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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL  
471<sup>ST</sup> MEETING  
28 NOVEMBER 2014  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(CDLXXI)

**PRESS STATEMENT**

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), held its 471<sup>st</sup> meeting, open session, in Addis Ababa, on 28 November 2014. The meeting was held pursuant to the decision taken by the PSC at its 464<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 29 October 2014 to dedicate every month a meeting on the Ebola epidemic on the basis of comprehensive reports to be submitted by the Commission, covering the evolution of the situation, the implementation of the mandate of the AU Support Mission to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA), the status of contributions by AU Member States and the level of engagement of the larger international community.

Council and Participants took note of the briefing made by the AU Commission on the evolution of the Ebola epidemic in the affected countries in West Africa, the efforts of the AU, the affected countries and the region as a whole, as well as the support being provided by the international community, including the United Nations, the AU partners, the private sector and the civil society. Participants also received statements from the representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), AU partners and the civil society, as well as the wider international community.

Council and Participants welcomed the efforts of the AU, the Member States and the various international and regional actors who have mobilized and continue to mobilize responses to the Ebola epidemic. They stressed that, as the recent meeting of the private sector has demonstrated, it is important to continue to mobilize the various sections of the African public, including the civil society and the media, in order not only to keep and scale up the momentum of support, but also to fight the stigmatization and isolation of the affected countries.

Council and Participants also expressed gratitude to the African Private Sector for its contribution to the fight against the Ebola epidemic. In particular, they expressed gratitude to the Mobile telephone companies which will be launching the continent-wide citizen based campaign on 3 December 2014. In this respect, they called on AU Member States to also support this campaign, including through granting the necessary regulatory exemptions which include, but are not limited to, a) the provision of a universal short sms code 7979, b) tax exemption, and c) public information dissemination through the public broadcasting services.

They also expressed gratitude to all those who have pledged material, human and financial resources to support the countries most affected by the Ebola epidemic, including ASEOWA and called upon them to redeem their pledges, as soon as possible. In the same context, Council and Participants stressed that, in addition to the mobilization of funding for treatment and medical personnel, responses to the Ebola epidemic should also focus on systematic education of the affected communities and on equipping them with basic necessary means and ways of protecting themselves, in order to prevent further spread of the Ebola virus. Council and Participants stressed the need to prioritize prevention of further infections. In this regard, they urged all countries of the region to adhere to the World Health Organization (WHO) guidance on preparedness and prevention.

Furthermore, Council and Participants stressed that, beyond the immediate impact of the disease, there are economic and social effects of the Ebola epidemic, which also require urgent attention. Therefore, they emphasized that, in the long term, the rest of Africa would need to provide support to the affected countries in West Africa in their recovery efforts.

Council and Participants commended the brave health professionals who have risked their lives to fight the Ebola epidemic. They paid condolences to the families of all those who lost their relatives due to the Ebola epidemic and expressed solidarity with the governments and people of the countries most affected by the Ebola epidemic.

They also stressed the need to work to overcome any barriers to a swift response and encouraged the AU, WHO, and the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) to coordinate their efforts on ensuring that international health workers can be easily and safely deployed to the affected countries. In this regard, they called on AU Member States to keep open the lines of communication with the counties most affected so that the health workers can move without any hindrances.

Council and Participants underscored the need to start rebuilding the national healthcare infrastructure of the most affected countries of West Africa, which have been overwhelmed by the Ebola epidemic. They also underscored the need to push ahead with the development of an Ebola vaccine.

Council and Participants noted that strengthened regional and international cooperation will be critical in easing the burden of the Ebola crisis. In this regard, they emphasized the importance of continued regional coordination of efforts and the need for the AU to continue to lead all international efforts in fighting the Ebola epidemic. They stressed, in particular, the need for closer cooperation between and among the countries most affected by the epidemic. In this context, they welcomed the endorsement by the ECOWAS Heads of State of the Regional Integrated Operational Plan for Response to Ebola during the ECOWAS Summit held in Accra, on 6 November 2014.

Council and Participants deplored the continued stigmatization and isolation of the countries most affected. They urged AU Member States, which have not yet done so, to implement the decision adopted by the 16<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council held in Addis Ababa on 8 September 2014, regarding the opening of borders and resumption of flights to the affected countries. In addition, Participants requested the PSC to begin to make plans to develop a post-Ebola support plan, including the holding of an international pledging conference, in West Africa, to mobilize resources to help the affected countries to successfully recover from the consequences of the Ebola outbreak and rebuild their health and social infrastructure.

Council and Participants underscored the urgent need to begin to explore practical means and ways of supporting the West African region to re-enter the path of accelerated recovery, peace-building and development. In this regard, they stressed the need to expedite international assistance beyond medical response to also include institutional recovery particularly in the rebuilding of a robust healthcare infrastructure. They also

stressed that a comprehensive approach, which meets the broader security, development and governance challenges is also critical, as well as ownership, by the affected countries, of planning the recovery programmes.

They also urged the speedy deployment, by AU Member States, of the pledged additional health workers to ASEOWA and to ensure that the deployments are made to areas where the demand is highest and where the personnel could contribute the most. Council and Participants stressed the need to ensure that these deployments are undertaken in close cooperation with the relevant government institutions of the countries mostly affected.

Council and Participants stressed the need to urgently address the risks that the limited access to healthcare may have on women's reproductive health and that of their newly born. They reiterated the need for particular attention to continue to be paid to the impact of the epidemic on the post-conflict reconstruction and socio-economic development efforts in the countries affected.

They further reiterated the need for the convening, as soon as possible, of an international conference, in West Africa, on Ebola under the aegis of the AU with a view to mobilizing additional support towards the fight against the Ebola epidemic and long-term mitigation of its effects.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.