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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
714TH MEETING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
29 AUGUST 2017

PSC/PR/BR. (DCCXIV)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), devoted its 714th meeting held on 29 August 2017, to a briefing on the situation in South Sudan.

Council took note of the statement of the Commissioner for Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui, read on his behalf by the Acting Director for Peace and Security, Dr. Admore Mupoki Kambudzi. Council also took note of the presentations made by the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for South Sudan and Head of the AU Mission in South Sudan, Ambassador Joram Mukama Biswaro and the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) for South Sudan and Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Mr. David Shearer. Council further took note of the briefing made by the Deputy Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), Ambassador General Augustino Njoroge, as well as statements made by Ambassador James Morgan, Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Sudan to the AU; Ambassador Wahide Belay, Permanent Representative of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in its capacity as the Chair of GAD, the Special Envoy of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to South Sudan, Ambassador Ismail Wais and by the representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt in its capacity as an African member of the United Nations Security Council (A3).

Council recalled all AU Assembly decisions, previous PSC communiqués and press statements on the situation in South Sudan, particularly, Communiqué PSC/BR/COMM. (DCLXVII) adopted at its 667th meeting held on 17 March 2017.

Council noted with deep concern the slow pace of implementation of the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Crisis in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS). In this regard, Council urged the leadership of South Sudan and all the other political actors to place the interests of the country and its people above all else and to scrupulously implement the Agreement in its letter and spirit, in order to restore lasting peace in the country. Council further emphasized that the attainment of durable peace in South Sudan would enable the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) and the people of South Sudan to focus their efforts on advancing socio-economic development, taking advantage of the vast natural resources endowment in the country.

Council expressed serious concern that, despite the commendable unilateral declaration of ceasefire by President Salva Kiir Mayardit, on 22 May 2017, fighting still continues in some parts of the country which is aggravating the already dire humanitarian situation, including internal displacement of the population, while others are compelled to become refugees in neighboring countries.

Council reiterated its conviction that there can be no military solution to the current crisis in South Sudan. Council urged all parties to the crisis including non-state armed groups to immediately cease hostilities and fully comply with the provisions in the ARCSS regarding the ceasefire.

Council strongly condemned all attacks that continue to be perpetrated against peacekeepers and humanitarian aid workers and demanded the parties to immediately desist from such heinous acts. Council further condemned the continued abuses of human rights, particularly sexual violence against women and girls. In this regard, Council called for the perpetrators of these violations to be held accountable for their actions.

Council expressed gratitude to all Member States hosting refugees from South Sudan and urged the larger international community to assist these Member States in meeting the needs of the refugees and provide humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced population in South Sudan. Within this context, Council urged all parties to the conflict to create conditions conducive for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the population in need, including guaranteeing the safety and security of humanitarian aid agencies.

Council further reiterated the need for a genuine, inclusive, transparent and credible national dialogue as the only viable approach to assure the ordinary citizens of South Sudan, a platform to address national concerns and the root causes of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Council commended the TGoNU for the release of 30 political detainees, and urged it to take further steps to release all remaining detainees as a confidence building measure in the National Dialogue.

Council reiterated the AU's full support to the efforts of IGAD and took note of the progress made in the implementation of the decision of the 31st Extraordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government on South Sudan held on 12 June 2017 on the convening of the High Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) including the efforts of the IGAD Special Envoy to South Sudan, Ambassador Ismail Wais for steering the revitalization process for the full implementation of the ARCSS. Council also took note of the completion of the pre-convening phase and looks forward to the convening of the HRLF in September 2017 and the implementation phase from October 2017.

Council welcomed the first round of deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) including the Rwandan troop contingent and reiterated its appeal for its accelerated as well as full deployment in line with UN Security Council resolution 2304 of 12 August 2016. Furthermore, Council commended the TGoNU and UNMISS for having amicably addressed the misunderstanding which arose during the first round of deployment of the RPF and encouraged the two sides together with Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) to continuously engage with a view to resolving outstanding issues related to the deployment of the RPF. In this context, Council commended the RPF TCCs that have already started the process of deployment of their contingents and took note of the intention of other RPF TCCs to deploy their contingents soon.

Council hailed the sustained efforts of the IGAD, especially its Chair, Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn, of Ethiopia ; the AU, particularly through the High Representative for South Sudan former President Omar Alpha Konare, the Chairperson of the JMEC former President Festus Mogae, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for South

Sudan, Ambassador Joram Mukama Biswaro for their relentless efforts in facilitating the search for an early end to the current crisis in South Sudan. Council also acknowledged the important role played by UNMISS in finding the solution to the crisis in South Sudan. Council encourages all the respective actors to persevere in discharging their respective mandates.

In this context, Council underscored the importance of complementarity and coordination of efforts, as well as the importance of avoiding mixed messages to the parties to the conflict in South Sudan. Council stressed the need to put in place mechanisms for promoting such complementarity and coordination, with a view to not only preventing forum shopping, but also ensuring that all actors speak with one voice. In this regard, Council welcomed JMEC's One Voice Initiative and called on all concerned actors to fully support it in an effort towards restoring peace in South Sudan.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.