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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
695TH MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
21 JUNE 2017

PSC/PR/BR. (DCXCV)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), dedicated its 695th meeting held on 21 June 2017, to an Open Session on the theme: “Responses to Humanitarian Emergencies in Africa”.

Council and Participants took note of the opening statement made by the PSC Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Susan Sikaneta of the Republic of Zambia. They also took note of the presentations made by the Director of the AU Department of Political Affairs and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mr. Filippo Grandi. They further took note of statements made by the representatives of AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), AU partners, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the European Union.

Council and participants recalled all existing AU instruments on refugees, including the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness adopted by the AU Assembly in January, 2016; the Organization of African Unity (OAU) 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the AU 2009 Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, which is also known as the Kampala Convention.

Council and participants stressed that the World Refugee Day, which is commemorated on 20th June, every year, is an important opportunity to raise awareness and draw the attention of the continent to the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa. They observed that Africa remained disproportionately affected by forced migration and displacements of its people.

Council and participants acknowledged that humanitarian emergencies in Africa are a result of both, natural and man-made causes, including violent conflicts which are often triggered by factors relating to governance deficits and climate change-related phenomena. In this regard, they affirmed the commitment of the AU to work closely with the UNHCR in dealing with the plight of refugees and in the search for durable, effective and holistic solutions that address the structural root causes of forced migration and displacement of people in the continent.

Council and participants commended all Member States which, with very limited resources at their disposal and for many years, have continued to host refugees. In this context, after expressing gratitude, they appealed to the AU partners and the international community as a whole for solidarity and more enhanced financial and material support to AU Member States

that are hosting refugees. In the same context, and while acknowledging that there have been numerous pledging conferences, they urged the partners to honour their pledges and to translate commitments, already made, into practical actions to the benefit of refugees and IDPs. In particular, they called for urgent action and humanitarian support to be provided to the Sahrawi refugees who are living in dire conditions for more than four decades in refugee camps near the city of Tindouf in Algeria.

Council expressed solidarity with Member States affected by terrorism and violent extremism including those in the Lake Chad Basin Commission region, the Horn of Africa region, the Sahel region and in North Africa. In this regard, they called for a collective security efforts dealing with the scourges of terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization in Africa.

Council commended the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for his relentless efforts to address situations of refugee and internally displaced persons in Africa and encouraged him to continue his efforts.

Council and participants, while noting the efforts being made by Member States in providing third country options to refugees, underlined the importance of considering the possibility of integrating and naturalizing some of the refugees who may wish to take that option. In the same vein, they urged Member States to develop policies for the protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs as stipulated in the 1969 OAU Convention on Refugees and the 2009 Kampala Convention on IDPs.

Council and participants underscored the importance of addressing the specific needs of special groups of forcibly displaced people including women, children, the youth and people with disabilities.

Council and participants, while acknowledging the legitimate concerns of Member States hosting refugees for many years, including security, underscored the importance of ensuring that necessary conditions are created in the countries of origin before considering any process of repatriation of refugees.

Council and participants commended Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Djibouti for pioneering the implementation of the commitments of New York Declaration for refugees and migrants of 19 September 2016, which, among others, calls on the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to propose a “Global Compact on refugees” in his annual report to the UN General Assembly in 2018. In this regard, they urged the other Member States to also do the same.

Council and participants also commended the Republic of Uganda for hosting the Solidarity Summit on Refugees on 22-23 June 2017, which is jointly organized by the Government of Uganda, the UN Secretary-General and UNHCR and looks forward to receiving the outcomes of the conference.

Council and participants requested the UNHCR to ensure that the process of developing the global compact is conducted in close consultation with the AU and other relevant stakeholders in the continent, with a view to taking into account the practical realities in Africa and AU's concerns as articulated in the 2016 Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness.

Council and participants welcomed the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Refugees in Somalia, and Plan of Action which were adopted by the Special Summit of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on 25th March, 2017. In particular, they welcomed the fact that the Declaration calls for a regional approach and cooperation between Somalia and countries of the region in the search for lasting solutions to forced displacement.

Council and participants also welcomed the appointment, by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, of a Special Envoy and Regional Refugee Coordinator for Somalia and South Sudan and called on him to work very closely with the relevant Departments within the AU Commission.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.