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UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321

Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

987TH MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

22 MARCH 2021

PSC/MIN/COMM.(CMLXXXVII)

COMMUNIQUE

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 987th meeting held at the Ministerial level on 22 March 2021 on the theme "Women, Peace, Culture and Gender Inclusivity in Africa":

The Peace and Security Council,

Noting the opening remarks made by the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya and Chairperson of the PSC for March 2021, H.E Ambassador Raychelle Omamo (SC, EGH), and the statements by the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, and AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, H.E Ambassador Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil; **also noting** the presentations made by the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, H.E. Madam Bineta Diop, and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Office to the AU, H.E Madam Hanna Tetteh, as well as the representative of the United Nations Women, H.E Ms Letty Chiwara;

Further noting the statements delivered by the Chairs of the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), Common Market for the Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Minister of the Republic of Madagascar, Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Minister of the Republic Chad, East African Standby Force Coordination Mechanism (EASFCOM), H.E. Minister of the Republic of Djibouti, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Minister of the Republic of Ghana, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the AU, North African Regional Capability (NARC) and Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Minister of the State of Libya, as well as Southern African Development Community (SADC), Minister of the Republic of Mozambique;

Recalling its outcomes, decisions and pronouncements during previous sessions on women, peace and security in Africa, particularly, Press Statements [PSC/PR/BR.(CMLI)] adopted at its 951st meeting held on 5 October 2020; [PSC/PR/BR.(DCCCLXXXVIII)] adopted at its 887th meeting held on 17 October 2019, [PSC/PR/BR. DCCCLXXXIII] adopted at its 833rd meeting held on 19 March 2019;

Also recalling the provisions and principles of article 4(l) of the AU Constitutive Act, Aspiration 6 of the Agenda 2063, Goals 5 and 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), the Protocol of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa adopted in Maputo in 2003, the 2015 Gender Peace and Security Programme (GPSP), and the Doctrine on AU Peace Support Operations adopted by the 3rd Extraordinary Specialized Technical Committee on Defence Safety and Security in January 2021, as well as the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018-2028, amongst others, which have put forth gender equality and gender mainstreaming explicitly as normative and policy imperatives, especially in peace and security structures and processes;

Cognizant of the leading historical role of women in the Continent in the pursuit of independence, their involvement in various capacities in issues of peace and security, as well as the promotion of Africa's socio-economic development;

Respecting the principles of sovereignty and national independence whilst taking into account the cultural and societal specificities in each country in armed conflict or emerging from conflict; and

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

1. **Underscores** the need to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, broadening women's access to education, improving their participation in the economy and decision-making, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels;
2. **Commends** the work being done by women in their communities nationally, regionally, and in the Continent to advance social cohesion with limited resources and amidst impediments, and **applauds** steadfast efforts by leading African women at all levels to promote women's participation in AU peace processes, including peace support operations, entrenching transitional justice and preventing conflict-related sexual violence, as well as working to protect and safeguard women and girls from violence;
3. **Acknowledges** the debilitating impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on women's livelihoods and economic autonomy, thereby accentuating their pre-existing challenges and vulnerabilities, especially during armed conflict and post-conflict situations evidenced by human rights violations and abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); in this regard **strongly condemns** the violations of human and people's rights, especially against women and girls and **calls** for the perpetrators to be criminally prosecuted to ensure justice for the victims;
4. **Condemns in the strongest terms** deadly attacks against civilian property including schools and hospitals resulting in maiming and killing of children, as well as the abduction of children by armed belligerents and terrorist groups disrupting their access to education and self-actualization through learning; and **also strongly condemns** the scourge of forced child marriages and recruitment of children in conflict and hostility situations stunting their growth and depriving them of enjoying their liberties; in this regard **reiterates** the AU's zero tolerance to violations of human and people's rights and **urges** all the Member States to take all appropriate measures to ensure that perpetrators of heinous crimes and atrocities face the full might of the law;
5. **Underlines** the need of building the required infrastructure to provide medical and psychosocial care and trauma healing to victims and survivors of SGBV and all other violations in conflict settings and countries emerging from conflict, and **urges** all Member States, RECs/RMs and partners to invest in awareness programmes to sensitize communities on the available support and structures for victims and survivors of trauma aimed at addressing stigmatization;
6. **Emphasizes** the pertinence of adopting a comprehensive approach resting on the four pillars of prevention, protection, participation and, recovery and relief for the full and effective implementation of gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security agenda, taking into consideration the unique contexts of countries in armed conflict or those emerging from it;

