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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL
EFFORTS TO COMBAT THE BOKO HARAM TERRORIST GROUP AND THE WAY FORWARD**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 469th meeting held on 25 November 2014, Council considered the regional efforts being deployed to combat the Boko Haram terrorist group and agreed on steps to be taken by the Commission in support of the Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Benin. Council requested the Commission to submit to it a report on the follow-up steps taken in pursuance of that communiqué, to enable it take the necessary decisions. At their 5th ministerial meeting held in Niamey, Niger, on 20 January 2015, the LCBC Member States and Benin requested me to, *inter alia*, submit to Council a report on the regional and international efforts being deployed in the fight against Boko Haram, particularly the Conclusions of that meeting, in order to enable it authorize the deployment of, and mandate, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

2. This report is submitted in pursuance of Council's communiqué of 25 November 2014 and the Conclusions of the Niamey ministerial meeting. It provides an overview of the situation since the last meeting of Council on this issue, as well as of the evolution of the related regional and international efforts. The report concludes with observations on the way forward.

II. EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND

3. During the period under consideration, the Boko Haram terrorist group has continued to carry out numerous attacks, targeting civilians, police, churches, mosques, and public facilities, including schools. In early January 2015, Boko Haram overran a military base in northeastern Nigeria that was the headquarters of the MNJTF located in Baga, Borno State. The group then forced thousands of people from the region, burnt and destroyed homes and businesses, and committed mass killings. Mention should also be made of the 10 and 11 January 2015 suicide bombings in Maiduguri, Borno State, and Potiskum, Yobe State, reportedly involving children coerced by Boko Haram to act as suicide bombers.

4. Since 2013, the Boko Haram terrorist group has frequently attacked towns and villages, security outposts and schools, and has also kidnapped civilians, foreign tourists and missionaries in the border regions of Cameroon. Recently, there has been an increasing number of attacks in the Lake Chad Basin region along Nigeria's borders with Chad and Cameroon and in the northern provinces of Cameroon.

5. At its 469th meeting, Council reiterated its strong condemnation of the abhorrent terrorist attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram, as well as its solidarity with Nigeria and the other affected countries of the region. It stressed that the terrorist activities of Boko Haram pose a serious threat not only to Nigeria, but also to the region and the continent as a whole, and, as such, require collective African efforts to combat them. In reaction to the evolving situation on the ground, on 12 January 2015 I issued a press release in which I strongly condemned the dastardly attacks carried out by Boko Haram in Baga and Potiskum, and reiterated the AU's solidarity with the Government and people of Nigeria. In another press release dated 20 January 2015, I again condemned the Boko Haram terrorist attacks and expressed Africa's continued solidarity with the affected populations and countries.

6. Meanwhile, on 12 January 2015, the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) issued a press release strongly condemning Boko Haram's despicable acts and wanton disregard for human rights and property, as illustrated by the attack in Baga. He reiterated ECOWAS's commitment to work with the Government of Nigeria, Member States and other stakeholders to halt these continuing attacks that pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region. He welcomed the efforts by the AU, the LCBC and others in this regard. On 17 January 2015, the President of the ECOWAS Commission wrote to me to convey a request from the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government for the inclusion of an item on the threat posed by Boko Haram on the agenda of the upcoming AU Summit. In response, the Commissioner for Peace and Security informed him that appropriate consultations would be undertaken to ensure that the issue of Boko Haram is given all the attention it deserves during the deliberations on the report of the Peace and Security Council on its Activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa.

7. The United Nations (UN) Security Council has also pronounced itself on the situation. In a presidential statement adopted on 19 January 2015, the Security Council condemned, in the strongest terms, the most recent escalation in attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram, as well as the increased attacks in the Lake Chad Basin region and in northern Cameroon. The Security Council expressed deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of Nigeria, as well as to the people and Governments of other affected countries. The Security Council demanded that Boko Haram immediately and unequivocally cease all hostilities and all abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, and disarm and demobilize. It also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all those abductees who remain in captivity, including the 276 schoolgirls abducted in Chibok, Borno State, in April 2014. The Security Council recognized that some of these acts may amount to crimes against humanity and stressed that those responsible must be held accountable. Earlier on, on 22 May 2014, the UN Security Council's Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee approved the addition of Boko Haram to its list of individuals and entities subject to targeted financial sanctions.

