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## COMMEMORATING INTERNATIONAL MINE AWARENESS DAY

REMARKS

BY

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**Commissioner for infrastructure and Energy**

**A.g Commissioner for Peace and security**

**4 April 2013**

**Addis Ababa**

**Excellency's,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the African Union Commission, I welcome you to this event aimed at commemorating the International Mine Awareness day. Let me take this opportunity to thank the UNMine Action Services (UNMAS), the UNOffice to the African Union (UNOAU), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Mine Wolfe, for their invaluable support in ensuring that on this day, we raise awareness on the problem of landmines in Africa.

It can be recalled that eight years ago, on 8 December 2005, the UN General Assembly declared that 4 April of each year shall be observed as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. Indeed, today's commemoration reminds us of the threat caused by landmines to the safety, health and lives of civilian populations, and encourages states.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The African Union Commission is hosting this important event, to call for universalization of existing legal frameworks and encourage Member States to deploy all the necessary resources to meet their obligations under the existing international instruments to protect civilians from the scourges of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

In-order to achieve these objectives, there is need for cooperation and collaboration to support each other to achieve the goal of a Mine Free Africa. It is in this regard that the African Union Commission has taken a number of steps towards supporting AU Member States to address the problem of anti-personnel mines.

Indeed at its 62<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary session held in **Addis Ababa 21-23 June 1995**, the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted resolution CM/Res.1593 (LXII) on the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and Problems Posed by the Proliferation of Anti-Personnel Mines in



Africa. In pursuant to the resolution, the OAU convened three Continental Conferences of African Experts: “Towards a Landmine-Free Africa: The OAU and the Legacy of Anti-Personnel Mines”. In May 1997, which adopted a Plan of Action; “Kempton Park-seven years after” in September 2004 – that developed an African common position on anti-personnel landmines; and "Africa as an Antipersonnel Mine-Free-Zone-Progress and Challenges", September 2009

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

The AUC is committed to achieving this goal of a Landmine Free Africa and will continue to pay sustained attention to the problem of antipersonnel mines. The Commission will continue its support to Member States in the following areas:

- I. The establishment of a framework for regular consultations, bringing together affected AU Member States and international organizations working in mine action to assist Member States work towards meeting their mine clearance deadlines, as well as advocacy platforms for the Universalization and implementation of the Mine Ban Convention and Convention on Cluster Munitions.
- II. Development of a three year plan 2013-2015 aimed at galvanizing support for Member States and co-coordinating mine action activities. This work plan is envisaged to provide support Member States in overcoming the challenges that impede mine clearance.
- III. Facilitate intra-African cooperation amongst Member States by assisting one another meet their obligations under the Conventions. This is envisaged through the exchange of equipment and expertise.

The objective of the Commission’s work in mine action is to give political leadership, policy direction and advocacy in addressing the issue of landmines in Africa.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The journey towards achieving this goal will be difficult but through working together and consistently applying our effort towards mine clearance, we will meet our key objective of a Landmine Free Africa.



The photo exhibition and the demonstration minefield are aimed at showing the effects of this benign weapon that lies in wait for decades, with disastrous consequences. I invite you to take a few minutes and visit both.

I once again want to thank you all, on behalf of the Commission, for being here today. Your presence here is the valuable step towards showing our commitment towards this cause.

I thank you for your attention.