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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
716TH MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
4 SEPTEMBER 2017

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), dedicated its 716th meeting held on 4 September 2017, to an Open Session on the theme: “Inaugural Launch of the of the Africa Amnesty Month for the Surrender and Collection of Illegally Owned Weapons Pursuant to Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec. 645 (XXIX) adopted during the 29th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union”.

Council and participants took note of the opening statement by H.E. Ambassador Mmamosadinyana Molefe in her capacity as the PSC Chairperson for the month of September 2017, in which she announced the Launch, by the PSC, of the Africa Amnesty Month- September 2017. They also took note of the statement of H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security read on his behalf by the Acting Director for Peace and Security, Dr Admore Mupoki Kambudzi. They further took note of the presentations made by Mr. Desire Assogbavi, the Director of Plan International, and Dr Nelson Alusala, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Security Studies in Addis Ababa. They also took note of the statements made by the representatives of AU Member States and those made by the representatives of AU partners and international organizations.

Council and participants recalled Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec. 645(XXIX) on the Inaugural Report of the PSC on the Implementation of the AU Master Roadmap on Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020, in which the Assembly declared the month of September each year, starting from 2017 till 2020, as “Africa Amnesty Month” for the surrender and collection of illegally owned weapons/arms, in line with the African and international best practices. They also recalled Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec.630 (XXVIII) by which the Assembly endorsed the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020, as well as the Press Statement of the PSC, PSC/PR/BR.(DCXCIII) adopted at its 693rd meeting, open session held on 14 June 2017.

Council and participants noted that illegal possession of weapons by non-state actors, including individuals, contributes to insecurity and violence in various parts of Africa, thereby undermining social cohesion, public security, socio-economic activities and the proper functioning of states institutions. In this regard, they stressed the importance of taking effective steps to recover all illegally owned weapons/arms, with a view to address the threat they pose to peace, security and stability in the continent.

Council and participants urged Members States to collect and destroy all excess and obsolete small arms and light weapons, as well as to ensure effective management and protection of their weapons depots and stockpiles, with a view to ensuring that the weapons will not fall into illegal possession and use by non-state actors.

Council and Participants underlined that the Assembly initiative to launch the Africa Amnesty Month- September 2017 affords an exceptional window of opportunity for all non-state

actors illegally possessing weapons/arms to freely and in confidence surrender them to designated competent government agencies.

Council and participants encouraged Member States to provide all necessary assurances and protection to all persons who freely surrender their illegally-owned weapons as a way of building confidence and trust to those people illegally possessing weapons, who may otherwise be initially reluctant to surrender them to the relevant authorities. In this regard, they emphasized that the Launch of this Amnesty Month and its implementation is a complementary effort aimed at further strengthening the various amnesty processes that may already be underway in some Member States.

Council and participants commended all Member States which have signed, ratified and are already implementing all relevant regional agreements, AU, as well as international instruments relating to disarmament, particularly the Arms Trade Treaty, which, if adhered to, will significantly contribute towards the realization of the goal of silencing the guns in Africa by the year 2020. In this context, they urged all Member States, which have not yet done so, to also do the same. In the same context, Council urged Member States to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Council and participants underlined the need for Member States to take effective measures to holistically address all root causes of violent conflicts, including the drivers of the demand for and sources of illicit supply of weapons/arms and ammunition.

At the onset of the Africa Amnesty Month- September 2017, Council encouraged Member States to actively engage in public awareness campaigns, including through their national media, in order to effectively educate the people about the Africa Amnesty Month with a view to ensuring their full cooperation and support, as well as success of the process.

Council and participants urged Member States to submit reports to Council, through the AU Commission, on the actions taken in implementing the Africa Amnesty Month, by November/December 2017. They called on the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution to equally submit their reports on actions taken on this matter, by the same deadline.

Council and participants commended all international and bilateral partners for their continued support to disarmament and arms control programs in some Member States. They also commended the efforts of the relevant continental think tanks and research institutions, including the Regional Centre for Small Arms (RECSA), which are assisting Member States to effectively address the scourge of illicit proliferation and trade of small arms and light weapons.

Council and participants also called on the African Union Commission, in particular the Peace and Security Department, to engage the RECs/RM, with a view to ensure that Member States are fully aware of the subsequently expected outcomes in undertaking this annual voluntary disarmament and to engage Civil Society and non-governmental organization to play an active and supportive role during Africa Amnesty Month to ensure that it is fully publicized and reaches the intended recipients for its success.

Council requested the Commission to organize a panel of experts discussion forum, under the aegis of the PSC, by end of September/October 2017, focusing on arms control and disarmament in Africa, as one of the methods of giving publicity to, and raising public awareness for the Africa Amnesty Month.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.