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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1189TH MEETING

1 DECEMBER 2023
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.1189 (2023)

COMMUNIQUÉ



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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 1189th meeting held on 1 December 2023 on: (a) Private Military Companies and the Review of the 1977 Convention on Mercenarism; and (b) the outcomes of the 3rd Edition of the Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence-2023 Luanda Biennale.

The Peace and Security Council,

Recalling its previous pronouncements on Private Military Companies (PMCs) and Mercenarism in the context of conflict situations in Africa, as well as the decisions of the AU / Organization of African Unity policy organs;

In particular refers to the OAU Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa, adopted in Libreville, Gabon, on 3 July 1977; and **reaffirming** that the Convention remains a critical normative tool for preventing and countering mercenarism and related transnational security threats affecting the African Continent;

Also recalling the United Nations International Conventions Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries;

Noting the introductory remarks by H.E. Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the AU and the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) for December 2023; and the briefing by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security;

Reaffirming its commitment to respect the sovereignty and independence of Member States; and

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

a) On Private Military Companies and Mercenarism in Africa:

1. **Expresses deep concern** over the proliferation of mercenaries and irregular private military and security companies operating in the Continent; as well as the growing use of these companies by some Member States to augment their national security;
2. **Also expresses concern** over the grave threat posed by mercenaries to the realization of the AU peace and security agenda, particularly the successful implementation of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by the Year 2030, in order to create conducive conditions for the AU Agenda 2063;
3. **Strongly condemns** the criminal activities of irregular private military and security companies operating in Africa, especially as it relates to the violations of human rights and illegal exploitation of natural resources of the Member States, which adversely affect human security;
4. **While recognizing** the sovereign prerogatives and legitimate rights of Member States to choose the means of security response to crisis situations, in pursuit of their national security agenda; **stresses** the fundamental imperative for the concerned Member States to regulate such irregular private military and security companies and to fully comply with international law, as well as international norms and conventions;

5. **Requests** the Commission working in close collaboration with national, regional and international actors to develop and effectively implement robust counter-measures and legal frameworks against the illegal exploitation of the Continent's natural resources and other illegal activities of the irregular private military and security companies in Africa; and in the same context, **calls on** multinational corporations operating on the Continent to abide by national, regional and continental norms and regulations in their operations and desist from using irregular private military and security companies which often aggravate insecurity and violate human rights and the sovereignty of Member States;
6. **Commends** the Commission for the steps it has taken so far to implement the 2019 Decision of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security to review the OAU/AU Convention on the Elimination of Mercenaries in Africa; in this regard, **directs** the Military Staff Committee to provide the necessary technical support to this process;
7. **Looks forward** to the prompt finalization of the review of the 1977 OAU Convention for Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa and in this context, **underscores** the importance of incorporating accountability and regulation of irregular private military and security companies, including robust enforcement mechanisms beyond the domestic fulfilment of treaty obligations; as well as a multilayered response that includes complementary enforcement mechanisms at the domestic and regional levels; and **equally emphasizes** the need to ensure that the review process should be supported by multiple stakeholders including national actors, and civil society organizations to ensure universal ownership; and further, the review process should take care, to distinguish between Mercenaries and legitimate and regular Private Military Security Companies, which in many cases have played a complementary and positive role to peace and security on the continent;
8. **Underlines** the need to adopt an approach that addresses the root causes and drivers of recruitment of irregular military and private security personnel by some Member States as a strategic approach towards addressing the scourge of mercenarism and related challenges; and **emphasizes** the need to build the capacity of Member States so as to be able to effectively control and regulate private security activity, and in this regard, underscores the need to build strong and professional armies infused with the right ideology of patriotism, nationalism and Pan Africanism;
9. **Further calls upon** Member States to further enhance collaboration and mutual assistance in combating the recruitment, including the predatory recruitment, and use of mercenaries;
10. **Encourages** Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) to jointly undertake kinetic responses in tackling non-state armed groups, irregular militaries and insurgencies; in this regard, **underlines the essence** of fast tracking the operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF), so that it can be readily deployed, both, as a preventive and management tool for tackling security challenges;
11. **Requests** the Commission to enhance its institutional collaboration with the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services in Africa (CISSA) and the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries to deepen investigation and conduct regular assessments on all irregular private military and security companies and Mercenaries- related activities operating on the Continent with a view to providing regional specific recommendations to all relevant Policy organs including the African Court on Human and people rights for consideration;

