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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1029th MEETING

8 SEPTEMBER 2021
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(1029 (2021))

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) dedicated its 1029th meeting held on 8 September 2021 to an open session commemorating the 2021 Africa Amnesty Month.

Council recalled Assembly Decision [Ext/Assembly/AU/Dec.1(XIV)] adopted during the 14th Extra-Ordinary Session on Silencing the Guns held on 6 December 2020, in Johannesburg, South Africa, which extended the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa for a period of ten (10) years (2021-2030) and accordingly, extended the commemoration and conduct of the Africa Amnesty Month during September of each year for a period of ten (10) years (2021-2030) within the context of Agenda 2063. Council further recalled all previous decisions and pronouncements on this central theme and its related activities.

Council noted the opening remarks made by H.E Ambassador Mahamad Ali Hassan, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Chad to the AU and the PSC Chairperson for September 2021 and remarks by H.E Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security. Council also noted the presentations made by H.E. Ms Hanna Tetteh, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Office to the AU (UNOAU) and the representative of the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, Horn of Africa and Bordering States (RECSA).

Furthermore, Council noted statements by the Members of the PSC, the AU Member States and the respective representatives of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs).

Council expressed its grave concern over the persistence of conflict in Africa, which is fueled by multifaceted factors and the trend of civilians acquiring arms for protection during situations of conflict, both of which contribute to the proliferation and circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW).

Council underscored the imperative for concerted efforts towards implementing the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2030 to ensure not to bequeath future generations with a conflict-ridden Continent and, importantly, to realize the Aspirations enshrined in Agenda 2063.

Council noted with satisfaction the progress made since the beginning of this initiative of commemorating the Africa Amnesty Month in 2017, and in this regard, emphasized that willingness to commit to an illegal arms free society will ensure that Africa achieves a peaceful and secured continent that thrives collectively in the comity of nations.

Council encouraged Member States, working in close collaboration with RECs/RMs, to consolidate the gains achieved during the period 2017-2020 and to actively promote the annual commemoration of the Africa Amnesty Month, and redouble efforts to implement it effectively as a crucial step towards curtailing the proliferation of illegally owned weapons and silencing the guns in the Continent.

Council underlined the need to address the factors and drivers underlying possession of illicit arms by civilians as a necessary requirement to curb the illegal flows of weapons in an integrated and sustainable manner, and in this regard, stressed the importance of Member States to continue prioritizing the principal goals of both the African Peace and Security Architecture and African Governance Architecture.

Council strongly condemned non-African states sponsoring and promote the influx of arms into Africa, including in cases of existing armed embargoes, leading to the further escalation of existing conflicts. In this regard, Council emphasized the need for adherence to existing arms embargoes and stressed that it will not hesitate to name and shame sponsors of such actions, and take appropriate actions against them.

Council emphasized the importance of close collaboration among neighboring States and with the concerned REC/RM on strengthening border monitoring and control, with clearly defined roles, aimed at eradicating cross-border trafficking of small arms and light weapons and inhibiting the use of land borders as a shelter for traffickers, armed non-state actors, criminal syndicates and terrorist groups. In this regard, Council called on Member States that have not yet done so, to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty as part of the efforts to fight the importation of illicit arms.

Council encouraged the RECs, in close collaboration with their Member States, to scale up efforts towards the full implementation of the regional SALW instruments, such as the ECOWAS Convention, Nairobi Protocol, SADC Protocol and Kinshasa Convention. Within this context, Council underlined the need for strengthening National Commissions and Focal Points, and establishing where they do not exist, to spearhead the amnesty mechanisms.

Council underscored the importance of building national capacities to manage stockpiles and the destruction of surrendered SALW.

Council urged for active participation of all sectors of society, including women and youth, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and the media, to support their respective States and region in promoting the surrender of illicit weapons by civilians during Africa Amnesty Month.

Council called on Member States to share best practices and experiences in designing and implementing initiatives to commemorate the Africa Amnesty Month and overall Silencing the Guns initiative. Further, Council encouraged Member States to avail requisite resources and partner with experts to ensure effective implementation of this initiative.

Council requested the AU Commission to consistently work with Member States and provide the technical support, as required, to ensure that Member States develop action plans for the surrender and destruction of illegally owned arms, as well as the commemoration of the Africa Amnesty Month annually until the goal of silencing the guns is realized in the Continent.

Council further requested the AU Commission to revitalize the Security Sector Reforms (SSR) Steering Committee to work closely with Member States and the RECs/RMs to implement security sector reforms.

Council committed to commemorating the amnesty month on the ground in future in a selected Member State, when conditions are conducive, to ensure that the objectives of this initiative are popularized and to encourage broad participation.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.