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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
758TH MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
14 MARCH 2018

PSC/PR/BR.(DCCLVIII)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 758th meeting, held on 14 March 2018, followed a briefing on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC):

Council took note of the statements made by the Acting Director, Peace and Security, on behalf of the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, and by the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and Head of the AU Liaison Office in the DRC, Ambassador Abdou Abarry. Council also took note of the statements made by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the DRC, H.E Mr. Leonard She Okitundu, the Republic of the Congo, in its capacity as Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), South Africa, as Chairman of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Executive Secretary of SADC, Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, and the United Nations (UN).

Council recalled its previous decisions on the situation in the DRC, particularly communiqués PSC/PR/COMM (DCCXII) and PSC /PR/COMM (DCCXXX), adopted respectively on 23 August and 7 November 2017.

Council reaffirmed its commitment to the independence and sovereignty of the DRC, in conformity with the relevant instruments of the AU.

Council reaffirmed the need for the full implementation of the Political Agreement of 31 December 2016 and urged the political stakeholders to comply strictly with the provisions of the Agreement, the only consensual and inclusive framework that would enable the DRC to organise peaceful, free and fair and credible elections. In this regard, Council welcomed the steps taken so far by the Government of the DRC, since the announcement made on 5 November 2017 to organise the Presidential, Legislative and Provincial elections on 23 December 2018. Council took note of the progress made, in particular the completion of the registration of voters by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), resulting in the registration of over 46 million eligible voters, as well as other activities including the approval by the Parliament and promulgation by the President of the Electoral Law in December 2017. Council looked forward to the vote of the National Assembly on the law relating to the allocation of the seats in that body.

Council took note of the commitment made by the DRC to finance the electoral process with its own funds. Council, once again, called upon the countries of the region, other African countries and the international community as a whole to provide the necessary technical, logistical and financial support for the smooth organisation and holding of the elections in the DRC. In this regard, Council requested to expedite the finalisation of the required steps for the speedy operationalization of the International Group of Electoral Experts, which should provide technical support to the CENI in the conduct of the electoral process.

Council welcomed the various initiatives of the countries of the region to assist the DRC in these efforts to ensure the peaceful conduct of the electoral process. Council took note with appreciation of the efforts of SADC, in particular the appointment of a Special Envoy, in the person of His Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba, former President of Namibia, as well as the opening of a SADC liaison office in Kinshasa. Council also welcomed the mission of the SADC Electoral Technical Committee, which was dispatched to the DRC from 25 November to 3 December 2017, as well as the Political Assessment Mission undertaken by the Executive Secretary of SADC from 30 January to 2 February 2018. Council further welcomed the efforts of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), including initiatives taken by the Tripartite (Republic of the Congo, Angola and the DRC), Gabon, Zimbabwe and whose Presidents recently visited the DRC, to support the momentum in preparation for the election in the DRC. In this respect, Council reaffirmed the need for enhanced coordination of efforts and initiatives of the various actors in the promotion of peace, security and stability in the DRC.

Council deplored the loss of lives, injuries and arrests recorded during various incidents and appealed to the Congolese authorities to investigate the events of 31 December 2017, 21 January and 25 February 2018 and bring perpetrators to account. In this respect, Council welcomed the establishment of a Joint Commission of Inquiry to conduct the necessary investigations into these incidents, including those of 25 February 2018. Council urged the Congolese political actors to show more responsibility and the defence and security forces to demonstrate utmost restraint, at a time when no effort should be spared to establish the conditions for the organisation of free, fair and credible elections, in a peaceful climate.

Council reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region of February 2013. Council welcomed the measures considered by the AU, SADC, the ICGLR and the UN, at the meeting of the Guarantors, held in Addis Ababa, from 24 to 26 February 2018. Council encouraged the countries of the region to honour their commitments and to pursue the efforts aimed at contributing to the overall stabilisation of the DRC, within the context of the implementation of the Framework Agreement.

Council expressed its concern about the continuing insecurity and violence in Eastern DRC, as well as in the centre of the country, particularly in the provinces of Kasai and Ituri. In this regard, Council took note of efforts of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) in restoring security in the areas concerned. Council recalled Paragraph 3 of the communiqué of its 712th meeting and urged the Congolese authorities to take the necessary steps to strengthen security throughout the territory, including with the support of the forces of the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO).

Council, in anticipation of the forthcoming renewal of the mandate of MONUSCO, by the UN Security Council, stressed the need to do everything to ensure that the Mission's mandate is renewed, taking into account also of the electoral context in the DRC and the expected support

of MONUSCO to the FARDC's operations against the negative forces in Eastern DRC. Council also stressed the need for the operational capabilities of MONUSCO's Force of the Intervention Brigade (FIB) to be enhanced and to ensure that it is equipped with the necessary resources for the effective implementation of the tasks defined in its mandate.

Council, reaffirming paragraph 8 of the communiqué of its 712th meeting held on 23 August 2017, underlined once again its decision that unilateral decisions to impose sanctions on personalities in the DRC would not provide the environment conducive for the resolution of the crisis in the DRC.

Council remains deeply concerned at the worsening humanitarian situation in several areas of the Congolese territory and appealed to the international community to provide the necessary support to meet the needs of millions of internally displaced persons and refugees. To this end, Council requested the Chairperson of the Commission to take the necessary steps to enable the AU and its Member States to participate actively in the Round Table of Donors on the humanitarian situation in the DRC, scheduled in Geneva, on 13 April 2018.

Council, recalling the Communiqué of its 747th meeting on the organisation of elections in Africa and the Decision of the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union on the Report of the PSC on the State of Peace and Security in Africa, called upon the Commission to take the necessary steps to coordinate the multifarious support that AU member states could provide for the organisation of elections in the DRC. Council welcomed the support provided by MONUSCO to the development of the electoral register and encouraged all partners to extend support to the electoral process in the DRC, without precondition.

Council decided to remain actively seized of the matter.