7. **Stresses** the imperative of ensuring women involvement and inclusion in peace processes, from conflict prevention and peace-making, including negotiations and signing of agreements to peacebuilding and peace support operations, to ensure that women's needs and security are sufficiently addressed and comply with the AU and universal frameworks on human rights and gender equality;
8. **Encourages** Member States to redouble their efforts investing in arts and culture that embrace women participation and promote peace in the Continent; **strongly rejects** practices which are harmful towards women, girls and children, including female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriages, and **encourages** the Member States to raise awareness using, amongst others, arts, culture and heritage as well as technology consistently aimed at protecting women, girls and children, to ensure their meaningful participation in their communities, nations, regions and broadly the Continent in pursuance of gender equality; and **stresses** the imperative of educating men and boys to actively participate in the promotion and safeguarding of women and girls' rights;
9. **Highlights** the vital role of the AU Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) and African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), as well as other related women's networks and women's rights organizations in advancing women's empowerment and participation in all levers of leadership in Africa, and in this regard **encourages** enhanced coordination and synergy amongst all actors, including the United Nations (UN) agencies and partners, civil society organizations and the Private sector for the advancement of gender equality including in peace-making, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction;
10. **Underscores** the necessity for revitalizing the African First Ladies Peace Missions (AFLPM) platform for the promotion of peace and harmony, as well as their advocacy for advancing women and girls' interests, provision of support to the victims of armed conflict, refugees and displaced people;
11. **Commends** the RECs/RMs and their Member States for their efforts in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda through the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs); in this regard, **encourages** those which are yet to develop to develop the NAPs to do so expeditiously; and **also encourages** RECs/RMs and the Member States to redouble their efforts in institutionalizing gender parity and continued dedication of domestic resources to capacitate and empower women and girls to participate meaningfully in various capacities in their societies;
12. **Stresses** the need for the Member States and RECs/RMs to establish platforms of sharing expertise and best practices in advancing gender equality and the WPS agenda to ensure that the multifaceted challenges are addressed in the quest for silencing the guns in the Continent to achieve and attain lasting peace;
13. **Emphasizes** the importance of exploring cultural strategies in mediating, managing and transforming armed conflict and **underlines** the necessity of scaling-up actions to mobilize community leaders, including traditional and religious leaders, aimed at ensuring commitments to and accelerating the implementation of the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018-2028 and related normative frameworks, anchored on more robust monitoring, evaluation and reporting;

14. **Underscores** the necessity of the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy, in close collaboration with the country concerned, RECs/RMs and the AU's PCRD Centre in Cairo, Egypt, to ensure gender mainstreaming and inclusion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in their activities seeking to address root causes of conflict and identifying priority projects in rebuilding countries emerging from conflict;
15. **Notes with appreciation** the relentless efforts of the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, Mme Bineta Diop, in championing gender mainstreaming as a policy imperative in the Continent and for developing the adopted Continental Results Framework, which serves to enhance accountability on the Women Peace and Security agenda, and **requests** the Chairperson of the AU Commission to capacitate the office and avail the requisite support, especially human and financial resources to ensure uninterrupted and effective implementation of the mandate of the Special Envoy;
16. **Commends** all AU partners for their sustained material support to the African Women, Peace and Security agenda;
17. **Decides** to remain seized of the matter.