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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
659TH MEETING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
16 FEBRUARY 2017

PSC/PR/COMM.(DCLIX)

COMMUNIQUE

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 659th meeting held on 16 February 2017, in an open session format, in accordance with Article 8 (10) of the PSC Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the PSC, on the theme: “The role of women in protecting lives in challenging security environments in Africa”, adopted the following decision:

Council:

1. **Takes note** of the presentation made by the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Madame Bineta Diop. Council **also takes note** of the presentations made by Brigadier General (Rtd) Riana Peneas, former Police Commander of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), two representatives of female peacekeepers serving in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), namely, Chief Superintendent of Police Patience Adegoke and Major Bupe Chanda, as well as Ms. Siphokazi Mnguni, a researcher at the Institute of Peace and Security Studies, at the Addis Ababa University. Council **further takes note** of the statements made by the representatives AU Member States and by the representative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as by the representatives of AU partners, other institutions and organizations;
2. **Welcomes** the progress being made in the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 and AU instruments on Women Peace and Security and commended AU Member States which have already adopted national action plans to implement the resolution and **encourages** those that have not yet done so, to also do the same;
3. **Commends** the female peacekeepers serving in various AU peace support operations and peacekeeping missions in Africa, for their sacrifices, exemplary role and high performance in particularly challenging security environments;
4. **Expresses deep concern** over the fact that, despite the existence of gender-sensitive policies adopted, so far, women and girls continue to be victims of sexual violence and other forms of abuses, including in zones in which AU peace support operations are deployed. In this regard, Council **stresses the need** for ensuring full protection of women and girls in countries affected by conflicts and crises. Council **underlines the need** for ensuring the zero tolerance on sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the need for imposition of stiff penalties against perpetrators of sexual violence, regardless of their status or rank;
5. **Underscores the importance** of enhancing women’s effective participation in decision-making, particularly, in the implementation of the peace and security agenda in the African continent, as well as the need for mainstreaming gender in AU peace operations, including, in particular, during the planning stages of those operations. In this regard, Council **welcomes** the training programmes being provided to peacekeepers with a view to equipping them with the required skills and knowledge, prior to their deployment. Council **also underscores** the importance of ensuring that all

special provisions for women serving in peace support operations and peacekeeping missions are made, including for their personal health and other hygienic needs;

6. **Stresses** that meaningful participation of women in the peace and security agenda is key to building sustainable peace and security in the continent. In this context, Council **underscores** the importance of inclusion of women as equal players at all levels in conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as in post-conflict reconstruction and development. Also in this context, Council **commends** the AU Commission for establishing a network of women mediators and **stresses the need** to ensure that they are effectively supported and utilized in AU peace efforts;

7. **Welcomes** the significant progress made towards the establishment of Child Protection Units in AU peace support operations and **calls** for more adequate support to be provided to them;

8. **Urges** all AU Member States to further strengthen their national infrastructures for peace, including in particular, the justice system and mechanisms for immediate and effective redress of reported cases of sexual abuse and violence against women and children. Council **also urges** AU Member States to create more opportunities for women and emphasized the importance of recruitment of more women into their national defense and security forces and to ensure that women are fully represented at all levels of decision-making;

9. **Requests** the AU Commission to take necessary steps to ensure a gender sensitive approach with regard to promotion opportunities in peace support operations and in peacekeeping missions. Council **also requests** the AU Commission, in consultation with the troop and police contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs) to AU peace support operations, provide sufficient numbers of medical personnel, including gynecologists, in those operations;

10. **Appeals** for more capacity building support to rural women working on peace and security issues in Africa, and **emphasizes the need** for exchanging of capacity building programmes from different countries and sharing best practices and knowledge;

11. **Requests** the AU Commission to expedite the finalization of the Continental Results Framework for Monitoring Progress and the AU Zero Tolerance Policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, in the implementation of Women Peace and Security Agenda for consideration by the Council, as soon as possible;

12. **Also requests** the AU Commission, through the Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, to provide quarterly briefings to the Council on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa and on her solidarity missions to closed sessions of the Council;

13. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.