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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1002ND MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
8 JUNE 2021

PSC/PR/PS. 1002(2021)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union dedicated its 1002nd meeting held on 8 June 2021, to an open session on the theme: “The Plight of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Forced Displacement in Africa”.

Council noted the opening remarks made by H.E. Ambassador Joel Nkurabagaya, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Burundi to the AU and PSC Chairperson for June 2021; as well as statements by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the AU, H.E. Ambassador Adekunle J.M.King, as the Chairperson of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, and by AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye. Council also noted the presentation by the AU Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, H.E. Amira Elfadil, read by her representative, as well as the presentations made by the representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to the AU and the representative of the World Food Programme (WFP).

Council recalled the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the 2009 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (also known as the Kampala Convention), as well as the 1951 UN Refugees Convention. Council also recalled all its previous decisions and pronouncements on the plight of refugees and IDPs, in particular, Communique [PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXXI)] adopted at its 921st meeting held on 28 April 2020.

Council noted with deep concern the growing numbers of refugees and IDPs as a result of a combination of factors, which include violent conflicts, terrorist attacks, political and economic crises, adverse impact of climate change and natural disasters, such as cyclones, volcanic eruptions, drought, famine, desertification, landslides, floods, animal diseases, pest infestations, epidemics and pandemics. Council expressed particular concern over the plight of refugee women, children and the elderly, as well as people living with disabilities, and in this respect, underscored the importance of Member States to always include refugees and IDPs in the national strategies related to provision of basic public services, including food aid, other forms of humanitarian assistance and COVID-19 related interventions.

Council also noted with concern the capacity constraints facing Member States that are hosting large numbers of refugees, particularly in the context of public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, Council commended all Member States hosting refugees and encouraged them to continue to do so in the spirit of pan-African solidarity and promote their inclusion in national development programmes. Furthermore, Council reiterated

its request for the AU Commission to mobilize support for Member States hosting large numbers of refugees, IDPs and undocumented migrants.

Council underscored the importance of expediting the full operationalization of the African Humanitarian Agency, with a view to boosting Africa's preparedness to respond to complex emergencies and, in this regard, encourages Member States and partners to redouble efforts in mobilizing the required resources to enable the Agency to effectively discharge its mandate. In the same vein, Council also underscored the importance of replenishing the AU Special Emergency Assistance Fund (SEAF) by Member States and International Partners in order to provide support to Member States facing drought, famine, and natural disasters with a view to alleviating acute food shortages of refugees, returnees and IDPs in Africa.

Council reaffirmed the necessity to comprehensively address the fundamental root causes of forced displacement and to invest more in disaster risk reduction by building more effective local, national, regional and Continental early warning capacity, and the required resilience for natural disasters. To this end, Council requested the Commission to work with WFP, UNHCR, FAO and other relevant partners to identify how food security challenges among refugees, returnees and displaced persons can be addressed.

Council encouraged Member States, which have not yet done so, to consider to sign, ratify and domesticate all AU and international instruments aimed at addressing the plight of refugees, IDPs and forced displacements, especially the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention and the 2009 AU Kampala Convention. Council also emphasized the need to maintain the civilian character of refugee and IDP camps.

Council appealed to the international community to continue to support humanitarian efforts in Africa especially through mobilization of resources. In this regard, Council commended the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), the bilateral and multilateral partners, as well as all other international humanitarian aid organizations for their sustained efforts to alleviate the plight of refugees, IDPs, and victims of forced displacements in Africa and the world at large.

Council also encouraged Members States and the international community to participate and to make more generous pledges at the upcoming Continental Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference to be held in November 2021, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, aimed at raising awareness and mobilizing required resources towards alleviating the plight of refugees, IDPs and forced displacements in Africa. To this end, Council requested the AU Commission to work with UNHCR, WFP, OCHA and other humanitarian partners to ensure the successful organization of the Summit.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.