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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF COMMUNIQUÉ PSC/AHG/COMM.2(CDLXXXIV) ON THE BOKO HARAM TERRORIST GROUP
AND ON OTHER RELATED INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted in pursuance of communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM.2(CDLXXXIV) on the regional and international efforts to combat the Boko Haram terrorist group adopted by the 484th meeting of Council, held on 29 January 2015, at the level of Heads of State and Government. In that communiqué, Council requested me to provide monthly updates on the implementation of the decisions contained therein.

2. The report provides an overview of the evolution of the situation since the last meeting of Council on this issue, as well as an update on follow-up steps taken by the Commission towards the implementation of communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM.2(CDLXXXIV). It concludes with observations and recommendations on the way forward.

II. EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND

3. During the period under review, the Boko Haram terrorist group continued to carry out attacks targeting both civilians and the defense and security forces in Nigeria and Cameroon. The group also carried out attacks in Chad and Niger, in a new pattern indicating an expansion of its activities.

4. On 1 February 2015, Boko Haram attacked the town of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. Although, the attack was repulsed, it displaced many people. The same day, a suspected Boko Haram suicide bomber killed eight people at the residence of a politician in Potiskum, while another suicide bomber killed five people outside a mosque in Gombe, the capital city of the Gombe State. On 2 February, a female suicide bomber attacked an election rally organized by the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the city of Gombe, killing at least one civilian and injuring eighteen others. In another incident, the group attacked the town of Mbuta, 15 miles northeast of Maiduguri, killing 8 people and injuring dozens. Another dozen people were killed in a suicide blast at Biu, 100 miles southwest of Maiduguri.

5. On 14 February 2015, Boko Haram attacked the town of Gombe. The attack was repelled by the Nigerian army. The following day, a suicide bomber killed sixteen people and wounded thirty civilians in the city of Damaturu, in Yobe State. Boko Haram continued its deadly attacks on 20 February 2015, when it killed twenty one people in the town of Chibok and thirteen others in surrounding villages in Borno State. On 22 February 2015, a suicide attack took place in Potiskum, killing five people and wounding dozens in a market. On 24 February 2015, another attack took place at a bus station, in the same town, killing twenty seven people.

6. Boko Haram also carried out attacks in neighboring countries. On 4 February 2015, the group raided the town of Fotokol, in northern Cameroon. On 6 February 2015, Boko Haram attacked the towns of Bosso and Diffa, in Niger. This attack, which was the first of its kind in Niger, was repelled with the support of the Chadian army. On 8 February 2015, Boko Haram attacked the town of Kerawa, in Cameroon, and on 9 February 2015, it bombed the town of Diffa, killing five people, while also carrying out attacks in Cameroon, where it kidnapped a bus full of passengers, twelve of whom were executed subsequently. On 11 February 2015, two female suicide bombers attacked the town of Diffa, but there were no reported casualties. At least one hundred and sixty people suspected to have links with Boko Haram were arrested in Niger. On 14 February 2015, an estimated thirty Boko Haram fighters crossed Lake Chad in four motorboats and attacked the village of Ngouboua, in Chad. This was the first attack in Chad by the group.

7. Meanwhile, Nigeria and the other countries of the region stepped up their efforts against Boko Haram. On 4 February 2015, the Chadian army regained control of the border town of Gamboru Ngala, in Borno State. On 10 February 2015, Niger's Parliament unanimously approved sending troops to be part of the regional offensive against Boko Haram. On 12 February 2015, the allied forces led by Nigeria and supported by Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, carried out an operation in the Sambisa Forest in Borno State, a stronghold of Boko Haram, where they dislodged many of the groups' fighters. On 16 February 2015, Nigeria regained control of the town of Monguno from Boko Haram and, on 21 February 2015, it liberated the town of Baga, which had been captured by Boko Haram on 3 January 2015. On 24 February 2015, the Chadian army attacked Boko Haram fighters near the town of Garambu, close to the border between Nigeria and Cameroon.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MNJTF CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS AND OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS

8. At its above mentioned meeting, Council authorized the deployment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), for an initial period of twelve months renewable and for a strength that could go up to 7,500 military and other personnel, to carry out the following mandate :

- (i) create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the activities of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, in order to significantly reduce violence against civilians and other abuses, including sexual- and gender-based violence, in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (UNHRDDP);
- (ii) facilitate the implementation of overall stabilization programmes by the Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Benin in the affected areas, including the full restoration of State authority and the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees; and

- (iii) facilitate, within the limit of its capabilities, humanitarian operations and the delivery of assistance to the affected populations.