12. **Decides** that the AU Commission should establish a task group to fast track the review of the 1997 OAU Convention and to conduct regular monitoring, analysis of the activities of irregular private military and security companies, and mercenaries in Africa and report annually to Council;
13. **Welcomes** the efforts by the AU Commission to revitalize the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes for enhanced intelligence sharing and cooperation as an integral part of the fight against foreign fighters, non-state armed groups and criminal gangs;
14. **Encourages** replication of ad hoc regional security initiatives such as the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit (RIFU) that bolster collaboration within regions on specific security threats, because of their successes; and
15. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.

b) On the Outcomes of the 3rd Edition of the Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence-2023 Luanda Biennale:

1. **Welcomes** the presentation by H.E. Ambassador Francisco Jose Da Cruz, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Angola to the AU, on the outcomes of the 3rd Edition of the Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence-2023 Luanda Biennale held on 22 to 24 November 2023;
2. **Also welcomes** the regular inter-generational dialogue forums, as platforms for ensuring continuous interaction between political leaders and young people; including the implementation of actions to ensure meaningful and active participation of young people in decision-making processes, to ensure that their voices are not only heard but also integrated into public and private policies and strategies;
3. **Expresses appreciation** to His Excellency, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and AU Champion for Peace and Reconciliation, for his personal commitment towards the promotion of the culture of Peace and his efforts to successfully implement and consolidate the peace, security, governance and development agenda of the continent;
4. **Commends** the Government of the Republic of Angola for the successful hosting of the 3rd Edition of the Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence-2023 “Luanda Biennial” and the previous editions of the Luanda Biennale, and looks forward to the organization of the 4th Edition of the Luanda Biennial;
5. **Also commends** the Commission under the leadership of H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the strategic partners for contributing to the successful organization of the 3rd Edition of the Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence-2023 Luanda Biennale and the previous editions of the Forum;
6. **Also expresses** its appreciation for the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in the Forum, which facilitates the successful implementation and consolidation of peace, security, governance and development agenda in the continent;
7. **Encourages** Member States to overhaul education systems, prioritizing the training and empowerment of young people to better understand political processes and play more significant roles in society;

8. **Renews** the call for digital inclusion in communities, especially in rural areas, promoting equal access to technology for boys and girls and strengthening public policies for gender equality; also **encourages** public-private partnerships to promote access to inclusive digital technologies; and **underscores** the need for expansion of the culture of peace and efficient use of digital technologies as well as the need for effective alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly, Goal 5 on access to technology;
9. **Urges** the popularization of scientific research centres and resilience programmes to deal with climate change; and the need to work with UNESCO to define an Action Plan aimed at promoting education, defending science, and disseminating culture and art to foster a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence;
10. **Underscores the need** to ensure the alignment of women's empowerment actions in conflict resolution, in compliance with the African Bill of Rights and UN Resolution 1325; and in this regard, **calls** for the formulation of conflict resolution strategies based on African experience and vision, based on increasing the number of women in conflict prevention and resolution missions;
11. **Also calls** for development of policies and programmes that encourage innovative initiatives led by young people, including investments in research, funding, and support to turn ideas into practical solutions;
12. **Requests** the Commission and other strategic partners to continue collaborating with the Government of the Republic of Angola in the successful organization of future editions of the Forum; and
13. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.

2023-12-01

Communiqué of the 1189th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held on 1 December 2023 on the Briefing on (a) Private Military Companies and the Review of the 1977 Convention on Mercenarism and (b) outcomes of the 3rd Edition of the Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence - 2023 Luanda Biennale.

Peace and Security Council

African Union Commission

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