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UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

2ND ANNUAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING BETWEEN THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES AND REGIONAL MECHANISMS FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTIONS (RECs/RMs)

26 AUGUST 2021

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/RECs/RMs/2. (2021)

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

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1. On 26 August 2021, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) and the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolutions (RECs/RMs) held their 2nd Annual Joint Consultative Meeting, virtually, as part of their regular dialogue, on the one hand within the framework of Article 16 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, which institutionalises the relationship between the PSC and the RECs/RMs, in the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa; and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the AU, RECs and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern and Northern Africa signed in January 2008, on the other, as well as Article 28 of Chapter IV of the Abuja Treaty of 1991 establishing the African Economic Community and the relevant provisions of the Constitutive Act of the AU concerning the relations between the AU and the RECs.

2. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cameroon to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for August 2021, in the presence of H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union Commission, with the participation of the representatives of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), East African Standby Force (EASF), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), North African Regional Capability (NARC) and Southern African Development (SADC).

3. The PSC and RECs/RMs recalled the Joint Communiqué [INAUGURAL MEETING (I) PSC/RECS/RMS], held on 24 May 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCCXLXX)], adopted at the 870th meeting of the PSC held on 20 August 2019. This second joint consultative meeting is also in line with: Decision Ext / Assembly / AU / Dec.1 (XIV) of the 14th extraordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union on "Silencing the Guns in Africa", held on 6 December 2020; Declaration MYCM / Dec / 1 (1) adopted on 8 July 2019 in Niamey, Niger by the first Mid-year Coordination Meeting between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the Regional Mechanisms, which welcomes the efforts of the AU Peace and Security Council, aimed at strengthening its strategic partnership with the RECs, RMs and Policy organs responsible for peace and security, and which requests the AU, RECs and RMs to develop quickly practical modalities to facilitate the adoption of coordinated and rapid responses to Continental crises; Communiqué PSC / MIN / COMM.1024 (2021) of the 1024th meeting of the PSC, held on 19 August 2021 at Ministerial level, under the Chairmanship of Cameroon, on the Implementation of the aspects of Peace and Security relating to Border Governance in Africa, which stresses the importance of the cooperation between the African Union, the RECs/RMs, and the Member States in the implementation of the AU Border

Programme and the AU Border Governance Strategy, including for the settlement of border disputes between and among Member States; Communiqué PSC/MIN/COMM(Dec.XCIX), adopted by the 899th Meeting, held Ministerial level, on 5 December 2019, in Luanda, Angola, on Support to Member States in Political Transition and Post-conflict Situations, as well as the Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(VIII) of its 958th Meeting, held on 23 October 2020, and Communiqué [PSC / PR / COMM.1017 (MXVII)], adopted at its 1017th meeting, held on 5 August 2021;

4. The PSC and RECs/RMs reaffirmed that the RECs/RMs are on many occasions the primary responders of crisis/conflict situations in their respective regions guided by the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantage;

5. The PSC and RECs/RMs *expressed concern* over the myriad threats to peace, security, stability and socio-economic development in the Continent, including armed conflicts, terrorism, extremism, piracy, cyberattacks, transnational organised crime, circulation of illicit weapons, amongst others, causing instability, endangering the safety of civilians, destruction of infrastructure, forced displacement of a considerable number of people in the Continent, and undermining ongoing efforts by the AU and the RECs/RMs in the promotion of peace, security and stability;

6. The PSC and RECs/RMs *emphasized* the need to redouble efforts to respond to the various conflicts and multi-dimensional threats to peace, particularly through context-specific interventions aimed at addressing the fundamental and structural root causes of conflicts and crises in the Continent, as well as post-conflict reconstruction;

7. The PSC and RECs/RMs *underscored* the need to expedite the implementation of the undertakings adopted during the Inaugural Consultative meeting between the AU PSC and RECs/RMs Policy Organs on Peace and Security held in May 2019 and the subsequent 870th meeting of the AU PSC held in August 2019;

8. The PSC and RECs/RMs *also underscored* the importance of continued and enhanced collaboration and information sharing between the AU and the RECs/RMs in conflict prevention, management and resolution to silence the guns and achieve a conflict-free Continent as well as to realise the Aspirations enshrined in Agenda 2063; to this end, they *stressed* the need to determine comparative advantage in dealing with each conflict situation whilst acknowledging the pertinent role of the RECs/RMs guided by the cardinal principles of subsidiarity and complementarity;