9. Council further decided that, within the framework of the mandate outlined above, the MNJTF contingents shall carry out a number of tasks. These include conducting military operations to prevent the expansion of Boko Haram and activities of other terrorist groups, and eliminate their presence; facilitating operational coordination amongst the affected countries in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups; encouraging and facilitating the conduct of joint/simultaneous/coordinated patrols and other types of operations along the borders of the affected countries; ensuring, within its capabilities, the protection of civilians under immediate threat, IDP and refugee camps, humanitarian workers and other civilian personnel; actively searching for, and freeing, all abductees; supporting, as may be appropriate, the initial implementation phase of strategies for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of disengaged fighters into their communities; contributing to the improvement and institutionalization of civil-military coordination; supporting regional efforts to arrest and bring to justice all those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity; and ensuring the protection of the MNJTF personnel, facilities and equipment.

10. In its communiqué referred to above, Council also welcomed the steps taken by the Commission, in response to the request made by the Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Benin at the Niamey ministerial meeting of 20 January 2015, to convene a meeting of experts, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, to finalize the concept of operation (CONOPS) for the MNJTF and other related documents. The meeting of experts took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 5 to 7 February 2015. It brought together experts from the LCBC Member States and Benin, the AU, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the UN, the European Union (EU), as well as experts from France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

11. The experts developed and adopted the MNJTF CONOPS, which articulates as follows the strategic end state of the planned operation: elimination of the presence and influence of Boko Haram; reestablishment of the necessary security conditions for the concerned countries to fully exercise their authority over the affected areas and ensure the protection of the affected population, property and livelihood; and enhancement of operational coordination to enable the LCBC Member States to implement overall stabilization programs. The CONOPS defines the specific objectives of each of the components of the MNJTF, namely the military, police and civilian components. The achievement of these objectives is based on a number of assumptions, including the endorsement of the operation by the UN Security Council, the provision by Member States and partners of the necessary support, the fulfillment by the LCBC Member States and Benin of their pledged capacities for the MNJTF, the existence of a political consensus at all levels on the deployment of the MNJTF, and the support of the local populations.

12. The CONOPS identifies specific tasks to be undertaken by the MNJTF, within the framework of those mandated by Council. These cover a number of areas, including

intelligence, human rights, information and media. The CONOPS also deals with cross-cutting issues, including implementation of the UNHRDDP, humanitarian liaison, protection of civilians, gender, women, peace and security, and conduct and discipline.

13. The Area of Operation (AoO) for the MNJTF encompasses various regions in the affected countries, within which the MNJTF contingents shall operate freely. In the event that Boko Haram commences operations outside of this AoO, the Force Commander shall seek further authorization from the LCBC Member States to expand the initial AoO. An Area of Interest (Aoi), larger than the AoO, has also been defined. In executing the CONOPS, the MNJTF will operate in coordination with the defense and security forces of the LCBC Member States and Benin. The execution process involves several phases, most notably deployment, conduct of offensive operations, stabilization and drawdown.

14. The Mission Support Concept is premised on the provision of integrated services to the MNJTF, including administration and finance, communication and information system, equipment, logistics, medical, infrastructure, strategic lift and other support, as required for the achievement of its mandate. The LCBC Member States and Benin will extend the necessary support to the MNJTF, through a Mission Support Team (MST) established at the Headquarters of the Force. Furthermore, the Commission and the LCBC will establish a strategic cell responsible for the coordination and management of additional support to the MNJTF.

15. A number of structures are envisaged with respect to command, control and coordination. These include a Support Group, acting as a consultative body, and a Joint Coordination Mechanism mandated to harmonize the efforts of the AU, the LCBC Member States and Benin, as well as those of partners, and chaired by the political representative for the operation, who shall be appointed in consultation with the AU. The AU Commission will assist the LCBC towards the operationalization of the strategic headquarters for the MNJTF. It was agreed that the operational Headquarters of the MNJTF be established in N'Djamena, Chad, and that the said Headquarters be staffed by personnel from the LCBC Member States and Benin. The HQs will comprise liaison officers from relevant bilateral and international partners, as may be required. The MNJTF will operate under a central command and control structure of the LCBC Member States and Benin under the authority of a Force Commander. The appointment of the Force Commander shall be done on a rotational basis, amongst the contributing states.

16. During the Yaoundé meeting, the LCBC Member States and Benin pledged up to 8 700 military, police and personnel. The composition of the Force needs to be organized in such a manner that the MNJTF comprises the appropriate capabilities both in terms of combat support (such as artillery and close air support) and combat service support (mainly logistical and other service support elements). Furthermore, considering the high intensity of the engagements expected of the units on the ground, the MNJTF will only be able to sustain its operations and create a favorable power balance against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, if it can be supported by the required force enablers and multipliers, which are not included in the current pledges. There is therefore need to consider increasing the authorized strength as the situation

on the ground is evolving rapidly, taking advantage of the strong commitment shown by the LCBC Member States and Benin to provide troops.

