PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1052ND MEETING

29 NOVEMBER 2021
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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PRESS STATEMENT
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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) dedicated its 1052nd meeting held on 29 November 2021, to an Open Session on the theme “Commemoration of the 21st anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security”.

Council recalled all its previous decisions and pronouncements, on women, peace, and security in Africa, particularly Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.(CMLI)] adopted at its 951st meeting held on 5 October 2020, and UN Security Council resolution 1325(2000), which is a landmark decision that aims at ensuring that women and girls are systematically and sustainably integrated into peace and security processes and institutions.

Council took note of the opening statement made by the H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Omar Gad, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the African Union, as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of November 2021. Council also took note of the statement made by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security; the presentation by the AU Special Envoy for Women Peace and Security, H.E. Madame Bineta Diop, as well as statements made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) and Head of the UN Office the African Union (UNOAU), H.E. Hannah Tetteh; Council further took note of the statements made by the representative of FEMWISE, H.E. Catherine Samba Panza and by the Director of Women International Peace Centre (WIPC), Ms Helen Kezie-Nwoha, as well as by the representatives of AU partners, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), international institutions and organizations.

Council also expressed concern that despite progress made in empowering women on peace and security issues on the Continent, the WPS Agenda continue to receive limited financial support by national and continental machineries. In this regard, Council appealed to all Member States to redouble efforts towards mobilization of required resources for effective implementation of the WPS Agenda.

Council noted with concern the massive disruptions caused by COVID-19 pandemic on all aspects of human endeavor, particularly, the health, education, economic, social services and humanitarian support, with women and girls bearing the brunt of the negative side effect, of particular concern was the global rise of cases of violence against women and girls, as the lockdowns and closures trapped them at home with their abusers.

Council also noted, with deep concern, the disproportionate adverse socio-economic impact on women and girls resulting from the COVID-19 containment measures being implemented by Member States, including the closure of schools and workplaces, as well as lockdowns, bearing in mind the fact that the majority of women and girls are employed in the informal sector and in generally low income work, as well as the limited access to crucial health services.

Council expressed concern over the high number of girls who have not yet returned to school despite school re-opening. Although data is scanty, the Council observed that,
incidences of early marriages and teenage pregnancies associated with COVID-19 school closure are among the factors contributing to school drop out for girls, which has detrimental impacts on gender equality, development outcomes and implementation of WPS Agenda in the continent.

Council commended the efforts being deployed by the AU Commission through the Office of the Special Envoy and the AU Gender Directorate, for providing technical support to Member States in implementing the Women Peace and Security Agenda, including in tracking and regularly reporting their progress using the Continental Results Framework (CRF); coordinating virtual meetings of Female African Ministers for Foreign Affairs a well Ministers in charge of Gender and Women, which resulted in the development of the AUC Gender responsive guidelines for COVID-19 responses and the Post COVID-19 recovery period.

Council acknowledges the resilience developed in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw sustained women, peace and security undertakings, and adaptation to the new normal working environment of virtual interactions, which include the “She Leads Peace” campaign and the First African Women, Peace and Security Forum that brought together various stakeholders with the aim promoting collective efforts in promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In the same context, Council also acknowledges in particular the virtual solidarity missions to support women of Mali and women of Mozambique in the face of adverse impact of conflict on their safety, security and livelihoods, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Council reiterated its previous request for the Chairperson of the Commission to further enhance the institutional capacity of the Office of the AU Special Envoy, including through the provision of all required resources.

Council recognized UN Women and FEMWISE for their spirited efforts in promoting the WPS agenda in the Continent.

Council welcomed the establishment of the AU African Vaccine Acquisition Trust and commended the African Heads of State and Government who during the high-level debate at the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) strongly advocated for an end to the discriminatory practices in the access to COVID-19 vaccines especially in Africa, which has disproportionately affected women and girls. In this regard Council called for gender responsiveness and women’s leadership in planning and rolling out of COVID-19 vaccine distribution, in order to ensure global access and coverage, particularly in poor and marginalized, as well as war affected communities.

Council commended all Member States and Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) that have already developed action plans and are already regularly reporting their progress in the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the AU WPS agenda, and encouraged those that have not yet done so to also do the same without further delay, including through signing, ratifying and fully domesticating the relevant AU and international instruments relating to women, peace, and security.

Council underscored the need for Member States to redouble their investments in ensuring more accurate data collection and, in this respect, to collect more disaggregated data, based on age, gender, and people living with disabilities, with a view to ensuring that
the particular concerns of women and girls are taken into full consideration in policy-making at national, regional, and Continental levels. In this context, Council requested the Commission to work closely with the office of the Special Envoy for WPS to develop a template for a mechanism for reporting on the implementation of WPS agenda by the member states and the RECs/RMs, and to take into consideration the Continental framework (CRF), and underlined the need to protect children in the context of UNSC resolution 1325.

Council emphasized the importance of respecting the International Humanitarian Law as a contribution towards improving the situation of women and girls in times of armed conflict, as well as to ensure the provision of mental, physical care and survivor-centered psycho-social support to victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Council encouraged Member States to criminalize child marriages and rape, as well as to further strengthen their national legislation against all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Council underlined the need for Member States to create necessary conditions for facilitating more enhanced and meaningful participation and leadership of women in decision-making including in peacekeeping, peacemaking processes and post-conflict reconstruction and development, as well as peacebuilding processes and in the rolling out of the COVID-19 vaccine, in order to ensure that the vaccine is accessible to all women and girls.

Council commended all partners and the rest of the international community for the continued support to women and girls, particularly in conflict contexts and encouraged them to further enhance their support.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the mater.