8. At the Niamey ministerial meeting of the LCBC Member States and Benin of 20 January 2015, the participants noted that, since its emergence, the Boko Haram group has distinguished itself through violent attacks on civilians, summary executions, looting and destruction, abduction and continued attacks against the defense and security forces of the countries of the region. The participants strongly condemned the attack on Baga, which culminated in a large-scale massacre considered as a crime against humanity. They noted with concern the significant enhancement of Boko Haram operational capacity.

9. As noted by the Niamey ministerial meeting, the attacks and other abuses committed by Boko Haram have resulted in massive internal displacement. It has also led to significant flows of populations from the Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States of Nigeria into Niger, Chad and Cameroon. This situation has significantly strained resources in the host countries, raising concerns that this may give rise to tension between refugees and host communities. According to the Government of Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), about 868,235 people were affected by the ongoing terrorist attacks in the North East. NEMA is currently managing 20 camps for internally displaced people (IDPs). The precarious security situation prevents the delivery of aid to many people in need. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that the number of refugees and displaced people has exceeded one million."

10. In its above-mentioned presidential statement, the Security Council expressed concern at the scale of the growing humanitarian crisis caused by the activities of Boko Haram. In this regard, the Security Council commended the support provided to the refugees by the Governments of the host countries, and called on the international community to provide support in areas which require urgent attention.

III. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

11. Council will recall that, at its Summit meeting on terrorism and violent extremism held in Nairobi on 2 September 2014, the issue of Boko Haram was discussed extensively. More specifically, Council urged the countries of the region to take the necessary steps towards operationalizing the mechanisms agreed upon to address more effectively the threat posed by Boko Haram. Subsequently, a number of initiatives were taken by the countries of the region pursuant to the conclusions of the Paris Summit of 17 May 2014, which brought together the Heads of State of Benin, Chad, Cameroon, France, Niger, Nigeria and other stakeholders, as well as the ministerial-level meetings that took place in London and Washington on 12 June and 5 August 2014, respectively. It is important to note that the Paris Summit agreed on a number of steps aimed at enhancing regional cooperation and international action against the Boko Haram terrorist group, notably through coordinated border patrols; the establishment of an intelligence and fusion unit; the adoption of sanctions against Boko Haram, Ansaru, and their main leaders; as well as through support for marginalized areas and for their vulnerable populations. The London meeting reaffirmed the commitments made at the Paris Summit and welcomed the progress accomplished since then, particularly the signing in Yaoundé, on 9 June 2014, of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit (RIFU). The countries of the region pledged to contribute a battalion each to the MNJTF, while the partners committed to facilitate the early operationalization of the RIFU and offered training to the Nigerian and regional forces engaged in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups. The meeting recognized that, in addition to law enforcement, military and intelligence cooperation, security and stability can be achieved only through an approach that includes respect for human rights, alleviating poverty and creating jobs, strengthening the rule of law, improving education and protecting the rights of women and girls.

12. Council would further recall that, on 3 September 2014, the countries of the region convened their 3rd ministerial meeting in Abuja. That meeting welcomed the progress made in the operationalization of the RIFU, the efforts of the Nigerian Government in setting up a fund in order to alleviate the plight of the victims of the Boko Haram insurgency and the measures taken to strengthen the MNJTF. The meeting also underscored the need to effectively address the sources of funding for, and the supply of weapons to, Boko Haram. At their Extraordinary Summit, held in Niamey, on 7 October 2014, the Heads of State and Government of the LCBC Member States and Benin assessed the security situation and discussed a common strategy in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group. The Summit expressed its determination to reinforce the operational and intelligence capabilities of the countries of the region, as well as the coordination of the MNJTF. It decided to finalize the deployment of the contingents pledged by the LCBC Member States and Benin by 1 November 2014, and the establishment of the MNJTF Headquarters, by 20 November 2014. The 4th ministerial meeting of the LCBC Member States and Benin, which took place in Abuja, on 13 October 2014, committed to the implementation of the decisions of the Niamey Summit regarding the establishment of the MNJTF Headquarters and the deployment by the countries of the region of the pledged contingents, within their national borders. The meeting agreed on a draft

