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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

573<sup>RD</sup> MEETING

8 FEBRUARY 2016

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR. (DLXXIII)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 573<sup>rd</sup> meeting, held on 8 February 2016, was briefed by the Department of Political Affairs, of the AU Commission, on elections in Africa.

Council welcomed the briefing by the Commission on the recent elections in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic (CAR), Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Guinea, Seychelles and Tanzania. Council also welcomed the briefing on upcoming elections during the first quarter of 2016, namely, in Benin, Cape Verde, the CAR (run off for the Presidential elections and re-run of legislative elections), the Comoros, Republic of Congo, Niger, Tanzania (in Zanzibar), and Uganda.

Council took note of the preparations for the upcoming elections during the first quarter of 2016 and urged all stakeholders in the concerned countries to ensure peaceful, credible, transparent and democratic elections. Council also urged the concerned countries to ensure that they conduct their elections in accordance with the shared values and relevant instruments of the AU, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. Furthermore, while emphasizing the imperative of level playing fields ahead of and during elections, Council stressed the importance of political parties to accept the election outcomes and to refrain from any recourse to violence in settling any election-related irregularities and grievances but, instead, to use all available legal channels.

In particular, Council expressed its delight that the culture of peaceful and democratic elections continues to be deepened across Africa, as evidenced by the regularity of national elections in AU Member States. In the same context, Council hailed the growing trend of peaceful transfer of power.

Council commended the efforts being deployed by the Commission to ensure the successful organization of peaceful, credible, transparent and democratic elections in the concerned countries and throughout the continent. In this regard, Council requested the Commission to deploy election observers in sufficient numbers and on time, with a view to ensuring that they cover the whole country in their election observation exercise. Furthermore, while acknowledging the financial contributions made by the governments of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Council stressed the need for additional resources to be made available to the Commission in the preparations for and process of election observation.

Council stressed the need for the Commission to build and ensure greater synergies, cooperation and collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

Council further stressed the need for all AU Member States to entrench constitutionalism and to have strong and independent national institutions, particularly those involved in electoral processes, with a view to engendering, deepening and consolidating the culture of democracy, and peace. In this regard, Council requested the Commission to continue to provide capacity building assistance to the national election management bodies, political parties, the judiciary, the law enforcement institutions and the national infrastructures for peace, as well as to the civil society organizations and the media.

Council emphasized the need for the Commission to ensure that the popularization, in all AU Member States, of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, is considered as a continuous process, rather than wait for the time that Member States organize their election. In this regard, Council urged all Member States, which have not yet done so, to sign, ratify and domesticate the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, as well as all other relevant AU instruments.

Noting that prevention is better than cure, Council underscored the importance of early warning and timely briefings by the Continental Early Warning System on possible electoral risk factors in order to enable the Council to make timely and appropriate responses.

Council requested the Commission to undertake a comprehensive review of AU election observer missions, including the methodology they use in observing elections and make recommendations towards enhancing the AU election observation process.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.