17. As agreed during the Yaoundé meeting, a follow-up planning meeting was held in Ndjamena from 23 to 27 February 2015, to develop the operational level CONOPS, with the view to articulating the overall political and strategic objectives, set in Yaoundé, in more concrete actions and benchmarks towards the attainment of the overall End State. The operational CONOPS addresses issues relating to the exact composition of the MNJTF Headquarters and components, force generation, the operational sectors that constitute the AoO, the sequencing of the operations on the ground, as well as to the mechanisms for coordination, cooperation and liaison with relevant national and international actors operating in MNJTF AoO.

IV. RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

18. During the period under review, there have been a number of international developments relating to the issue at hand. The threat posed by Boko Haram was extensively discussed during the 24th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Addis Ababa, on 30 and 31 January 2015. The Assembly adopted a Declaration of Support to the LCBC countries and Benin in the Fight Against Boko Haram [Assembly/AU/Decl.3.(XXIV)]. In that Declaration, the Assembly appealed to all Member States and other international stakeholders, including the UN, to support the efforts of the region to establish an appropriate legal framework to govern cross-border military operations against Boko Haram.

19. The UN Security Council also made a number of pronouncements on the situation during the period under review. On 2 February 2015, the Security Council issued a press statement in which its members condemned in the strongest terms the continued escalation of attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists, including on 1 February 2015 in Maiduguri, as well as the increasing attacks in the Lake Chad Basin region, including against the Chadian army contingent deployed to fight Boko Haram in Cameroon, on 29 and 30 January 2015 near the border town of Fotokol. Recalling their presidential statement of 19 January 2015, the members of the Security Council reiterated their deep concern that the activities of Boko Haram are undermining the peace and stability of the West and Central African region. They urged the region to enhance regional military operations and coordination to more effectively and immediately combat Boko Haram.

20. On 5 February 2015, the Security Council issued another press statement in which its members condemned in the strongest terms the continued escalation of attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists, including on 3 February 2015 alongside the border between Cameroon and Nigeria, against the Chadian army contingent deployed to fight Boko Haram in Cameroon and Nigeria, and against the civilian population and Cameroonian troops in Fotokol on 4 February 2015. The members of the Security Council commended the Chadian army's swift assistance in the fight against Boko Haram. They urged the region to enhance regional military operations and coordination to more effectively and immediately combat Boko Haram. In this

regard, the members of the Security Council welcomed the convening of the Yaoundé meeting of experts to finalize the CONOPS for the MNJTF and other related documents.

21. On 13 February 2015, the members of the Security Council issued another press statement condemning in the strongest terms the continued escalation of attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists, including on 13 February 2015 in Ngouboua against civilians, as well as the 8 February 2015 attack in Kerawa, and the 6 and 8 February 2015 attacks in Diffa. They reaffirmed that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, including the actions of Boko Haram, constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomever committed.

22. On 16 February 2015, an Extraordinary Session of the ECCAS Peace and Security Council (COPAX) was held in Yaoundé to adopt a Regional Strategy to combat the Boko Haram terrorist group. The AU was represented at this meeting by its Special Representative in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Head of the AU Mission for the CAR and Central Africa (MISAC). The Summit adopted two documents: a Final Communiqué and a Declaration known as the Yaoundé Declaration on the Fight Against the Boko Haram Terrorist Group.

23. The Summit condemned, in the strongest terms, the acts of terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger; the financing and any other form of support provided to this group; as well as its unjustifiable claims to create an "Islamic Caliphate" in the Lake Chad area, tending, thereby, to call into question the national borders in the area. The Summit expressed its support for the initiatives taken by the LCBC and the other members of the international community in order to address the threat posed by the Boko Haram terrorist group, particularly the establishment of the MNJTF, and commended Cameroon and Chad for their exemplary cooperation. The Summit pledged to support Cameroon and Chad within the framework of the mechanisms provided for by the Protocol relating to COPAX and the Mutual Assistance Pact between the Member States of ECCAS. In this regard, the Summit decided to provide the two countries with an emergency aid including financial resources amounting to 50 billion CFA francs, troops, life support and logistics.

24. The Summit expressed the commitment of the ECCAS to cooperate fully and at all levels with ECOWAS, and agreed to undertake political and diplomatic actions in the direction of Nigeria, with a view to enhancing cooperation between this country and the two ECCAS Member States affected by the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group. To this end, the Summit mandated the Heads of State of Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of the Congo to consult with the Current Chairman of ECOWAS, with a view to exploring the possibility of convening a summit meeting between the two organizations, to adopt a common strategy to fight against Boko Haram. The two Heads of State were also requested to contact the President of Nigeria.

25. The Summit thanked the AU for having endorsed the deployment of the MNJTF, and requested it to expedite the authorization process of this deployment by the UN Security Council. An appeal was made to the international community to continue and increase its

multifaceted support to the fight against the terrorist group Boko Haram. More specifically, the Summit appealed to the United Nations to assess the terrorist threat in the Cameroon - Central African Republic (RCA) – Chad border triangle, and take the necessary measures to ensure security in the area, so that it does not serve as a safe haven or a resupply area for the Boko Haram terrorist group.

