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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

IGAD/AUC REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE AU BORDER GOVERNANCE STRATEGY
ENTEBBE, UGANDA
13-14 MAY 2024

Opening Remarks

Dr. Alhaji Sarjoh Bah,
Director, Conflict Management Directorate
Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department (PAPS)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

I wish to thank the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for having accepted to co-organize this workshop with the AU. This gesture symbolizes the commitment of the IGAD to collaborate with the African Union Commission through the African Union Border Programme on the implementation of the AU Border Governance Strategy. Let me also thank the Member States, who, despite their busy schedules, responded to our joint invitation. It is an eloquent illustration of the importance you attach to this regional workshop on the AU Border Governance Strategy. We appreciate and thank you for that. We extend our profound gratitude to the Government and People of the Republic of Uganda for hosting this workshop and for their legendary hospitality.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of you for the progress achieved, with your neighbors, in the processes of clarification of your boundary lines and in fostering cross border cooperation, as per the objectives of the AU Convention on Cross Border Cooperation also known as the Niamey Convention. We encourage IGAD Member States that not yet done so, to sign, ratify and domesticate the Convention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In its very design, the African Union Border Programme assigns a prominent role to the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The Programme is founded on the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity, and respect for

the sovereignty of states. In 2007, the 1st Declaration of African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues defined the modalities for the implementation of the AUBP at several levels – national, regional, and continental – and the responsibilities of each level are to be governed by the principles I mentioned above. At the 1024th meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council, held at the ministerial level on the 19 August 2021, the Council welcomed the efforts of Member States and RECs/RMs in the implementation of the AU Border Governance Strategy. It reiterated the need for continuous engagement and collaboration between Member States, Regional Economic Communities, and Regional Mechanisms with the AU Commission.

Efforts to actualize the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity were realized with the organization of coordination meetings between the AU Border Programme and Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms. The 1st coordination meeting was held in Abuja (Nigeria) in October 2013. The 2nd was held in Lusaka (Zambia) in November 2015. The 3rd was held in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in November 2017. The 4th was held in Arusha (Tanzania) in September 2018. The 5th was held in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in September 2019. Each Coordination Meeting fostered the exchange of experiences and facilitated the coordination of interventions by RECs/RMs and the Commission on border related issues.

It is in this same spirit that we are organizing this regional workshop with IGAD on the African Union Strategy for Better Integrated Border Governance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

More recently, the Commission has embarked on a process to reflect on progress, challenges, and opportunities to enhance and scale up the AUBP so that it can provide the strategic leadership that was envisaged when it was established close to two decades ago. This assessment is motivated by the evolution of border governance in Africa and the need to safeguard the impact of the Programme's interventions, at all levels. Change, in the form of the adoption border policies and legal frameworks, the launch of trade programmes such as AfCFTA, regular and irregular migration, the introduction of cross border security mechanisms, such as the Djibouti and Nouakchott Processes, and the Accra Initiative. has resulted in the introduction of "new" border actors or "new" processes which alter our engagement. Hence, to acknowledge the evolution in border governance means to adjust our interventions both at the AU and REC/RMs.

To do so, the Commission organized a Strategic Review Workshop of the AUBP in October 2023. One key recommendation of the Workshop was for the AUBP to accelerate the institutionalization of its coordination mechanisms with the Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms through the adoption and implementation of joint action plans on border governance – to ensure the coherence of interventions.

The recommendation bolsters the current momentum in which the Programme has organized three regional workshops on the AU Border Governance Strategy: with ECOWAS in Accra (Ghana) in November 2021, with EAC in Dar es Salam in November 2021, with ECCAS in Kinshasa (DRC) April 2022. Each of these workshops were the foundation on which bilateral

action plans between the AU/ECOWAS, AU/EAC and AU/ECCAS were drafted and adopted. Each of these Action Plans serve as the principal tools for the harmonization of efforts on border governance at regional and continental levels. I am pleased to announce after IGAD, the next regional Meeting will be held with SADC in August in Lusaka, Zambia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, border governance is a tangible reality reflected in African agendas. In various forms, it is the subject of political initiatives and concrete actions across the continent. These efforts aim to address situations in border areas that constitute potential sources of tensions, with proliferation of transnational organized crime including the growing threat of terrorism. Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms are at the forefront of this dynamic, as shown by:

- the EAC regional policy framework on cross-border security
- the ECOWAS Regional Programme to Support Cross-Border Cooperation: 2017–2021;
- the ECCAS Border Programme;
- IGAD's regional policy framework on cross-border informal trade and border security governance;
- the SADC Guideline on Coordinated Border Management.

All of these important initiatives must be promoted and implemented in synergy with the relevant provisions of the African Union Border Governance Strategy. In this way, we will gain in efficiency, impact, and sustainability in our efforts to support Member States in their border governance actions.

Thus, our gathering here over the next two days will be focused on how to develop and implement a pragmatic and fully operational approach fostering our synergies and coherence. Our previous coordination meetings have laid the foundations for convergence towards joint action. This regional workshop provides us with an opportunity to consolidate the gains made and further strengthen coordination between the AU Commission and IGAD, in close cooperation with Member States and partners.

I remain convinced that together, through frank collaboration, we can make a decisive contribution to structural conflict prevention and management while strengthening regional and continental integration processes. In the quest for integration, through the RECs/RMs, stable borders constitute a pre-requisite for peaceful neighborly relations, cross border cooperation, and the full realization of Silencing the Guns Initiative, the AfCFTA, in line with the broader goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the Federal Republic of Germany which, through GIZ, has accompanied us since the creation of the African Union Border Programme since 2007. I hope that it will continue to provide its technical and financial support in the implementation of the AU Border Governance Strategy.

With these few words, I wish to declare the workshop open, and wish you fruitful deliberations.