resolution to be forwarded to the AU and the UN Security Council for the latter to authorize the operationalization of the MNJTF, call for the provision of the required international support and request the UN Secretary-General to establish a Trust Fund for the Force. In a letter dated 17 October 2014, addressed to the Commissioner for Peace and Security, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Niger, Chair of the LCBC, formally submitted to the AU the conclusions of the ministerial meeting, for the necessary follow-up.

13. It was against this background that Council, at its 25 November 2014 meeting, expressed full support for the establishment and deployment of the MNJTF, as an appropriate framework for effectively neutralizing the Boko Haram terrorist group. It requested the Commission to undertake urgent consultations with the LCBC Member States and Benin and to avail the necessary expertise, in order to identify and agree on the practical steps that could facilitate the early provision of the required international support, as requested by the ministerial meeting of 13 October 2014, namely: (i) the adoption by the UN Security Council of a resolution authorizing the Member States of the LCBC and Benin to deploy the MNJTF for an initial period of 12 months; (ii) the establishment by the UN Secretary-General of a Trust Fund for the sustenance of the MNJTF operations; and (iii) the mobilization of the necessary international financial and logistical support. As a follow-up, on 1 December 2014, the Commissioner for Peace and Security wrote to the Foreign Minister of Niger to formally transmit the Council's communiqué to the LCBC Member States and Benin, reiterating the AU's support to the MNJTF and the overall efforts of the countries of the region, and proposing, as a way forward, the convening of a meeting of experts to identify the practical steps to be taken to facilitate the achievement of the objectives set by the Abuja ministerial meeting of 13 October 2014.

14. On 14 January 2015, the Government of Chad pledged active support in the fight against Boko Haram. Subsequently, the Chadian National Assembly authorized the Chadian armed and security forces to assist Cameroonian soldiers in the fight against Boko Haram terrorists. Since then, Chadian soldiers have been deployed in Northern Cameroon. In its presidential statement of 19 January 2015, the UN Security Council welcomed the vote by the Chadian National Assembly. The Security Council also took note of the decision of the LCBC Member States and Benin to operationalize the MNJTF, and urged the countries of the region to undertake further planning towards the sustainable, viable and effective operationalization of the MNJTF. It welcomed the assistance already being provided to the States in the region and encouraged bilateral and multilateral partners to increase their support. In my press release of 20 January 2015, I welcomed the decision taken by Chad.

15. At their 5th ministerial meeting, the countries of the region agreed on a set of practical security steps, notably the establishment of the Headquarters of the MNJTF in Ndjamen, the establishment of a secure communications network for the security forces operating in and around the Lake Chad Basin, and the finalization, as soon as possible, of the coordination and liaison cell to be established in Ndjamen. Furthermore, and as indicated above, the meeting requested me to submit a report on the regional and international efforts to combat Boko Haram, in order to enable Council authorize the deployment of the MNJTF. The meeting also requested the AU Commission to organize, in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, a meeting of experts, in early February 2015, to finalize the concept of operations for the MNJTF. At the time of finalizing this report, the Commission was taking the necessary steps for the convening of the said meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 5 to 7 February 2015. Other steps agreed upon include the convening of a donor's conference to mobilize resources for the MNJTF, an appeal to the international partners to support

the implementation of the LCBC strategy against Boko Haram, the increase of humanitarian assistance to the affected populations, and a request to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to expedite the ongoing process relating to the crimes against humanity committed by Boko Haram.

