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## Press Release

### SEPTEMBER 2020: THE CONDUCT AND COMMEMORATION OF THE AFRICA AMNESTY MONTH

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 1 September 2020:** The 29<sup>th</sup> Summit of the African Union (AU), held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 3 to 4 July 2017, declared the month of September of each year, as the “Africa Amnesty Month”, for the surrender and collection of illicit arms/weapons. The decision provides for the voluntary surrender by civilians of weapons in their illegal possession, on the condition of anonymity and immunity from prosecution. This is an opportunity that every citizen of Africa should seize and utilize to contribute towards the realization of a peaceful, secure and prosperous Continent.

The illegal possession of weapons by non-state actors, individuals and groups, is one of the contributing factors to armed violence that continues to plague the Continent and its people. Removing these illegal weapons from circulation and use is, therefore, central to realizing peace, security and stability in the Continent. Indeed, the Amnesty Month contributes to efforts towards Silencing the Guns in Africa.

Member States have since undertaken various activities to collect and destroy or safely store weapons once illegally owned by non-state actors during the Amnesty Month. The African Union Commission, in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), with the support of the United Nations (UN), civil society organizations, think tanks and partners, continues to provide support these efforts.

The Commission calls upon all peace-loving citizens of this great Continent of Africa, including civil society (women and youth groups), the private sector, the media, academia and think-tanks, and religious and traditional organizations to join hands in mobilizing and sensitizing the communities, as part of the campaign to facilitate the surrender of illicit weapons during this September 2020. In this spirit, the Commission would like to encourage Member States to continue with this important exercise beyond the specific month of September in order to sustain the momentum towards building a conflict-free Africa.

For its part, the Commission will continue to work closely with Member States and RECs/RMs to implement their activities during the Amnesty Month and beyond.

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