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Statement of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security

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African Union Peace and Security Council

Open Session on Women, Peace and Security

Debate on "Sources of Instability in Africa: Root Causes and Responses"

Excellency Mr. President, Permanent Representatives, Commissioner for Peace and Security, Commissioner for Political Affairs, representatives of international organizations, representatives of civil society, representatives of women's organizations, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to deliver this statement to the Peace and Security Council during this **Open Debate on Women**, **Peace and Security**, in my capacity as the African Union Commission Chairperson's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. I would like to thank the Gambian Presidency for providing us the space to address the women, peace and security agenda in the first part of this session.

When the Chairperson of the African Union Commission appointed me in January 2014, she highlighted the vision of my mandate before the Heads of State and Government, "to ensure that the voices of women and the vulnerable are heard much more clearly in peacebuilding and in conflict resolution."

As this is my inaugural address to this august body, allow me to also recall other areas of my mandate, which includes the participation of women in peace and security, ensuring that protective measures on conflict related sexual violence are put in place at all levels, promoting women's roles in preventing conflict and in peace building, capacity building and building solidarity with African women's organizations in identifying and amplifying efforts being made at community, national, regional and continental levels.

Africa has made tremendous efforts to ensure the adoption of laws, policies and programs to safeguard gender equality and women's empowerment. **The time is now** for robust implementation to translate commitments into action. We appreciate that 16 African countries have adopted national action plans for women, peace and security and at least two regional action plans have been adopted by IGAD and the Great Lakes Region. However, much more needs to be done.

We need to accelerate the implementation of these instruments. Since my appointment, I spent the first six months as a member of the Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, investigating the impact of the conflict on women and children. The report, which highlights their current status, will be shared with you shortly.

I also visited countries in crisis, such as the Central African Republic on a joint mission with the Executive Director of UN Women, Madame Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. We took note of that the contributions of the African contingent and other troops were invaluable for containing the violence. Nevertheless, the situation of women, particularly in displaced camps can only be described as inhumane and degrading. As the Government and people of CAR strive towards societal transformation, they need your support to strengthen their governance mechanisms, particularly as they prepare for elections in 2015.

In Somalia, women expressed concerns over the continuing threats from Al Shabaab that has caused untold suffering. The work done by AMISOM is appreciated, but we need to adopt a zero tolerance policy and put in place protective and accountability measures to ensure compliance among our troops. In this regard, we appreciate the Chairperson's appointment of an Independent Investigation Team to look into the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. I also want to thank members of my delegation, the Ambassador of Namibia, Anne Namakau Mutelo and Julienne Lusenge of the DRC for contributing to the success of this mission.

Last week I was in Nigeria on a solidarity visit to women and girls in northern Nigeria. We were alarmed by the strategy of Boko Haram to kidnap girls, denying them their right to education, thereby undermining their contributions to meaningful development of their country. I would like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Amina Djibo Diallo, Justice Sophia Akuffo and Harriette Williams Bright who accompanied me on this mission. This growing phenomenon of terrorism, extremism and

radicalization, targeting women, girls, men and boys is ruining our collective efforts to foster peace and stability and enable real social, political and economic development on the continent.

It is important that we all come together to holistically address these challenges. After our consultation with various actors I had a meeting with civil society organizations and women's group on how best to implement my mandate and you will hear from them shortly. On this note allow me to thank Femmes Africa Solidarité and the Gender is my Agenda Campaign network for organizing the meeting with my Office.

I want to recognize the full support of the Chairperson in implementing my mandate. Let me also thank all the departments of the AUC, including the peace and security, political affairs and legal departments as well as partners for their collaboration in implementing the women, peace and security agenda.

We need to seize the opportunity provided by the 2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Agenda 2063, the agenda to silence the guns by 2020, the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 15th anniversary of the UNSC resolution 1325 to accelerate effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. In this respect I strongly urge the Peace and Security Council to consider establishing а continental results framework guide implementation of this agenda. I also recommend that the Peace and Security Council institute a fixed standalone annual open debate on women, peace and security to foster interactions with civil society.

Thank you.