16. Furthermore, my Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, joined by the Permanent Representative of Niger to the AU and a Judge at the African Court on Human and People's Rights, undertook a solidarity visit to Abuja, from 7 to 12 December 2014. More specifically, the purpose of the visit was to echo the voices of the women of Nigeria and civil society organizations and support them in their efforts to bring to an end the ordeal of the girls kidnapped in Chibok, in April 2014, and other forms of gender-based violence; express solidarity with the Government of Nigeria in its efforts to neutralize the Boko Haram terrorist group; and enhance advocacy for the respect of women and children's rights, including through the effective implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children and the African Charter on the Rights of Women. The delegation met with a number of civil society and Government stakeholders, as well as with the ECOWAS Commission.

IV. AUTHORIZATION FOR THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE MNJTF

17. As indicated above, the Niamey ministerial meeting of 20 January 2015 requested Council to authorize the deployment of the MNJTF and mandate the Force. Such a decision by Council is a necessary first step in securing the adoption by the UN Security Council of a resolution authorizing the Member States of the LCBC and Benin to deploy the MNJTF and the establishment of appropriate support mechanisms, including a Trust Fund. Council will recall that this was the process followed with respect to previous and current AU peace support operations, undertaken with the consent and assistance of the UN, namely the African-led Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), the African-led Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), for which the UN, in addition to establishing a Trust Fund, also authorized the provision of a support package funded through assessed contributions.

18. Furthermore, it will be necessary to develop a concept of operation that would outline the strategic objectives of the MNJTF and address all relevant aspects of the planned operation, including command and control, the support concept, the rules of engagement, and guidelines on the protection of civilians that mainstream the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), which is a critical element for obtaining UN support for non-UN operations. The Commission has already initiated the necessary steps for the convening in Yaoundé, from 5 to 7 February 2015, of the technical experts meeting that would develop the concept of operation and other related documents.

19. While this process is underway, it is recommended that, in support of the efforts led by the LCBC Member States and Benin, Council authorize the deployment of the MNJTF, for an initial period of twelve months renewable at the request of the LCBC Member States and Benin. In line with the overall objective set by the countries of the region during their various meetings, as captured above, it is proposed that the MNJTF be mandated, within its Area of Operation (AoR) as will be determined in the concept of operation, to :

- i. create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the activities of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, in order to significantly reduce violence against civilians and other abuses, including sexual- and gender-based violence, in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and the UN HRDDP;
 - ii. facilitate the implementation of overall stabilization programmes by the LCBC Member States and Benin in the affected areas, including the full restoration of state authority and the return of IDPs and refugees; and
 - iii. facilitate, within the limit of its capabilities, humanitarian operations and the delivery of assistance to the affected populations.
20. Within the framework of the mandate outlined above and in its AoR, the MNJTF contingents deployed within their national territories, may carry out a number of tasks. These will include the following:
- i. conducting military operations to prevent the expansion of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups activities and eliminate their presence;
 - ii. facilitating operational coordination amongst the affected countries in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, including on the basis of the intelligence collected by the LCBC Member States and Benin and/or availed by external partners;
 - iii. encouraging and facilitate the conduct of joint/simultaneous/coordinated patrols and other types of operations at the borders of the affected countries;
 - iv. preventing all forms of transfer of arms and ammunition and other type of support to Boko Haram and other terrorist groups;
 - v. ensuring, within its capabilities, the protection of civilians under immediate threat, IDP and refugee camps, humanitarian workers and other civilian personnel;
 - vi. actively searching for, and freeing all abductees, including the young girls abducted in Chibok in April 2014;
 - vii. undertaking effective psychological operations to encourage defections from Boko Haram and other terrorist groups;
 - viii. supporting, as maybe appropriate, the initial implementation phase of strategies for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of disengaged fighters into their communities ;
 - ix. contributing to the improvement and institutionalization of civil-military coordination, including the provision, upon request, of escorts to humanitarian convoys;

- x. supporting regional efforts to arrest and bring to justice all those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity; and
- xi. ensuring the protection of the MNJTF personnel, facilities and equipment.

21. As indicated above, the countries of the region have each pledged one battalion to be part of the MNJTF. However, in view of the deterioration of the situation on the ground, the possibility of increasing the MNJTF strength should be left open, to provide the Member States of the LCBC and Benin with the flexibility they need to adjust their operational response to the dynamics of the situation on the ground. Accordingly, it is recommended that the countries of the region be authorized to increase the strength of the MNJTF up to 7,500.

