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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
818TH MEETING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
17 DECEMBER 2018

PSC/PR/BR.(DCCCXVIII)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), dedicated its 818th meeting, held under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Osama Abdelkhalik Permanent Representative of Egypt to the African Union, on 17 December 2018, to an open session on the theme: International and Regional Initiatives in the Sahel: Promoting Coordination and Ownership of African Peace, Security and Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development Efforts.

Council took note of the briefings made by former President Pierre Buyoya, in his capacity as the High Representative of the AU for Mali and The Sahel, as well as by Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Special Adviser of the UN Secretary General on The Sahel. It also took note of the opening remarks by the Chair and statements made by the AU Member States and bilateral and multilateral partners.

Council recalled Communiqué [PSC/MIN/ COMM.1 (DCCLXXXII)] adopted at its 782nd meeting, held on 27 June 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on the margins of the 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU.

Council expressed deep concern over the continuing fragility of the security situation in Mali and the Sahel region in general, particularly because of the continuation of terrorist attacks in Northern and Central Mali, in Burkina Faso, as well as in the border region between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, in addition to the growing transnational organized crime including trafficking in persons, illicit arms, drugs and psychotropic substances and cases of targeted assassinations and kidnappings. It strongly condemned all terrorist acts targeting the civilians and law enforcement forces in the region including Malian and international forces, present in Mali, particularly those of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

Council commended the sincere efforts by the countries of the regions to restore security and stability and paid tribute to all national and international defence and security forces during their brave fight against terrorism and cross-border crime throughout the Sahel region. In this regard, it welcomed the stabilisation efforts of MINUSMA under particularly difficult conditions. It paid tribute to Regional Counter-Terrorism initiatives in the Sahel including establishment of the G5-Sahel Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin Region with a view to enhance the effectiveness of the response to terrorism and transnational organized crime.

Council reaffirmed the need to further strengthen the coordination of the security efforts within the framework of the APSA, including in relation to efforts of the G5-Sahel Force and the MNJTF, while preserving the flexibility and adaptability that underpin their effectiveness, with a view to reinforce their coherence with the framework of the Architecture, in conformity with relevant PSC decisions, particularly Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM(DCCLIX)] adopted by Council at its 759th meeting held on 23 March 2018. In this regard, it encouraged the Commission to pursue its efforts to implement the Memorandum of Understanding between the AU Commission and the G5-Sahel Secretariat, signed on 23 March 2018.

Council stressed the need for continued enhancement of the coordination, coherence and synergy of efforts among all initiatives with the common objective of restoring peace and security

in the Sahel. In this regard, it welcomed the coordination role of the AU within the framework of the Nouakchott Process, which is an appropriate inclusive framework for enhancing security cooperation in the Region.

Council welcomed the regular holding of the different forums held in support of the security and developmental efforts in Sahel, in particular the recent Conference on coordination of partners and donors for the G5-Sahel Force held in Nouakchott, on 6 December 2018, and called upon all partners to fulfil the pledges that they have announced in support of the countries of the region and the relevant regional processes and mechanisms; It noted with appreciation the regular coordination meetings of the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), within the ambit of the MNJTF, the most recent of which was held in Abuja on 15 December 2018 at level of Heads of State and Government. It also welcomed the convening, on 30 July 2018, of the Joint Summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

Council took note of the challenges facing the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, stressing that the expeditious implementation of the Agreement, as well as a stabilisation and early resolution of the crisis in Libya, will significantly contribute to the improvement of the security situation and stability in the Sahel Region.

Council once again reaffirmed the need to ensure ownership of the countries of the region of counter-terrorism initiatives and efforts, as well as to ensure the central role of the AU and the relevant Regional Mechanisms in the implementation of these initiatives, in line with the relevant provision of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the PSC. In this regard, it welcomed the invaluable contributions of some AU Member States to the ongoing efforts, such as the cooperation by Egypt and the Kingdom of Morocco, in areas of security capacity building and dismantling terrorist narratives, and encouraged further experiences of South-South, as well as trilateral cooperation.

Council expressed encouragement by the valuable contribution that will be presented by AU-PCRD Centre on Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development once operational in Cairo, and invited the Centre to pay particular attention to supporting efforts aimed at restoration of security and stability in the region.

Council expressed gratitude to the AU partners for their continued support to the AU in addressing the multiple challenges facing the Sahel. It called upon the international community to further enhance its support to the Regional initiatives, particularly through the provision of predictable, flexible and sustainable funding, notably, under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, stressing that the promotion of peace and Security in the Sahel will significantly contribute to the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security at large.

Council welcomed the intention of the UN to establish a fund dedicated to supporting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in the Sahel region, and invited the UN to avail at earliest opportunity additional information about this fund and to consult closely in this regard with the countries concerned and African Union Commission.

Council reiterated that, in the long term, eradicating terrorism will only be achieved through effectively addressing root causes. It reaffirmed the multidimensional nature of the challenges facing the Sahel, thus requiring a holistic approach that combines both the efforts in the field of security and the continuous efforts in the development and improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the people of the regions affected by terrorism, which capitalizes on the precariousness and lack of prospects, especially among the young people, as part of the efforts to tackle the root causes of extremism. It reiterated the crucial dividends of women empowerment and girls' education programmes in the long-term efforts to combat violent extremism and terrorism. It noted the centrality of adequate responses to issues related to governance and management of diversity in the Region.

Council underscored the need for a revitalisation and strengthening of the Ministerial Platform and its Technical Secretariat, under the impetus of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the UN Secretary General, with a view to playing a robust role in coordinated and well-coherent synergies between the relevant initiatives and processes. In this regard, it called for a better division of labour among the different initiatives in the Sahel, on the basis of the principle of comparative advantages and within the purview of the priorities and needs determined by the countries of the Region themselves, and encouraged periodic dialogue and consultations between these processes and mechanisms with a view to increasing effectiveness, reducing duplications and preserving diplomatic and financial resources.

Council urged the African Union Commission to undertake as a matter of priority to finalise the review of the AU Sahel Strategy pursuant to previous relevant decisions of Peace and Security Council and to inform the Council no later than April 2019 with the progress achieved in this regard.

Council decided to remain seized of the matter.