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REMARKS BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY AT THE ELEVENTH
UN-AU CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON CONFLICT PREVENTION MANAGEMENT
AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS (DESK-TO-DESK)
7 DECEMBER 2017

Special Representative of the Secretary General, Haile Menkerios
Assistant Secretary General, Taye Brouk-Zerihoun
AU and UN Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address the eleventh UN-AU Consultative Meeting on the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts (Desk-To-Desk). The last Desk-To-Desk was in December 2016. It is my hope that we won't have to wait for one year to have another Desk-To-Desk. Looking at the challenges facing our two organisation and the new impetus to the partnership, I believe that we need to re-energise the Desk-To-Desk.

Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Over the years, the African Union (AU) has forged various partnerships in its efforts to achieve its vision of a free, peaceful and prosperous continent driven by its people. The partnership with the United Nations in the area of peace and security is one of the most visible with annual joint consultations alternatively in Addis Ababa and in New York, regular consultations on issues of common concern and the establishment of institutional mechanisms such as the Joint Task Force (JTF) and the Desk-to-Desk. The relationship was given a new impetus on 19 April 2017, when the Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the Chairperson of the AU Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat signed the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. In the near future and building on the Peace and Security Framework , the UN and the AU will soon sign the AU-UN Framework for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals effectively linking peace and security to development.

2. The growing partnership between our two institutions is also manifested in our collaborative peacemaking efforts in several conflict and post-conflict zones, including the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC) and the Great Lakes region, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Sudan and South Sudan and Somalia, to name but a few. Experience from these cases provides useful lessons on how to establish a more predictable and mutually reinforcing partnership, bearing in mind the evolving nature of the threats to peace and security on the continent.

3. So we have come a long way and the strengthening of the partnership is irreversible but more needs to be done to further enhance the partnership both in terms of consultations prior to decision making, shared understanding of the issues at hand, and consistency and support to African-led efforts. More importantly we need to carry our Member States if we are to successfully address the peace and security challenges confronting the continent.

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. In 2018, 18 elections will be held on the continent. It is expected that the majority of these elections will remain peaceful, but elections have become a moment of vulnerability. From past experience, disputes over the voter registration, composition and membership of election management bodies, complaints about the lack of adequate consultations on impending election timelines, debates around issues of succession and term limits, as well as the rejection of electoral outcomes have been some of the issues that have led to heightened tensions and violence.

5. In the coming months, we will be monitoring closely the elections in Egypt, Mali, Sierra Leone, Togo, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, DRC and Zimbabwe to name a few. We are also concerned that some of the current crises might escalate as we near key milestones such as elections, implementation of key provisions of peace agreements or political negotiations. The situations in Libya, Mali, South Sudan, CAR and the DRC will continue to require our utmost attention. We will also remain seized with countries in a post-conflict due to their structural vulnerabilities. I am pleased to note that these specific situations will be reviewed by our respective teams.

6. Terrorism will also continue to be of major concern on the continent exacerbated by a governance deficit in some of our Member States, but also external factors such as aggressive nationalism, a crude populism and the events in the Middle East. The new worrying trend is that transnational organized crimes have become intimately intertwined with terrorist groups' activities and are providing them with new sources of funding.

6. All of this is happening, at a time when Multilateralism is in retreat and this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. This will have significant impact on access to funding for peacekeeping, humanitarian action and our ability to intervene in general. So we will have to work with less and this will require us to summon our creativity and innovation in order to truly have an impact and remain relevant.

7. Let me suggest a few steps that should be discussed in the next two days:

First, we need Flexible and innovative interpretation of Chapter VIII: The UN and AU should make renewed efforts to ensure a flexible and innovative interpretation of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. It is important that the two institutions have a shared understanding and appreciation of the principles and spirit of Chapter VIII.

Second, we need to enhance consultations between the PSC and the Security Council: While progress has been made in the relationship between the two Councils, more still needs to be done to enhance the partnership. This would involve improving the effectiveness of the annual consultative meetings, and ensure adequate follow-up to the communiqués adopted, and collaborative field missions to facilitate the formulation of common positions and strategies. It will also require the holding of timely consultations on issues of common concern. As African issues dominate the agenda of the Security Council, it is critical that the continent, through the

AU, is adequately consulted by the Security Council prior to the adoption of decisions that are of particular importance to Africa. This would ensure that the Security Council members are well informed of the AU views and positions on the issues on their agenda, without prejudice to the primacy of the Security Council.

Third, we need closer consultation between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission: Although the establishment of the UN-AU JTF on Peace and Security has contributed to the forging of closer ties between the Secretariat and Commission, the level of interaction and coordination can still be enhanced, based on African ownership and leadership. We also need to do a better job in terms of reporting back to our respective Councils. Here, I have in mind UNSC Resolution 2378 (2017). I am pleased that the Task Force between the AU and the UN will hold its first meeting early January.

Fourth, despite the difficult context, we must continue to address effectively and in a systematic manner the issue of predictable, sustainable and flexible funding of AU-led peace support operations undertaken with the consent of the Security Council, through the use of assessed contributions. Although we have made progress in this regard, we still have a long way to go.

Fifth, there is need to take steps to enhance the effectiveness of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), for this will go a long way in ensuring greater cohesion in African positions and more effective follow-up at the UN level of the decisions taken.

To this end, we will need to improve the interface between the PSC and the African members of the Security Council known as the A3. In fact, we have just concluded the 5th High Level Seminar on peace and security in Africa where we also welcomed Cote D'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, the two new members of the UN Security Council. These annual meetings are an opportunity for the PSC and the A3 to synchronize their views. Going forward, we will explore the possibility of working with the UN in the induction of the new African members of the UN Security Council.

We also need greater coherence between the AU and its Regional Mechanisms prior to engagement with the UN. This is crucial as it would foster the relationship between the AU and its Regional Mechanisms and, more critically, ensure that they speak with one voice in their engagements with the UN. The UN Secretariat should help us to strengthen this relationship and avoid initiatives that might undermined the relationship between the AU and its RECs.

Lastly, we must strengthen the mandate, capacity and visibility of the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN. The current configuration and staffing level of the office does not allow it to discharge its functions and play the role expected of it in an effective and efficient manner. In the coming days, we will submit a plan in this regard.

Let me conclude by thanking the Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, USG, Feltman, Lacroix and Atul Khare, the UNOAU, in particular the SRSG Haile and all of you who travelled from New York and who continue to make the strengthening of our partnership a top priority. The efforts are

already bearing their fruits and we look forward to building a closer relationship that will deliver on our aspirations for peace and security on the continent.

Thank You