22. The Yaoundé meeting of experts will work on the required details for the MNJTF to be able to operate effectively under the leadership and control of the LCBC Member States and Benin. This will include details on command and control arrangements, as well as coordination mechanisms with relevant national institutions, as well as with the AU and other stakeholders, whose role would mainly be to facilitate the mobilization of the necessary financial, logistical and political support, for the LCBC Member States and Benin. As directed by the Niamey ministerial meeting, the CONOPS should be flexible, so as to facilitate the provision, within the framework of the MNJTF, of timely support to bilateral and trilateral arrangement such as the one between Chad and Cameroon.

V. OBSERVATIONS

23. I am deeply concerned by the prevailing situation as a result of Boko Haram terrorist activities, including the recent escalation of violence witnessed on the ground. The continued attacks in northeastern Nigeria and the increasing attacks in the Lake Chad Basin, along the border with Chad and Cameroon, and in the northern provinces of that country, have the potential of destabilizing the entire region, with far reaching security and humanitarian consequences. No efforts should be spared, as part of the AU counter-terrorism agenda, to defeat this group.

24. Boko Haram's horrendous abuses, unspeakable cruelty, total disregard for human lives, and wanton destruction of property are unmatched. The abduction of the Chibok young girls, the attack in Baga and the involvement of children coerced to act as suicide bombers, as was reportedly the case in Potiskum, mass killings of civilians, hostage taking, sexual slavery and other horrendous acts, are cases in point.

25. I reiterate my strong condemnation of the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group and once again, express the AU's full solidarity with the people and Government of Nigeria, as well as the people and Governments of Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The people of the region have paid a heavy price to the scourge of terrorism. Their plight has to be urgently brought to an end.

26. I commend the countries of the region for their sustained efforts. I note with satisfaction the steps taken to fully operationalize the MNJTF and facilitate a timely exchange of intelligence among them. As underlined by Council, the MNJTF provides an adequate framework for effectively neutralizing Boko Haram and other terrorists groups active in the region. Accordingly, the task ahead for the AU and the rest of the international community is to help the LCBC Member States and Benin fully operationalize the MNJTF and the other related structures they have established. There is no

room for duplication of efforts or any parallel initiative. It is with this in mind that the proposals contained in paragraphs 19 to 22 of the present report are made. I recommend that Council endorse these proposals.

27. I pay tribute to Chad for responding positively to Cameroon's request for assistance, through the deployment of troops in the northern part of Cameroon. This is a clear display of solidarity and further illustration of Chad's continued commitment to the promotion of peace and security on the continent, as exemplified by its contribution to the liberation of northern Mali.

28. As repeatedly stressed by Council, the Boko Haram terrorist group activities are a serious threat not only to Nigeria and the region, but also to the entire continent. It is therefore critical that the African continent as a whole extend all the necessary support to the LCBC Member States and Benin, in keeping with the principles of African solidarity and indivisibility of peace and security on the continent, as provided for in the relevant AU instruments, including the Common African Defense and Security Policy of February 2003 and the AU Non-Aggression and Common African Defense Pact.

29. I call on the UN Security Council to adopt, in due course, a resolution authorizing the deployment of the MNJTF and requesting the Secretary-General to establish a Trust Fund, as requested by the Abuja ministerial meeting of 13 October 2014. I note with satisfaction the support already provided to the countries of the region by bilateral and multilateral partners. I urge them to stay the course and enhance their assistance, particularly in the areas of logistics, finance, equipment and intelligence. I call on other members of the international community to join the fight against the evil of terrorism in the region.

30. The urgency of humanitarian assistance to the affected populations and the countries hosting Nigerian refugees cannot be over emphasized. I call on the humanitarian agencies and the larger international community to pursue their support. Beyond the much needed security and military operations and the urgent provision of humanitarian assistance, national, regional and international efforts should also focus on the improvement of the livelihoods and education, job creation, protection of human rights, including that of women and girls, so as to address alienation and marginalization as conditions conducive to violent extremism and attempts to legitimize the recourse to armed violence, including terrorism.