

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321

Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

**AU REVIEW AND ASSISTANCE CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1540 (2004) IN AFRICA**

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

6-7 APRIL 2016

OPENING STATEMENT BY DR ADMORE KAMBUDZI
AG. DIRECTOR OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY DEPARTMENT
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

Your Excellency, Ambassador Román Oyarzun Marchesi, 1540 Committee Chair and Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations

Excellencies, Ambassadors and Representatives of AU Member States and International Partners

Distinguished Representatives of the 1540 Committee, the United Nations and International Organizations,

Distinguished Representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations and Regional Specialized Bodies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the African Union Commission, to this very important conference.

At the outset, I would like to express our great pleasure for having H.E. Ambassador Marchesi, Chair of the 1540 Committee, at this conference, which is a testimony to his commitment to this initiative. I also wish to express our thanks to the 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts, for the key technical support that they have continued to provide over the years, that indeed, deepened the partnership between the AU and the 1540 Committee. I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for supporting this conference, through the generous voluntary contributions made by the Republic of Korea, the United States and the European Union.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Without a doubt, the adoption of United Nation Security Council resolution 1540 in 2004, added a critical and important tool to the global disarmament and non-

proliferation framework – a tool that responds to the changing international security environment challenges and the growing range of actors within it. Indeed, with the evolving threat of terrorism and transnational organized crime, the need to have a robust, effective and transparent approach to prevent non-state actors from acquiring, proliferating and using weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, becomes a necessity and requires collective responsibility.

In fact, the threats and risks that the resolution aimed to address ten years ago remain present. The increasing terrorist attacks that have taken place in different regions, as well as, intelligence reports from various states indicate that terrorists' continue to seek material and the technology to construct and deploy weapons of mass destruction. It is because of these reasons that the resolution continues to enjoy international consensus and support, especially in Africa.

As a matter of fact, the African Union attaches great importance to the full and effective implementation of the multilateral instruments on nuclear, chemical and biological disarmament and nonproliferation. The African Union's commitment is strongly enshrined in the Common African Defense and Security Policy, adopted by the Second Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union in 2004. This overarching policy has provided the African Union Commission with the mandate and roadmap through, which it continues to actively engage in regional efforts and lends its support to Member States in becoming active players in the global dialogue towards disarmament and non-proliferation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having shared these global and African concerns, the African Union was quick to respond when resolution 1977 was adopted in 2011. The resolution recognizes the need to enhance coordination of efforts at national, regional and international levels and stresses the need for enhanced assistance and collaboration between the 1540 Committee and relevant international and regional organizations.

Later that year, the African Union designated Dr. Tarek A. Sharif, the Head of the Defense and Security Division of the Commission, as the Regional 1540 Coordinator. Subsequently, the 20th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in January 2013, adopted a decision calling for the full and effective implementation of the resolution and requested the Commission, in collaboration with the 1540 Committee and the relevant regional and international partners, to support Member States' efforts towards this end.

Since then, the Commission has undertaken a number of activities to give political and practical support to the implementation of the resolution. These activities, combined with the indispensable technical support provided by the 1540 Committee, the partner states, and the range of organizations present at this conference, have contributed to achieving significant progress in implementing the resolution. Such a statement cannot be made without duly recognizing the strong commitment of the Member States themselves, and the lead role they have taken, in achieving this progress. Indeed, without national ownership and leadership, no effort will have sustainable impact.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is also important to indicate that the Peace and Security Council (PSC), at its 584th meeting, held March 2016, considered the report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, that was exclusively dedicated to the theme *Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation*. The communiqué of the PSC meeting expressed concern over the attempts made by non-state actors and terrorists to acquire weapons of mass destruction, and welcomed the important contribution of resolution 1540 in mitigating these threats. The PSC further commends all efforts undertaken by the AU Commission in this area and encourages further steps that take into consideration the socio-economic development needs of Member States.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While we celebrate the important practical progress achieved and the increasing political commitment displayed by Member States and organs of the African Union, we also have to be aware of the many gaps and challenges that to exist, which have the potential to undermine our progress. Indeed, we have long recognized that our Member States deal with competing national developmental priorities, which impact their ability to dedicate the human and financial resources, required to implement the regional and global disarmament and security frameworks, including resolution 1540. In this regard, the African Union Commission believes that it has a strong role to play and will spare no effort in providing a learning platform and facilitating the channeling of assistance.

This brings me to the purpose of this conference, which is to provide opportunity for potential assistance providers and States requesting for assistance, to meet and agree on next steps on assistance provision. As you are well aware, assistance is a key

component in the implementation of resolution 1540 and to date, 16 AU member States have made formal requests for assistance to the 1540 Committee. Therefore, our aim is to capitalize on the mandate of the 1540 Committee, the wealth of expertise and resources of the partner states and specialized agencies, in order to ensure that the gaps and challenges faced by the Member States are well provided for, through a consolidated, well-structured, and mutually-agreed on process.

I use the word process to emphasize that this conference is not an end in itself, but an important step towards achieving our common objective. In fact, in September 2015, the AU, in collaboration with the 1540 Committee and with the support of UNODA, convened a consultative meeting in Vienna with the assistance providers to discuss the needs expressed by Member States and how they can be addressed. The consultative meeting thus set the parameters and agenda for this important conference. The African Union takes great pride in leading this initiative, which is considered the first assistance conference aimed at advancing the implementation of the resolution at a continental level.

The next two days will offer the opportunity to discuss specific avenues through which assistance can be challenged in response to the requests submitted by Member States. I would like to urge the meeting to take full advantage of this opportunity, including through bilateral consultations that will be held with states that have requested for assistance. I also wish to encourage other AU Member States that are facing similar challenges and wish to submit requests for assistance in the future to learn from experiences that will be shared here.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding and on the way forward, we have to maintain momentum to ensure that the opportunities and avenues for assistance we identify are realized within an optimal timeframe and in a manner that ensures sustainability and impact.

Let me thank all of you once again for your commitment and I wish you fruitful deliberations.