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SECOND CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE ARMS TRADE TREATY

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

22-26 AUGUST 2016

STATEMENT

BY

DR TAREK A. SHARIF, HEAD OF THE DEFENCE AND SECURITY DIVISION

Mr. President,
Excellences,
Distinguished participants,

On behalf of the African Union, I wish, at the outset, to congratulate you on your election to preside over the Second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty and assure you of our full support and cooperation. I also wish to express the African Union's sincere thanks and appreciation to the Secretariat and the Facilitators for the effort and critical work that has been done over many months leading up to this Conference.

Mr. President

The African Union is strongly committed to an ATT that delivers on its objectives to set the highest possible common international standards for regulating international trade in conventional arms, prevent their illicit trade, reduce human suffering, and promote transparent and responsible action by States.

The African continent is perhaps the most in need for such promise to be fulfilled. For decades, the continent has suffered from numerous civil wars and inter-state conflicts that have resulted into unimaginable death and destruction. Conventional weapons, and particularly small arms and light weapons, have played a primary role in perpetuating and prolonging these tragedies. Today, terrorist groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army, Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab are destabilizing different regions of the continent using diverted and illegally traded conventional weapons and ammunition.

With the adoption of the ATT, the international community has declared that the status quo cannot continue and we as states and international actors stand answerable to the millions of men, women and children in fragile regions who remain at risk.

Mr. President,

It is for these reasons that the African Union continues to call for strong commitment by states parties to the effective implementation of the aspirations set out in the treaty.

The African Union's commitment to end all armed conflict in Africa by the year 2020, as expressed in the Declaration of the 50th Anniversary of the Union, the implementation of the ATT is a bold and ambitious plan that is supported by the conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post conflict reconstruction programmes within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

The African Union recognizes that the universal adherence and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty is critical to this quest. It is in this regard, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, in April 2014, adopted a statement under the theme "*Silencing the Guns: Pre-requisites for Realising a Conflict-Free Africa by the Year 2020*" in which, it called for the universal accession and ratification of the ATT and for the naming and shaming of suppliers, financiers, facilitators, transit points and recipients of illicit weapons, with a view to stem the phenomenon of the illicit arms proliferation.

In reaffirming this commitment, the Peace and Security Council, once again in March 2016, expressed its deep concern over the continued irresponsible international

trade in conventional weapons and the excessive accumulation thereof, and called on Member States and members of the international community to become party to the ATT and institute effective transfer controls in line with its provisions.

The African Union also established in 2008 the AU-Regions Steering committee on small arms and DDR, comprising the sub-regional organizations and other regional intergovernmental bodies with a small arms mandate, to enhance coordination and synergy. Through this Steering Committee, the Africa Union has set up a working group to look into national implementation of the ATT, with a view to provide concrete recommendations and guidance to Member States for effective and harmonized implementation.

Mr. President,

The African Union wishes to call upon all States taking part in this Conference to work with the required resolve and commitment to constructively discuss and agree on future steps on all the relevant aspects to implement the ATT, in a manner that can have a positive and deep impact on regional and global security and stability. The African Union will remain a strong partner and supporter of this forum and we look forward to work with our Member States and the international community to realize its objectives.

Thank you, Mr. President.

