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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
560TH MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
26 NOVEMBER 2015

PSC/PR/BR.1(DLX)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 560th meeting held on 26 November 2015, was briefed by the Commission on the ongoing efforts to neutralize the Boko Haram terrorist group, including the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) established by the Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Benin. Council also listened to the statements made by the representative of Niger, as Chair of the LCBC, as well as by those of Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria. Council took note of the statements made by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, as well as by the UN Secretariat and the European Union (EU).

Council recalled its earlier pronouncements on the Boko Haram terrorist group, including press statement PSC/PR/BR(DXVIII) adopted at its 518th meeting, held on 25 June 2015.

Council acknowledged the progress made on the ground in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group. In this respect, Council noted the recovery of areas that had previously been under the control of this group and other related operations to eliminate the threat it poses. Council nonetheless expressed concern at the continued ability of the Boko Haram terrorist group to carry out attacks against civilians, as well as against military and security forces, and to destroy infrastructure and livelihoods, as illustrated by the incidents that have taken place in various locations in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Council strongly condemned these cowardly attacks and expressed, once again, the AU's solidarity with the affected countries and their Governments.

Council commended the LCBC Member States and Benin for their continued efforts to fully operationalize the MNJTF. In this respect, Council welcomed the conclusions of the Special Session of the Committee of Chiefs of Defense Staff of the LCBC Member States and Benin held in Ndjamena, Chad, on 20 August 2015, including the effective deployment of the pledged contingents in the Area of Responsibility, transfer of authority to the MNJTF Command, and continued staffing of the MNJTF Headquarters. Council also noted with satisfaction the other steps taken fully to operationalize the MNJTF, including the Conference of the Communication and Signal Directors of the LCBC Member States and Benin and the inaugural meeting between the MNJTF Force Commander and Sector Commanders, held in Ndjamena, on 5 and 13 November 2015, respectively.

Council urged the LCBC Member States and Benin to persevere in their efforts and to enhance their cooperation within the framework of the MNJTF, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of the strategic Concept of Operations (CONOPS) adopted in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 7 February 2015, as endorsed by Council in communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLXXXIX)-Rev.1, adopted at its 489th meeting held on 3 March 2015, and by the Extraordinary Summit of the LCBC Member States and Benin, held in Abuja on 11 June 2015.

Council commended the Commission for the steps taken, in line with the relevant provisions of communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLXXXIX)-Rev.1, in support of the operationalization of the MNJTF. In this respect, Council noted the deployment of a Start-up Team to the MNJTF Headquarters in Ndjamena and the subsequent establishment of the AU Support Team (AUST), the provision of communication equipment to facilitate coordination between the MNJTF Headquarters and Sector Headquarters, as well as between the MNJTF Headquarters and the AU Commission, the procurement of vehicles, and the hiring of staff to help run the MNJTF Headquarters.

Council also noted the steps taken to ensure that the MNJTF comply fully with international humanitarian and human rights law in the conduct of its operations, including the secondment, for a period of two months, by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, at the request of the Commission, of a senior human rights officer, who provided advice on the setting up of a human rights component, including its structure and staffing, adherence by the deployed uniform personnel to international human rights and humanitarian law standards, and mainstreaming of human rights. Council urged for the continuation and enhancement of these efforts, bearing in mind that scrupulous respect for international human rights and humanitarian law is a *sine quo non* for the effective neutralization of the Boko Haram terrorist group.

Council further noted the steps taken by the Commission to secure additional funding amounting 50 million Euros from the EU, within the framework of the Africa Peace Facility, to assist in various areas, including command, communication and control information systems (C3IS), infrastructure development at the level of both the MNJTF Headquarters and Sectors Headquarters, ground transportation, air mobility, including assets to support intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance activities, human resources and medical support. Council, having expressed its deep gratitude to the EU for this support in the spirit of the Africa-EU partnership, and looks forward to the urgent signing of an Agreement that would pave the way for the disbursement of the pledged funds. Council requested the Commission, once the required procedures with the EU are finalized, to ensure the timely and effective delivery of the planned support and to take all required administrative measures to this effect, and to continue to closely coordinate its efforts in this respect with the LCBC member countries and Benin.

Council noted with gratitude the support provided by international partners to the MNJTF. Council reiterated its appreciation to the United Kingdom, the United States of America and France for their invaluable support, and urged other partners also to contribute to the ongoing efforts. In this respect, Council requested the Commission to reactivate its plans for the holding, by February 2016, at the latest, with the support of the UN, of a Donors' Conference to mobilize additional resources, including finances, logistics and equipment, for the MNJTF.

Council noted with satisfaction the adoption by the UN Security Council, on 28 July 2015, of Presidential Statement S/PRST/2015/14 in which it, *inter alia*, reiterated its strong condemnation of all terrorist attacks and other abuses committed by Boko Haram; commended the LCBC and Benin for their continued efforts to fully operationalize the MNJTF; called upon the international community and donors to support the MNJTF, invited the Secretary-General

to support the Commission's plans for a Donors' Conference, called on Member States to contribute generously to the AU Trust Fund and requested the Secretary-General to advocate strongly with the international community and donors in support of this effort; and, having recalled that Boko Haram has been designated as associated with Al Qaeda by the Committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011), expressed its readiness to consider listing individuals, groups, undertakings and entities providing support to Boko Haram. Council looks forward to the continued engagement of the Security Council on this matter and to support, as may be appropriate, by the UN Secretariat to the efforts to the activities of the MNJTF.

Council commended the Economic Community of the Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their contribution to the ongoing efforts against the Boko Haram terrorist group. Council looks forward to the holding of the planned joint ECCAS/ECOWAS Summit to enhance coordination between the two organizations in the fight against Boko Haram.

Council appealed for greater international mobilization to assist the populations affected by the attacks carried out by the Boko Haram terrorist group, as well as the countries hosting refugees fleeing the atrocities committed by this group.

Council stressed, once again, the need to complement the military and security operations against the Boko Haram terrorist group by sustained national and regional efforts, to improve livelihoods, promote education and job creation, as well as ensure the protection of human rights, particularly those of women and girls. Council called for renewed efforts in this respect by the LCBC Member States and Benin, with the support of the larger international community. Council reiterated its request to the Commission to liaise with the LCBC, to identify practical steps through which the AU and its relevant structures could contribute to these efforts.