9. The PSC and RECs/RMs *underlined* the need for harmonizing decision-making processes, clearly defined mandates, enhancement of coordination and division of labor, and strengthening of synergy in the overall implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture and African Governance Architecture at both the regional and continental levels;

10. The PSC and RECs/RMs *commended* the progress made by those RECs/RMs in the establishment of policy organs on peace and security matters and *encouraged* those RECs/RMs who are yet to do so, to create policy organs dedicated to peace and security, to ensure that all the regions have the architecture to respond to conflict/crisis situations in their geographic areas of mandate in collaboration with the AU PSC; and they *emphasized*, in this regard, the importance of effective early warning mechanisms to ensure the anticipation and prevention of conflicts;

11. The PSC and RECs/RMs *underscored* the significance for consolidation of technical skills and mobilization of all relevant resources, including material, human and financial resources to ensure sustainable efforts in the promotion of peace in the Continent;

12. The PSC and RECs/RMs *reaffirmed* the pertinence for the full operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF) to enable rapid deployment and timeous intervention where required, and they *emphasized* the necessity of establishing a special unit dedicated to combatting terrorism, and which would be deployed upon request by the affected Member State and RECs/RMs upon approval by the AU PSC;

13. The PSC and RECs/RMs *committed* to establishing a knowledge exchange platform on Governance and Conflict Prevention between the AU and RECs/RMs premised on horizontal partnership and aimed at fostering consistent interaction between AU and the RECs/RMs; in this regard, they *recommended* setting up a preparatory team comprising designated officers/officials in Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department of the AU Commission and staff members of RECs/RMs to finalize the concept paper and operational framework of the knowledge exchange platform to be launched before the end of 2021;

14. The PSC and RECs/RMs *reaffirmed* commitment to harmonize and institutionalize collaboration through the following undertakings:

- i. To convene a meeting of the Technical Working Group of Experts, to be established by the AU Commission, as soon as practicable and not later than October 2021, to develop a matrix that outlines concrete and practical steps to be undertaken, assign responsibilities with specific timelines, as well as a draft roadmap with clearly defined modalities and timeframes for the AU PSC;
- ii. To establish the team of Focal Points from the RECs/RMs to work with the PAPS Department to facilitate the regular meetings/consultations, particularly on issues on the agenda of both the AU PSC and of the RECs/RMs;
- iii. To agree on a timeline for the RECs/RMs to forward proposals through the PAPS Department to be integrated into a single document focusing on harmonization/division of labor in the area of peace and security, modalities for undertaking early responses to looming crisis and expediting action to mitigate/resolve crisis and conflicts;

- iv. To request the Committee of Experts (CoE) of the PSC and the Technical Experts of the RECs/RMs working in collaboration with the Military Staff Committee (MSC) to review the existing AU legal instruments and those of the RECs/RMs to expedite the full operationalization of the ASF including the setup of the Strategic Working Group on the finalization of the MoU between the AU and RECs/RMs;
 - v. To agree to convene a joint retreat in 2022 to brainstorm and reflect on the “Decision-making, harmonization and coordination between the PSC and the RECs/RMs on the promotion of peace and security” and thereafter develop a Report on the promotion of common response strategies to be presented during the AU Summit;
 - vi. To ensure that the reports presented to the future consultative meetings include detailed information on the progress made regarding the implementation of the previously agreed relevant decisions and communiqués;
 - vii. To commence a transparent, in-depth and dynamic dialogue with the participation of the Member States, the Commission, RECs and RMs concerning the scope, dimensions, variables and criteria of the applicability of the principle of subsidiarity;
 - viii. To support horizontal cooperation and collaboration among RECs and RMs, particularly in situations where the country concerned with a particular conflict or crisis is a party to more than one REC;
 - ix. To encourage the future chairships of the PSC to include in their respective programs a stand-alone dialogue with one or more of the RECs/RMs that it enjoys its membership with a view to strengthen the regional approaches to peace and security questions in the continent;
15. The PSC and RECs/RMs *agreed* to convene consultative meetings at least twice a year at a strategic and political level, and quarterly at a technical level, as well as to remain open to convene ad-hoc consultations to deepen collaboration and respond to emerging conflict; and
16. The PSC and RECs/RMs pledged to work the successful convening of a Third Joint Annual Consultative meeting, in 2022, between the AU PSC and the RECs/RMs Policy Organs on Peace and Security to be hosted by the RECs/RMs at a Headquarters of their choice, on a date to be mutually agreed by the two sides.