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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
469TH MEETING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
25 NOVEMBER 2014

PSC/PR/BR.(CDLXIX)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 469th meeting held on 25 November 2014, reviewed the humanitarian challenges arising from the prevailing conflict and crisis situations in Africa. In this regard, Council took note of the statement made by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, as well as of the briefing provided by the United Nations (UN) Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Ms. Kyung-wha Kang. Council also took note of the statements made by the representatives of South Sudan, as well as by those of China, France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, and the European Union (EU).

Council recalled the relevant provisions of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council, including Article 7(1p), which mandates it to support and facilitate humanitarian action in situations of armed conflict or major natural disasters. Council further recalled its earlier pronouncements on humanitarian challenges on the continent, including press statements PSC/PR/BR/1(CCCXXVI), PSC/PR/BR.(CCCXCI), PSC/PR/BR.(CDVIII) and PSC/PR/BR.(CDLXIV) adopted at its 326th, 391th, 408th and 464th meetings held on 26 June 2012, 19 August 2013, 13 December 2013 and 29 October 2014, respectively.

Council also recalled the August 2010 Memorandum of Understanding that governs cooperation and collaboration between OCHA and the AU Commission in the areas of early warning, disaster preparedness and response, coordination, and protection of civilians in situations of conflict and natural disaster.

Council, while noting with satisfaction the progress made towards the promotion of peace and security on the continent, reiterated its deep concern at the continued prevalence of conflict and violence in different parts of the continent and at their devastating consequences for the affected civilian populations. In this respect, Council expressed deep concern at the humanitarian situations prevailing in the Horn of Africa, namely Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia, where violence and erratic climatic conditions are negatively affecting humanitarian and development indicators. Council also expressed concern at the humanitarian situations prevailing in other parts of the continent, including the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mali, as well as at the humanitarian disaster caused by the Ebola epidemic in the affected countries in West Africa.

Council noted that the prevailing humanitarian challenges in Africa are stretching regional, national and community level coping mechanisms to the limit. Council reiterated its deep appreciation to the neighboring countries that host refugees, and encouraged them to keep their borders open, consistent with humanitarian principles and African solidarity. Council further expressed appreciation to OCHA for its leadership role in fostering international mobilization in support of populations affected by conflicts, violence and natural disasters in Africa, as well as to all the humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations providing assistance on the ground, in particularly challenging conditions.

Council emphasized the primary responsibility of States in ensuring the protection of civilians, particularly women and children. In this respect, Council urged all concerned countries to take the necessary steps, in line with relevant African and international instruments. Council urged

Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify all relevant AU and international instruments, including the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the 2011 Kampala Convention on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Council demanded all parties to conflicts to uphold their obligations under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to protect civilians, including refraining from recruiting children into armed forces or groups and ending all forms of gender-based violence. Council underlined the imperative for perpetrators of violations of IHL and human rights law to be held accountable for their actions, in line with the AU's commitment to fighting impunity as expressed in the Constitutive Act.

Council pledged its determination to do everything in its power to create an enabling environment for humanitarian assistance in Africa. In this respect, Council demanded that all concerned in conflict and other situations where assistance is required, timely and unconditionally, facilitate humanitarian access and response. Council strongly condemned all acts of violence against humanitarian workers, and called the release of all aid personnel who are in captivity.

Council called on AU Member States and the larger international community to generously contribute to humanitarian action in Africa, noting that overall response to Consolidated Humanitarian Appeals was significantly below what is needed. Council also stressed the need for creative approaches to mobilize additional resources to address the challenges at hand. In this respect, Council commended the Chairperson of the Commission for her efforts to raise resources from the private sector for the fight against the Ebola epidemic, and urged that this successful example be replicated in other humanitarian crises.

Council recognized the importance of holistic and strategically coherent approaches between peace, security, development and humanitarian operations where appropriate. Council pledged its commitment to further such approaches in addressing conflict and crisis situations on the continent.

Council urged all concerned stakeholders across the continent to redouble their efforts towards finding political solutions to the ongoing conflicts, as part of the overall efforts by the AU to achieve the objective of a conflict-free Africa by 2020, consistent with the 50th OAU/AU Anniversary Solemn Declaration adopted by the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Addis Ababa from 26 to 27 May 2013, and the 2014-2024 Madiba Nelson Mandela Decade for Reconciliation in Africa, as adopted by the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Addis Ababa, from 30 to 31 January 2014.

Council agreed on the need to devote adequate attention to African humanitarian crises, bearing in mind the competing emergencies around the world and the imperative of ensuring that the necessary resources are mobilized. In this respect, Council agreed to convene a yearly meeting devoted to humanitarian emergencies on the continent, on the basis of briefings to be provided by OCHA.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.