

AFRICAN UNION

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PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL MINE AWARENESS DAY

Addis Ababa, 4 April 2014: The Commission of the African Union (AU), in collaboration with the United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS), the United Nations Office to the AU (UNOAU) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), today, marked the International Mine Awareness and Assistance Day. To this end, an event was organized at the AU Headquarters.

The event, whose theme for this year was “Women in Mine Action”, aimed at highlighting the important contribution made by women in mine action. Representatives of AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), UN, ICRC and other AU bilateral and multilateral partners attended the event, which also featured a de-mining demonstration.

The Commission seized the opportunity to handover de-mining equipment (100 hand-held mine detectors, 55 protective Aprons and 55 Visors) to four Member States, namely: Ethiopia, Mauritania, Sudan and Zimbabwe, as part of the AU’s efforts to support national efforts toward a Landmine-free Africa.

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Note to the Editor

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Union have taken a number of steps to assist Member States in addressing the problem of landmines and paid sustained attention to the problem of anti-personnel mines. At its 62nd Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, from 21 to 23 June 1995, the OAU Council of Ministers 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. Pursuant to the resolution, the OAU General Secretariat convened, in May 1997, in Kempton Park, South Africa, the first-ever Continental Conference of African Experts on Landmines under the theme “Towards a Landmine-Free Africa: The OAU and the Legacy of Anti-Personnel Mines”. The Conference adopted a Plan of Action known as the Kempton Park Plan of Action. On the basis of this Plan, Africa participated and actively contributed to the adoption of the December 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, known as the Ottawa Convention.

The Second Continental Conference of African Experts on Landmines, was held in Addis Ababa, on 17 September 2004, under the theme “Kempton Park-Seven Years After”. On this occasion, Member States adopted an African Common Position on Anti-Personnel Landmines, which was subsequently endorsed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs/External Relations of OAU Member States, held in New York, in September 2004. The document served as Africa’s common position at the November 2004 First Review Conference, which took place in Nairobi. The Third Continental Conference of African Experts on Landmines took place in Pretoria, South Africa, from 9 to 11 September 2009, under the theme: “Africa as an Anti-Personnel Mine-Free-Zone - Progress and Challenges”. It adopted a common position ahead of the Second Review Conference, which took place in Cartagena, Colombia, in November-December 2009.

The AU is also engaged in several other mine action activities in support of Member States. These include: the establishment of a framework for regular consultations, bringing together affected AU Member States and international organizations working in mine action; the development of a three-year plan (2014-2016) aimed at galvanizing support for Member States and co-coordinating mine action activities; and the facilitation of intra-African cooperation with the view to assisting Member States meet their obligations under relevant international Conventions.