

Engagement with the UNHCR on post- Malabo Extraordinary Summit on Humanitarian Action

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Tomorrow (29 September) the PSC is expected to convene its 1176th session on humanitarian action with an engagement with the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the post-Malabo Extraordinary Summit.

Following opening remarks by Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the AU and the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of September 2023, Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHS), is expected to make a presentation. The Chairperson of the PRC Subcommittee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons is also expected to deliver a presentation to be followed by statements from representatives of UNHCR; the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA); the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) and Amani Africa Media and Research Services.

On 18 May 2023, the PSC held an open session on humanitarian action in Africa for its 1155th meeting where it expressed deep concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in various African regions, including Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Horn of Africa, Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, and Southern Africa. The PSC had also expressed concern about dwindling resources for effective responses and called for increased financial mobilization while commending Member states and RECs/RMs for their humanitarian assistance efforts and aiding affected

populations. The issue of humanitarian access was also discussed, with the PSC calling on belligerent parties to adhere strictly to international humanitarian and human rights laws, ensure humanitarian access, and safeguard the security of aid agencies. The PSC also welcomed the adoption of the African Humanitarian Agency's Statute in 2023, requesting its prompt operationalization and resource mobilization.

The humanitarian situation in Africa has increasingly become dire, with 30 million people in the continent being internally displaced persons, refugees or asylum-seekers, according to UNHCR figures. This dire situation is driven by a complex combination of factors, including violent conflicts, terrorism, inter-communal violence, unconstitutional changes of government, famine, and the increasing impact of climate change-related phenomena like crop failures, droughts, floods, landslides, and cyclones, forcing millions of people to flee their homes and livelihoods. Only recently, the earthquake in Morocco and the devastating floods in Libya have affected and claimed the lives of thousands of people. Faced with such reality, Africa's prosperity and development continue to be threatened and realization of the aspirations of Agenda 2063 remain challenged.

It is expected that the central focus of tomorrow's session will be to review the implementation of the outcomes of the 15th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in May 2022, particularly regarding funding, institutional cooperation, and the 10-year AU Humanitarian Agenda.

Reflecting the importance of the outcomes of the humanitarian summit, during the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, as a decision on the report on the activities of the PSC and the state of peace and security in Africa, the Assembly had *"urged the PSC to prioritize the implementation of the outcomes of the 15th Extraordinary African Union*

Humanitarian Summit and Pledging held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in May 2022, to robustly respond to the pressing twin security issues of Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG) and the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism". At the Humanitarian Summit, AU Member States agreed to address common challenges and undertake actions towards the six declarations they made: on humanitarian challenges; on climate change, disasters and forced displacement in Africa; on food security and nutrition in humanitarian situations in Africa; on COVID-19 and health challenges in the humanitarian space in Africa; on post conflict reconstruction and development for refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa; and on resource mobilization and financing for humanitarian action in Africa.

One of the outcomes of the Malabo Summit, with its Statute adopted during 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in February 2023, was the creation of the African Humanitarian Agency (AfHA). Member States declared to allocate over USD176million to the AfHA to enable it to execute its strategic mandate. However, the collection of the entire amount pledged has yet to be effected. It is to be recalled that the PSC during its 1155th meeting on 18 May 2023 also *"underlined the need for Member States to generously contribute to the AU Special Emergencies' Fund and encouraged all Member States and partners who pledged support during the AU Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference, held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea from 25 to 28 May 2022 to expeditiously redeem their pledges."*

Another follow up that could be discussed during the 1176th session is the status of developing the Plan of Action for implementing the outcomes of the Humanitarian Summit, which is to be prepared by the AU Commission. Aside from that, the PSC may also recall the 2019 Global Refugee Forum held in Geneva, when the AU, its Member States, the AU Commission as well as Regional Communities made wide-ranging pledges. In addition to

following up on the implementation of these pledges, the PSC could urge Member States and the AU Commission to make a Pan-African pledge that is centered in the outcomes of the Malabo Declaration, at the second edition of the Global Refugee Forum expected to take place in December 2023, in Geneva.

Further to that, tomorrow's briefing also presents an opportunity for the PSC to reflect on the various humanitarian challenges in the continent and to discuss ways forward for ensuring effective response and sustainable solutions to Africa's growing humanitarian needs, despite the existing difficulties. To that end, the PSC's discussion could bring the needed attention to the existing situations across the continent. One such instance is the situation in Sudan. In the past five months alone, the deadly conflict in Sudan that erupted on 11 April 2023 has forced over 3.3 million people to flee their homes to other parts of Sudan or neighboring countries such as Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia, CAR, and Egypt. However, the PSC's attention towards Sudan has been considerably low. Since April 2023, there were only two solely Sudan-focused sessions (1149th meeting on 16 April and 1156th meeting on 27 May). In addition, there have been three sessions where the PSC considered the situation in Sudan as part of its meetings with broader focus. For instance, on 26 April, the PSC held an informal consultation with countries in political transition, with Sudan being one of the four countries of concern. For its 1154th session on 16 May, the situation in Sudan was one of the two agenda items tabled for the consideration of the PSC. During the PSC's 1158th session on 15 June, it received updated briefings on the situation in the Horn of Africa, Sudan forming one of the four contexts discussed. Further neglect of the situation in Sudan, which includes the atrocities and severe humanitarian crisis in reported in places such as Darfur, would not only be a missed opportunity for the PSC to demonstrate leadership in resolving the crisis, but also a failure to fulfill its main

responsibilities of ensuring peace and security in the continent.

The expected outcome of the session is a Communiqué. The PSC may express deep concern over the escalating rate of humanitarian need in the continent as compared to the constraints and decline in humanitarian action. It may emphasize that conflicts and instability form the major factor that create and facilitate humanitarian suffering the continent and as such, call on all relevant actors to expend efforts towards realization of AU's Roadmap for Silencing the Guns with its overarching objective of achieving a secure and peaceful Africa. Underscoring the critical role it is envisioned to play towards better coordinating humanitarian assistance in the continent, the PSC may also urge Member States to fulfil their pledges towards funding the AfHA. It may further urge the PRC sub-committees on structures and Finance as well as the AU Commission to expedite the operationalization of the AfHA. The PSC may also appeal to international partners to remain committed and to continue their humanitarian support to affected communities across the continent. It may also express alarm over the escalating violations of international humanitarian law, including deliberate attacks against civilians and obstacles to humanitarian access, attacks against public infrastructure and campsites hosting displaced populations and other violations that require accountability and proper action. Noting deteriorating humanitarian situations in conflict affected member states such as Sudan, the PSC may call on partners and all relevant actors to scale up support. It may further emphasize the need for strengthened engagement in humanitarian diplomacy and urge relevant civil society actors to fortify efforts in this respect.