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**HIGH-LEVEL MEDIA WORKSHOP ON THE AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY
ARCHITECTURE**

"PROMOTING A CULTURE OF PEACE THROUGH THE MEDIA"

**SPEECH BY COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE
MRS. TUMUSIIME RHODA PEACE**

**Organized by the Directorate of Information and Communication and the
Department of Peace and Security in Partnership with the Francophone Research
Network on Peace Operations (ROP)**

**2 – 4 NOVEMBER 2011
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This High-level Media Workshop on the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) gives me the opportunity to welcome you to the Headquarters of the African Union. It is a timely occasion for both the African Union and the participants to the workshop to renew our unity of purpose at the service of the ideals of the AU. I wish to thank you very much for your interest and participation.

The African Union Commission is particularly committed to the freedom of expression and the right to information. This commitment is well articulated in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights that inspires and shapes our actions. Section 9 of the Charter provides that "**everyone has the right to information**" and that "**everyone has the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the framework of laws and regulations.**" These fundamental principles, by your actions, you give them life. You allow millions of Africans to exercise their right to be informed, especially on the premier institution that represents their continent around the world. I personally give so much importance to the dialogue between the AU and the media, as the AU cannot function in isolation. Its vision and actions must be communicated throughout Africa and the rest of the world.

This dialogue is also important because it brings together two parties which, despite their different scope, have the same mission: **to bring the voice of Africa to the fore and to express African positions.** African media are the voice of Africa. You are, indeed, the voice of the people through articulating their aspirations which we must strive to meet. You are the cornerstone of dialogue in our societies, as you allow millions of women and men to find a sounding board for their opinions and demands. For our part, we strive every day to defend African positions on African soil and beyond.

This joint mission should lead us to continuously strengthen dialogue and exchange information. Your high attendance in this workshop demonstrates your commitment to work in this direction. On our part, it is just recently that we have created a Directorate of Information and Communication in the AU Commission that promotes interaction between all the professionals of the African Union and the African Media Fraternity. With appropriate tools for communication, the AU will continue to strive to increase its ties with African and international media in the course of executing our core functions of continental policy harmonization, partnership building, resource mobilization and advocacy for the causes of Africa.

It is healthier relations between the AU and the African and international media that brings better understanding of our organization and the constraints facing its operations in the context of complex geopolitical factors.

This workshop must enable you to discuss with relevant experts on how the African Union and its African Peace and Security Architecture function. It presents presentations on various aspects of the peace and security component of the Union. These presentations will address all the issues, theoretical and practical, to explain our real daily work conditions and offer our actual image in the African continental media. The dialogue should be open and transparent complemented by interactive sessions where questions and answers are entertained. I encourage you to express all your comments that, I am sure, will get appropriate replies.

Excellencies,

Dear Participants,

The African Union would like to improve the understanding of the media on its activities across the four pillars of the AU which, as you may know, are: peace and security, regional integration, institutional capacity building and shared values. No doubt, your independence and the need for professional ethics to adopt a permanent critical perspective are very essential. We are willing to come to you to express our

expectations and our plans and be partners in the promotion of peace and security in our continent.

With this in mind, this workshop should lead to the creation of a network of journalists for peace and security in Africa (NetPeace). We can devote a full day, this Friday, November 4, to discuss the establishment of this network, including immediate election of an Executive Board and reach an agreement on a calendar of meetings. The network will be closely linked to the existing networks for peace and security on the continent. In this connection, I would like to mention in particular the PAX PRESS network and RAJOSEP and convey our gratitude to them for being here with us.

It is obvious that conflicts hinder the economic and social progress of our continent. The media, particularly in Africa, have a major role to play in preaching the virtues of peace and warning on the dangers of war. Indeed, the media occupy a key position in the transmission of information to Africans and to the outside world. In this mission, the African media can count on full support and commitment of our Pan African organization that fights for a long time to promote peace on a continental scale, as shown by the campaign "Make Peace Happen". The promotion of peace also involves the extension of the APSA to the African people. All African citizens should have easy access to the knowledge of the continental instruments for the promotion and maintenance of peace. In this sense, the Commission shall progressively establish a program of learning and information (AID) on the APSA.

We need to work together for peace and security in a spirit of constant exchange and cooperation with various actors in AU. Let me reiterate that the African Union is committed to support African media. I wish to see the story of African events finding the space it deserves in the international media. Stories that give hope and esteem to African citizens.

Finally, let me say that when we share knowledge and information, together, we will carry the voice of Africa with more vigour and robust impact.