PRESS RELEASE

PSC holds Retreat in Abuja, Nigeria, on Enhancing its Cooperation with the RECs/RMs - Nigeria’s Vice-President commends Council for its achievements

Abuja, 15 September 2015 -- The African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council has started a three-day Retreat in Abuja, Nigeria, on the theme: “Enhancement of Cooperation between the AU Peace and Security Council and the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) in the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa”. The Retreat seeks to explore ways and means of strengthening the collective effectiveness and efficiency of the PSC and the RECs/RMs, using their respective comparative advantages and capacities, within the context of subsidiarity, synergy building and complementarity in the areas of early warning and early action, conflict prevention, peacemaking, post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development, strengthening democratic practices and good governance, as well as in combating terrorism and violent extremism. The Retreat builds on the outcomes of the last PSC Retreat which took place in Swakopmund, Namibia, on 21-23 May 2015, during which the Council made the first attempt to deeply reflect on the enhancement of its cooperation with the RECs/RMs, towards a more effective operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Retreat in Abuja, on 14 September 2015, the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, commended the Council for its achievements and service to Africa, and stated that the PSC had come a long way since its operationalization in 2004, in providing Africa with an effective mechanism for the management of peace and security issues. “The PSC has been a novel African initiative in many respects, one that has proven to be an effective tool in conflict management. The achievements of the Council in its 11 years of existence have set it out as an outstanding best model worthy of emulation by other regions in the world,” the Vice President said. With specific regard to his country, Professor Osinbajo said that Nigeria has always advocated for the proper conception and implementation of closer cooperation and collaboration between the AU and the RECs. He highlighted the contemporary security challenges facing the continent, in particular terrorism and violent extremism, and urged the PSC and RECs to more effectively coordinate and harmonize their efforts in a complimentary manner, in order to better address these challenges.
On his part, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Amb. Smail Chergui, conveyed the appreciation of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, to the people and Government of Nigeria for their country’s leadership in the continent’s quest for peace, security and stability. The Commissioner further commended the Nigerian Defense and Security Forces for their remarkable progress in combating terrorism and violent extremism. He reiterated the AU’s strong commitment to support and assist Nigeria and all countries of the region to degrade and ultimately eradicate the Boko Haram terrorist group.

In the same vein, the Chairperson of the PSC, Ambassador Mull Katende of Uganda, praised Nigeria for its tremendous economic and political progress. “Nigeria is a great African country and we look up to Nigeria for leadership in our continent. This Retreat is taking place at a time when Africa is facing a plethora of old and new security challenges,” he said, adding that APSA cannot succeed without strong cooperation between the PSC and the RECs/RMs. Amb. Katende highlighted the improving domestic security context in which Nigeria is hosting the PSC Retreat, a context characterized by the reopening of schools in areas liberated from Boko Haram and the voluntary surrender of an increasing number of the terrorist group’s fighters.

Nigeria’s Permanent Representative to the AU, Amb. Usman Baraya, thanked the PSC for accepting Nigeria’s invitation to organize the Retreat in Abuja. “The presence at this event of H.E. the Vice President, former Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and all Defense, Security and Intelligence Chiefs led by the Chief of Defense Staff, is eloquent testimony of Nigeria’s unwavering commitment to Africa’s peace and security,” he added.

The conclusions of the Abuja PSC Retreat are expected to inform the PSC’s decision making, with specific regard to the strengthening of its relations with the RECs/RMs, as the Council continues striving to manage and resolve current and prevent future conflicts in the continent, and to enhance the AU’s peacebuilding efforts, for a more stable, developed and prosperous Africa.

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