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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

833<sup>RD</sup> MEETING

19 MARCH 2019

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR. (DCCCXXXIII)

PRESS STATEMENT

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), dedicated its 833rd meeting, held on 19 March 2019, to an Open Session on the theme “The Role of Women in Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: The Contribution of Women Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees in Africa”.

Council took note of the Opening Statement made by H.E. Ambassador Catherine Muigai Mwangi, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the AU, in her capacity as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of March 2019. Council also took note of the Statements made by the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Madame Bineta Diop and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Head of the UN Office to the AU, Madame Hanna Tetteh, as well as, presentations made by Mr. Patrick Kawuma, Head of the Gambela Sub-Office of the (UNHCR) United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Council further took also note of the presentations made by two representatives of refugees at the Gambela and Kakuma camps in Ethiopia and Kenya, respectively. Council also 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 and international institutions and organizations.

Council recalled all its previous decisions and pronouncements, particularly, press statements [PSC/PR/BR. (DCCCIII)]; [PSC/PR/BR. (DCCLXXII)]; [PSC/PR/BR.(DCCLVII)] and [PSC/PR/BR. (DCCXXVIII)]; as well as [PSC/PR/BR. (DCLIX)] adopted at its open sessions held on 19 October 2018; on 13 March 2018; on 16 May 2018; on 31 October 2017, and on 16 February 2017, respectively, in the context of implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security.

Council also recalled the AU theme of the year as adopted by the 32<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly held in February 2019, namely: “*The year of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons: Towards durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa*”. In that regard, the Council expressed deep concern over the unbearable humanitarian situation in Africa, particularly as it relates to the plight of women and girls in refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Further and in the same context, the, Council stressed the importance of operationalizing the AU Humanitarian Agency and to ensure that it is configured in such a way that enables it to effectively address the specific needs of vulnerable women and girls, particularly those in Refugee and IDP camps.

Council condemned all forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls in refugee and IDP camps and stressed the importance of fighting impunity and promoting justice for the victims of violence and abuse. In this respect, Council recommended the imposition of stiff penalties against all perpetrators of gender-based violence and sexual abuses against vulnerable women and girls particularly those in Refugee and IDP camps.

Council encouraged all Member States, which have not yet done so, to sign, ratify and implement the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, adopted on 10 September 1969 and the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (The Kampala Convention), adopted on 23 October 2009.

Council underlined the need for urgent development of guidelines on mainstreaming the experiences of women and girls, particularly those in the refugee and IDP camps, in the AU policies, strategies, processes and initiatives regarding conflict prevention and resolution, mediation and post-conflict reconstruction, with a view to address the issue of finding durable solutions for IDPs and returning refugees.

Council stressed that active participation of women is a key ingredient for successful peace processes. Council acknowledged the significant contributions being made by women in the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa and underscored the need for Member States to redouble efforts aimed at promoting active participation of refugee and displaced women in peace processes, including in the design and implementation of the post conflict reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. In this respect, Council called on Member States to always ensure that women play a central role at all stages of a conflict cycle including, inter alia, prevention, management, resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building efforts. In the same context, Council underscored the urgency for enhancing participation of women in decision-making, particularly in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the communities, especially those affected by violent conflicts.

Council commended the UNHCR for the relentless efforts being deployed in providing sustained humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons throughout the Continent, particularly women and children. In this context, Council underscored the need for the UNHCR to continue to pay particular attention to the specific needs of vulnerable women and girls in the IDP and Refugee camps and to ensure that, both, the girls and the boys enjoy equal access to quality education. In the same context, Council emphasized the importance of further strengthening partnerships and promoting working synergies among all humanitarian aid agencies.

Council underlined the need to provide adequate and sustained financial support, and for deliberate efforts to establish Centers of Excellence which will be dedicated to providing capacity building training particularly for women mediators and negotiators, and to also strengthen leadership role of women's organizations in their participation in peace building efforts. In this regard, Council commended the AU Commission for the efforts being deployed through the Office of the Special Envoy in the context of the FemWise, and the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN).

Council also noted that currently, only 25 Member States have developed National Action Plans in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In this regard, Council commended those Member States, which have already developed their National Action Plans and encouraged them

to implement them. Council also encouraged those Member States, which have not yet adopted Resolution 1325, to do so and develop their National Action Plan Plans and ensure they mainstream different needs of women, children and men through peace building processes.

Council noted the significance of the recently launched Continental Results Framework, which is an important monitoring and evaluation tool that can aid in tracking progress made in the implementation of Resolution 1325 both, at national and regional levels. In this context, Council commended all those Member States that have already started to submit their national reports on the implementation of Resolution 1325 and appealed to those which have not yet done so to also do the same.

Council commended the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security for her relentless efforts on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda on the Continent, such as, development of the Continental Results Framework and carrying out Solidarity Missions. Council reiterated the importance of institutionalizing the Office of the Special Envoy within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and provision of all necessary resources to the Office, in order to enable the Special Envoy to more effectively discharge her mandate.

Council also commended all AU partners for their continued support to the African agenda for women, peace and security.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.