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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL  
723<sup>RD</sup> MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA  
5 OCTOBER 2017

PSC/PR/BR (DCCXXII)

**PRESS STATEMENT**

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union, at its 723<sup>rd</sup> meeting held on 5 October 2017 received a briefing on the humanitarian situation in the Sahel region, with particular focus on Mali and Niger.

Council took note of the briefing by Mr. Olabisi Dare, Head of the Humanitarian Affairs, Refugees and Displaced Persons Division in the Department of Political Affairs of the AU Commission, as well as by the Deputy Director for Northern and Western Africa of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mr. Patrick Youssef, on the humanitarian consequences in Mali and Niger of the ongoing conflict in Mali. Council also took note of the statements made by the Permanent Representatives of Mali to the AU, H.E. Ambassador Fafre Camara and the Permanent Representative of Niger to the AU, H.E. Ambassador Zakariaou Adam Maiga.

Council, noting the nexus between climate change related environmental challenges facing the Sahel region and the prevailing violent conflicts, underscored the urgent need to ensure political stability in the Sahel region as a whole.

Council expressed deep concern over the prevailing dire humanitarian situation in the Sahel region, which is being exacerbated, among others, by the ongoing conflict in Northern Mali that is spilling over to the central part of the country. In this respect, Council expressed also concern at the lack of access to the needy populations, due to insecurity prevailing in the region.

Council underscored the urgent need for all Member States, and members of the international community, in a position to do so, to help the affected countries in addressing the prevailing humanitarian situation. In the same context, Council stressed the importance of ensuring coordination of efforts between international humanitarian aid agencies and national authorities.

Council also underscored the urgent need for sensitizing and mobilizing the affected communities. In this regard, Council commended ICRC for deploying efforts aimed at responding to the immediate humanitarian needs of the affected population, including by implementing resilience building programs, visiting prisons, restoring family links between those who have been separated by the ongoing conflict and by strengthening the capacities of the national Red Cross societies in both Mali and Niger.

Council encouraged the affected countries to holistically address the root causes of the current situation, including extreme poverty and underdevelopment challenges.

Council, once again, underscored the urgent need for expediting the process of establishing and operationalizing the AU Humanitarian Agency, as requested by the Assembly of the Union in the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness, adopted during the 26<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of the AU Assembly held in January 2016.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.