regard, Mr. Anton commended the AU's Department of Peace and Security for their important role in establishing a memorandum of understanding with stakeholders on the Decade for people with disability. He highlighted that partnership should be encouraged to enable anyone with disabilities to enjoy human rights to which she/he is entitled. "This can largely be achieved through AU's effort in preventing conflict, building peace and ensuring that national resources are not wasted due to wars".

On his part, H.E. Mr. Remedan Ashenafi, State Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, stated that this Decade is significant because it gives an opportunity for all stakeholders to join hands in supporting the disability movement with readiness to promote inclusive and right based development approach. He acknowledges that, like other African countries Ethiopia has a large population of persons with disabilities. "Ethiopia is now trying hard to change the situation and enhance humanitarian projects for persons with disabilities". He concluded that even though persons with disabilities are protected under the constitution, they still face discrimination in their daily lives.

The Debut workshop on Disability Inclusive of Peace and Security ends tomorrow 20 September 2011.