

AFRICAN UNION

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Press Release

AFRICAN UNION LAUNCHES FIVE-YEAR GENDER PEACE AND SECURITY PROGRAMME 2015-2020

Addis Ababa, 2 June 2014: A major five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme has been launched today at the African Union (AU) headquarters in Addis Ababa by the AU Commission. The Programme is designed to serve as a framework for the development of effective strategies and mechanisms for women's increased participation in the promotion of peace and security. It is also designed to enhance protection of women in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa.

In his opening remarks to launch the Programme, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, highlighted the role of women on issues of peace and security in Africa. Addressing conflict-related sexual violence and the targeting of women in armed conflict, he said that this has "attained proportions such that they have become a security concern in some areas of the continent." He added that "men can no longer take a back seat in the process of fighting against sexual violence, thinking this only an issue for women."

Also speaking at the launch, the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Women Peace and Security, Madame Bineta Diop, said "We have to send strong messages that impunity will not prevail. We must mainstream gender issues for institutions, and for laws against harassment and abuse, and hold perpetrators of abuse to account."

The five year (2015-2020) Gender Peace and Security Programme is funded by the Austrian Development Corporation, following an agreement signed with the AU Commission in November 2013. This morning's launch began a two-day workshop to review and endorse the Programme. Among other outcomes, the workshop seeks to draft a work plan for the period January to December 2015. Participants at the workshop include representatives from Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the United Nations, civil society organisations, development partners and relevant AU Commission Departments.

