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CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON THE START-UP OF AFRIPOL

**27-28 April 2016
Algiers, Algeria**

Statement by

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- **Major-General Abdelghani Hamel, Director General of the Algerian National Security,**
- **Distinguished Representative of INTERPOL,**
- **Distinguished Representative of ASEANAPOL,**
- **Distinguished Representative of EUROPOL,**
- **Chairs of the African Regional Police Cooperation Organizations, EAPCCO and SARPCCO,**
- **Distinguished Participants,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the African Union Commission, I wish to extend warm welcome to you all, and to thank you for having spared time to participate at this meeting that is yet another historical milestone in the operationalization of the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation – AFRIPOL.

Let me, at the outset, thank the Government of People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for hosting this consultative meeting on the startup of AFRIPOL and for the warm welcome we have all received, including the all the facilities that have been made available to make our stay here comfortable.

Excellences

Ladies and Gentlemen

It can be recalled that Executive Council of the African Union, at its 25th Ordinary Session held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in June 2014, adopted decision EX.CL/Dec.820(XXV), in which it endorsed the Algiers Declaration on the establishment of AFRIPOL and requested the African Union Commission to follow-up on all the aspects of the Declaration, including the facilitation of the setting up of an *ad hoc* Committee, Co-Chaired by Algeria and Uganda and gathering the representatives of the African regional police chiefs cooperation organizations, to develop draft statute of AFRIPOL and legal texts governing its organization, operation and funding.

The second meeting of African Chiefs of Police, held in Algiers in December 2015, adopted the ad hoc Committee report. Subsequently, the report was submitted to the 2nd Extraordinary Meeting of African Chiefs of Defence Staff and Heads of Safety and Security (STCDSS) that was held in Addis Ababa on 15 January 2016. The 2nd Extraordinary Meeting of the STCDSS endorsed the report of the Commission on the Operationalization of AFRIPOL and will forward it for consideration by the relevant AU Organs.

It can also be recalled that the African Police Chiefs, at their 2nd meeting, stressed the need for the immediate start on preliminary activities of AFRIPOL for reasons including

- i. The fact that transnational criminal networks continue to increase their activities, therefore the need for immediate implementation of cooperation and coordination initiatives;
- ii. The host country, Algeria, has made available the Secretariat for AFRIPOL, with the necessary office facilities, and is ready for occupation.

In this regard, the Chiefs of Police agreed to second staff, at the cost of the seconding county, for immediate deployment to the AFRIPOL headquarters, who should translate the priority areas for AFRIPOL, as contained in the foundation documents, into specific activities and develop concrete plans for their implementation.

We are meeting at the headquarters of AFRIPOL for the first time today and, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of the African Union Commission to the Government of Algeria for ensuring that the headquarters is ready for use. It is also important to acknowledge the personal dedication of Major-General Abdelghani Hamel, to the speedy establishment of the AFRIPOL headquarters.

Excellences

Ladies and Gentlemen

This meeting will enable brainstorming on immediate, medium and long term phasing of next steps in the operationalization of AFRIPOL, giving opportunity for AFRIPOL to learn from the experiences of ASEANAPOL, EUROPOL and the global INTERPOL, in order to enhance law enforcement cooperation in the fight against transnational organized crime

and terrorism – considering what has worked, avoiding what did not work and introducing opportunities that may have been missed. The experiences of African Regional Organizations for Police Cooperation will also build on these efforts to build an effective and efficient mechanism for cooperation between law enforcement authorities to fight organized crime in the Member States.

The meeting will also help to explore modalities for information exchanges between the Member States, and between AFRIPOL and the similar police and law enforcement organizations, especially since cross-border policing is only taking prominence in the recent past. The objective here is to discuss mechanisms that will enhance freedom of legal movement of people, goods, services and capital and yet deter flourishing of transnational organized crime.

This scenario calls for the establishment and strengthening of robust law enforcement networks at bilateral, regional and global levels, to counter common threats faced in Africa and beyond. In this regard, AFRIPOL will contribute to enhanced cooperation among Member States including with other existing continental structures and institutions like the ACSRT, regional cooperation mechanisms like the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes and the Liaison and Fusion Centres is of necessity.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As Africa works towards strengthening integration by easing movement of people and goods across borders, it should be noted that open borders also leave countries with increased vulnerability to cross-border crime. Law enforcement should, therefore, not lag behind in this regard but rather result into enhanced cooperation. Criminal networks, for various reasons, choose to use certain countries or regions as bases and will manifest itself in different ways in order to plan certain crimes, and then launch them to other countries, whether regionally or internationally. This is the reason cooperation to fight cross-border organized crime is a necessity. Developing and enhancing information and intelligence sharing and cooperation tools and networks will help to facilitate such an initiative.

You will agree with me that focus should not only be on the criminal networks, but also the support systems between licit-illicit relationships, comprised of legitimate players like attorneys, bankers, accountants and brokers, who provide services to legitimate customers, criminals, and terrorists alike.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In conclusion, I wish to stress the importance of these consultations to the start-up of AFRIPOL and look forwards to enriching discussions that will enable AFRIPOL to join in the efforts to enhance cooperation between the Police and law enforcement agencies on the continent and globally. I believe that this is only but the beginning of what will be a strong and durable relationship that will outlive Transnational Organized Crime. I also hope that we will agree on concrete next steps in this regard.

I wish to, once again, thank the government of Algeria for its continued effort towards ensuring the effective operationalization of AFRIPOL.

I look forward to fruitful deliberations.

Thank you all.