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UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P.O.Box:3243 Tel. (251-1) 51 38 22 Fax: (251-1) 51 93 21

Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
680th MEETING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
18 APRIL 2017

PSC/PR/BR. (DCLXXX)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 680th meeting held on 18 April 2017, was briefed by the AU Commission and by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) on the Operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram terrorist group. Council also took note of the statements made by the representatives of Ethiopia (in its capacity as an African Member of the United Nations Security Council (A3)), Liberia (in its capacity as the Chairperson of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the United Nations.

Council recalled its earlier decisions and pronouncements on the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group and efforts aimed at neutralizing it, particularly Communique [PSC/PR/2. (DCXXXIX)] adopted at its 639th meeting held on 29 November 2016, Communique [PSC/PR/COMM. (DLXVII)] adopted at its 567th meeting held on 14 January 2016, Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.1 (DLX)] adopted at its 560th meeting held on 26 November 2015, Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR. (DXVIII)] adopted at its 580th meeting held on 25 June 2015, Press Statement [PSC/PR/COMM.2 (D)] adopted at its 500th meeting held on 27 April 2015, as well as Communiques [PSC/PR/COMM. (CDLXXXIX)] adopted at its meeting held on 3 March 2015 and Communique [PSC/AHG/COMM. 2(CDLXXXIV)] adopted at its 484th meeting held on 29 January 2015, at the level of Heads of State and Government, by which Council authorized the deployment of the MNJTF.

Council welcomed the significant progress made by the MNJTF and the Member States of LCBC plus Benin in the fight against Boko Haram terrorist group, which has been significantly degraded and dislodged from its previous strongholds. In the same context, Council commended the ongoing MNJTF major Joint Operation 'RAWAN KADA', which is expected to be a prelude to the 2nd phase of the MNJTF mandate aimed at implementing stabilization programs, including restoration of state authority in areas affected by Boko Haram and assisting Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees to return to their homes;

Council paid tribute to all troop contributing countries (TCCs) for their continued sacrifices. In the same context, Council also paid tribute to the men and women serving under the MNJTF and encourages them to persevere.

Council also welcomed the signing, on 24 February 2017, of renewed Support Implementation Agreement (SIA) and the Memorandum of Understanding between the AU Commission and the MNJTF TCCs for streamlining the AU additional support to MNJTF. Council further welcomed the decisions adopted by the Council of Ministers of Defence of the member countries of the LCBC plus Benin, at their meeting held on the 24 February 2017, in Abuja, Nigeria, to review the MNJTF Concept of Operations (CONOPs) and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in order to adapt it to the prevailing circumstances on the ground, covering such aspects as forces capacity requirement, organizational structure of the office of the Head of Mission, organizational structure of the MNJTF to incorporate the Military, Police and Civilian Components of the TCCs, relocation of Sector 2 Headquarters from Gamboru to Baga Sola, re-designation of Sub-Sector 3 (Niger) to a full-fledged Sector 4 and for TCCs to facilitate by sending nominations for various vacant posts for MNJTF Mission Support Team and civilian component. In this context Council encouraged the LCBC to convene an inclusive meeting of experts to urgently revise the CONOPs and SOP.

Council took note, with deep concern, of the serious humanitarian situation caused by the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group. In this regard, Council strongly condemned the continued attacks by the group against innocent civilians and the recruitment of vulnerable youth and human rights abuses, as well as sexual violence against women and girls, and strongly warned the perpetrators of such abuses and violence that they shall be held accountable for their actions. In the same context, while welcoming the pledges made at the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region held on 24 February 2017, Council underscored the urgent need for both, honoring and swift disbursement of those pledges, with a view to alleviating the current humanitarian crisis in the region.

Council acknowledged the critical resource challenges currently being faced by MNJTF in its operations against Boko Haram, including funding and lack of organic air capability especially for offensive operations. In this regard, Council underscored the urgent need for enhanced financial, material and logistical support for sustained combat operations by MNJTF to completely eliminate the Boko Haram menace.

Council reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive approach in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group as provided for in its Communiqué [PSC/AHG/COMM. 2(CDLXXXIV)] adopted at its 484th meeting. In this respect, Council underlined the importance of addressing the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency and, in the longer term, of supplementing military action with development projects, which focus, among other, on socio-economic development of the communities liberated from the Boko Haram terrorist group, with a view to depriving the terrorist group of support and recruitment grounds. In the same context, Council also underlined the need for adequate resources to facilitate the socio-economic rehabilitation of Boko Haram combatants who are defecting from the terrorist group. In this context, Council welcomed the donation made by the Commission during the visit, on 17 February 2017, by the Commissioner of Peace and Security to the MNJTF Headquarters.

Council also welcomed the visit undertaken by the UN Security Council in the countries of the region and its subsequent Resolution 2349(2017) of 31 March 2017.

Council looked forward to the joint visit envisaged to be undertaken to the LCBC region by the UN Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, the President of the African Development Bank and the President of the World Bank Group, with a view to draw the attention of the international community to the security and humanitarian situation prevailing in parts of the region.

Council commended both, AU Member States and AU Partners, for their continued support for the MNJTF operations and appealed to the Partners for the acceleration of all pledged support.

Council requested the Commission, with the support of the LCBC Secretariat, to regularly update the Council, in line with the reporting requirements, as stipulated in the Communiqué PSC/AHG/COM.2 (CDLXXXIV) of 29 January 2015.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.