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

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**THE TENTH REGIONAL MEETING OF NATIONAL AUTHORITIES  
OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION IN AFRICA  
22 - 24 MAY 2012  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**OPENING STATEMENT BY  
MR EL-GHASSIM WANE, AU DIRECTOR FOR PEACE AND SECURITY  
(As delivered)**



**Hon. Tadesse Haile, State of Minister for Industry and Chairman of the National Authority,  
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;**

**Representatives of the National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons  
Convention in Africa;**

**Representatives of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons;**

**Ladies and gentleman**

First and foremost, allow me to welcome you all to the African Union Commission, and in particular to this Tenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in Africa.

It is truly a privilege for the Commission to host this meeting, and we are thankful to OPCW, for having partnering with us in this regard.

**Honorable Minister, Ladies and gentleman;**

That this meeting is being held for the first time at the AU Headquarters is a clear manifestation of Africa's commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Indeed, it is a testimony of the AU's solid support for all multilateral instruments devoted to disarmament and non-proliferation.

In 2002, the 28<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Organization of the African Unity, adopted a decision in which it expressed its commitment to chemical weapons disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. It also fortified the call to achieve universality of the CWC in Africa as well as its effective implementation.

In addition, the AU Commission in 2006, reaffirmed its position by signing a Memorandum of Understanding, with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, which is based on the common objective of ensuring the full and effective implementation of the CWC in Africa. This Memorandum aims to establish an effective mechanism for collaboration and joint action between the Commission and the Technical Secretariat in assisting and ensuring that African States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention meet their respective obligations.

It is encouraging to note that the international community appreciates the heinous and indiscriminate nature of chemical weapons, and strongly advocates for their elimination. Today, there are 188 States Parties to CWC, representing about 98% of the global population and landmass. It also reflects 98% of the worldwide chemical industry. Moreover, as membership to the CWC continues to grow, it is expected that the prohibition of chemical weapons will enter into customary international law.

In Africa, 49 AU Member States have ratified the CWC and 48 have designated or established National Authorities for its implementation. AU Member States are thus asserting their role as active and vital players in the global nonproliferation efforts and full partners in advancing global security.

### **Honorable Delegates**

The implementation of the CWC among AU Member States, however, faces a number of challenges. Despite the commendable progress achieved so far, only twenty five States Parties to CWC in Africa have informed the OPCW about the legislative and administrative measures taken, in their respective countries. Unfortunately though, only 12 have implemented laws, which cover all CWC key areas. It should also be noted that some States Parties to CWC also lag behind in the submission of industrial declarations, as well as other regulations related to the import and export of chemicals.

This is largely due to the fact that, almost all African states are faced with many development related challenges and competing priorities, which when coupled with limited financial and human resources, make the operationalization of CWC at times impossible. Besides, States with no substantial chemical industries at times see no reason to join and finance the implementation of a treaty that does not directly affect them.

### **Ladies and gentleman**

While these are serious setbacks, I am certain that if we all play our part they could be effectively addressed. Today, continental and global security can only be achieved through concerted efforts and in the spirit of shared responsibility. This principle is enshrined in the Common African Defense and Security Policy, adopted by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in February 2004, which stresses the “indivisibility of the security of African States, meaning that the security of one African country is inseparably linked to the security of other African countries, and indeed, the security of the African

continent as a whole.” The presence of representatives of 39 National Authorities, here today, is a clear manifestation of shared responsibility among AU Member States.

This meeting, therefore, provides an invaluable opportunity for the identification of gaps and challenges, exploration of opportunities and for learning from each other’s’ experiences.

### **Honorable Delegates**

Let me use this opportunity to reaffirm the AU commitment to assist African States Parties to CWC, work constructively with the OPCW towards the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Commission will remain an important partner, and will walk with you, every step you make in the quest for a chemical free world.

I therefore urge you to discuss, openly and candidly, over the course of the coming three days, what the African Union can do to assist you in fully and effectively implementing your obligations under the CWC.

I wish you a successful meeting and fruitful deliberations.

I also encourage you to move out and explore Addis Ababa, and the magnificent Ethiopian Culture.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I now hereby declare the 10<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the CWC in Africa officially open.

***I thank you for your kind attention***