V. OBSERVATIONS

26. I am deeply concerned by the prevailing situation on the ground. Since the last meeting of Council, attacks by the Boko Haram terrorist group have continued unabated, both in Nigeria and in the neighboring countries, causing further killings, destruction and suffering. I reiterate AU's strong condemnation of the atrocities committed by the Boko Haram terrorist group. I express AU's condolences to the families of the victims of these attacks, and its sympathy to all those injured. I renew the AU's full solidarity with the affected countries, their Governments and people.

27. I am pleased to note the continued determination of the affected countries and their commitment to a coordinated and regional approach towards neutralizing the Boko Haram terrorist group. In this respect, the adoption of the MNJTF CONOPS and the meeting that subsequently took place in Ndjamena marked a major step in the right direction. I encourage the countries of the region to remain resolute and to pursue their efforts towards the full operationalization of the MNJTF.

28. I welcome the convening of the COPAX Extraordinary Summit in Yaoundé. The decisions reached on that occasion will undoubtedly strengthen the ongoing regional efforts to combat the Boko Haram terrorist group. The decision to provide financial and logistical assistance to Chad and Cameroon, coming on the heel of Chad's decision to deploy troops in Cameroon at the request of that country, is a further testimony of the commitment of the ECCAS leaders to the spirit of pan-African solidarity. I urge the other AU Member States to take similar steps in support of the countries of the region, as indeed called for by Council at its 484th meeting.

29. The decision of the COPAX Extraordinary Summit to closely cooperate with ECOWAS, including the holding of a joint Summit to develop a joint strategy to combat Boko Haram, is of particular timeliness. Indeed, coordination of efforts and harmonization of initiatives are a prerequisite for a successful action against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups. Equally timely is the decision to consult with Nigeria, which shares borders with the two ECCASS Member States affected by the Boko Haram terrorist activities. I welcome the visits that Presidents of the Republic of Congo and Equatorial Guinea undertake to Nigeria, Ghana and Chad, on 24 and 25 February 2015.

30. I stress the determination of the AU to fully play its role in support of the countries of the region. No effort will be spared in ensuring the full operationalization of the MNJTF, in line with the relevant provisions of the CONOPS as endorsed in Yaoundé. The AU will also actively assist in ensuring close coordination among all concerned stakeholders, to maximize the impact of the efforts being deployed.

31. I recommend that Council endorses the CONOPS developed by the Yaoundé meeting of experts. I further recommend that Council authorizes an increase in the strength of the MNJTF. Initially, Council had mandated a strength that could go up to 7,500 military and other personnel. However, at the Yaoundé meeting, it was deemed necessary to mobilize additional forces. The countries of the region pledged up to 8 700 military, police and personnel. Furthermore, the MNJTF will need significant support in terms of force enablers and multipliers, which are not provided in the current pledges. There is therefore need to consider increasing the authorized strength as the situation on the ground is evolving rapidly. Based on the Commission's assessment, it is proposed to increase the authorized strength of the MNJTF up to 10,000 military and other personnel.

32. Once the CONOPS is endorsed, the Commission will formally transmit the document to the UN Security Council. In line with the Council's communiqué of 29 January 2015, it is the AU's expectation that the Security Council will swiftly adopt a resolution that would endorse the deployment of the MNJTF, authorize the establishment, by the Secretary-General, of a trust fund for the sustenance of the MNJTF operations, and call for the provision of the necessary international support to the MNJTF. The Security Council may also wish to consider other innovative modalities through which it could effectively support the MNJTF, bearing in mind the lessons learnt from recent experiences on the ground, including in Mali, with the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (MISMA), in Central African Republic, with the African-led International Support Mission in CAR (MISCA), and in Somalia, with the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Undoubtedly, it is the support provided to AMISOM that proved to be the most effective. The assistance provided in the cases of MISMA and MISCA, while being helpful, did not have the degree of flexibility, predictability and sustainability required for the conduct of operations in unstable and combat-intensive environments. In this regard, I wish to reiterate that support by the United Nations to the AU in matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security is an integral part of collective security as provided for in the UN Charter.

33. I commend, once again, the AU partners extending support to the countries of the region and contributing to the planning process for the full operationalization of the MNJTF. I urge them to enhance their support, notably through the provision of the much-needed financial and logistical assistance, equipment and timely sharing of intelligence.

34. As Council rightly pointed out, successfully addressing the threat posed by the Boko Haram terrorist group requires, in addition to the much-needed military and security operations, sustained efforts towards the improvement of livelihoods, education and job creation, as well as the protection of human rights. I encourage the countries of the region to redouble their efforts in this respect.