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The First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Establishment of AFRIPOL

2nd July 2014

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Statement delivered by

Ambassador Smaïl CHERGUI

Commissioner for Peace and Security

African Union Commission

**Distinguished Co-Chairs of the ad hoc Committee,
The Chairpersons of the African Regional Organizations for Police Cooperation,
Representative of Interpol,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a pleasure for me to join you at this important meeting of the ad hoc Committee on the establishment of AFRIPOL. I also wish to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the delegations from Algeria and Uganda, together with Interpol and the chairs of the Regional Police Chiefs' Organizations for being here today to participate and engage in the development of this important project. The participation of the full membership of the committee is further testimony to the commitment towards the realization of a police cooperation mechanism for Africa.

Let me, at the outset, express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Uganda for the keen efforts in highlighting the need for a mechanism for police cooperation on the continent, and for mobilizing Member States towards its establishment. I also want to thank the Government of Algeria for having hosted the **African Conference of Police Directors and Inspector-Generals** that was held in Algiers from 10 to 11 February 2014. This meeting was a significant milestone in the efforts towards the establishment of a police cooperation mechanism for Africa.

The meeting adopted the Algiers Declaration on the Establishment of the African Mechanism for Police Cooperation – AFRIPOL, in which Member States agreed, among others, to establish, under the auspices of the AU, a mechanism for African police cooperation, called the African Police Cooperation Organization – AFRIPOL

The meeting also requested the AU Commission to submit a report on the establishment of AFRIPOL to the, just concluded, 23rd AU Summit that was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 20-27 June 2014, and proceed with its operationalization. It further requested the Commission to facilitate the effective setting up of an ad hoc committee co-chaired by Algeria and Uganda and bringing together the representatives of African regional organizations of police cooperation, to develop the draft statutes of AFRIPOL and other legal texts that will govern its organization, operation and funding. I am glad to inform that the Commission submitted a report on the establishment of AFRIPOL to the Summit.

The Summit welcomed the convening of the African Conference of Directors and Inspector Generals of police on AFRIPOL, which was held in Algiers, and endorsed the Algiers Declaration and requested the Commission to follow-up on all the aspects of the Declaration, in particular those relating to the statutes and other legal documents of AFRIPOL, as well as to its funding. It also requested the Commission to submit a progress report on steps taken and challenges encountered at the next Ordinary Session of the Assembly in January 2015. This is the context in which we are meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African region is faced with challenges on border security and this is being exploited by criminal groups engaged in human, arms, and drug trafficking, and contraband smuggling, to other criminal and terrorist activities. This has further been exacerbated by the increased presence of terrorist groups that have found safe havens in the marginal and poorly governed border regions and engage in

terrorist and criminal activity including kidnap for ransom, posing a serious security threat to the countries of the region.

Our interest is to foster cooperation to bring an end to all these challenges, and indeed, the establishment of AFRIPOL is a demonstration of the recognition by Member States of a shared burden of the devastating impact of transnational organized crime and terrorism, and the need for cooperation to counter them.

I have no doubt, that AFRIPOL will foster the desired cooperation between national police and/or national law enforcement agencies to counter this situation, and will contribute to strengthening national capacities and capabilities to this end. It will also strengthen coordination in the efforts towards the re-establishment of the rule of law during peace support operations in post-conflict situations.

Indeed, it will also provide a framework for standardized training/capacity building on skills and approaches of the different police units from different countries during AU Peace Support Operations in the continent. It can be recalled that the Commission established the Police Strategic Support Group (PSSG) in June 2013, with the objective to facilitate consultation, communication, networking and coordination with military troop contributors to AU peace support operations. The Commission will work with AFRIPOL to coordinate these processes for coherence and to optimize the police component within AU Peace Support Operations.

The success of AFRIPOL will depend on its capacity and capability to provide for better and stronger cooperation on such issues, and including efforts towards fighting the plunder of Africa's natural resources, the financial proceeds of

which are sometimes used to fund and sustain the organized crime, armed rebellions, undermine peace and democratic processes.

A well-functioning and effective AFRIPOL will contribute to the realization of the objectives of African Union's Agenda 2063, and also the Solemn Declaration of the African Union Heads of State and Government on the 50th Anniversary, especially Declarations E (i) and (ii), and F (i) and (ii).

The structure and functioning of AFRIPOL will determine its efficiency and success, and so the proposals the committee will come up with will be critical in this regard. It is my hope that we shall come up with concrete proposals on structured working relations by police and law enforcement agencies at bilateral, regional and continental levels.

The Commission has developed drafts of the Structure – highlighting staffing proposals and reporting mechanisms for your further consideration and elaboration. Whereas there may be other factors that will contribute to the effectiveness of AFRIPOL, its structure will play a critical role.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me once again reiterate the commitment of the Commission to provide the necessary support to Member States toward the operationalization of AFRIPOL. I trust that the meeting will set the desired foundation upon which AFRIPOL will be anchored, and that it will facilitate its effective functioning. I look forward to the outcomes of this first meeting.

I thank you.