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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

592ND MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

19 APRIL 2016

PSC/PR/BR (DXCII)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 592nd meeting, held on 19 April 2016, in Addis Ababa, dedicated an open session to the theme: decisive role of de-radicalization policies in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. Council listened to a statement delivered by Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, as well as statements from AU Members, international partners, specialized institutions and civil society organizations.

Council recalled previous decisions of the AU on the issue of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, and re-emphasized the critical importance of the provisions of communiqués PSC/AHG/COMM.(CDLV) and PSC/AHG/COMM.1(DLXXI) of its 455th and 571st meetings. Council further recalled communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(DXLIII) and press statement PSC/PR/BR.2(DLX) adopted at its 543rd and 560th meetings held on 11 September 2015 and 26 November 2015, respectively, which articulated a comprehensive framework for the implementation of the AU and international counter-terrorism instruments in Africa.

Council and Participants expressed deep concern at the escalating trend of terrorism in Africa as well as the spread geographically of terrorist attacks with ever changing tactics, targets, actors, recruitment methods and funding. They strongly condemned the terrorist attacks that continue to be carried out against public places, including educational institutions, hotels, markets and places of worship, resulting in the death of hundreds, wounding many more and leading to displacement of millions. They noted that the recent attacks in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia were taking place against the backdrop of a global rise in terrorist activities.

Council and Participants noted that violent extremism is a major threat to African peace and security, therefore addressing violent extremism both by preventive and counter actions is critical in the quest for a stable and prosperous Africa in line with the peace goals established in Agenda 2063. They further noted that violent extremism is not linked to any single ideology and is transnational in nature, therefore, there is need for AU Member States to support a holistic and multidimensional approach in addressing the drivers of radicalization which feed into violent extremism and terrorism. They stressed the need to name and shame those supporting, in whatever manner, terrorist activities, as well as radicalization. They also emphasized that a holistic approach encompasses the need to address all organizations and terrorist groups wherever they exist and without prejudice in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter and International Law, taking into account the fact that all of these groups and organizations adopt the same ideological approach based on the use of force and violence to achieve their ends.

Council and Participants noted that violent extremists seek out individuals and groups embittered by the lack of governmental accountability, the denial of basic human rights, and the lack of opportunities for political, economic and social participation, among others. In this regard, they emphasized the need to improve living conditions and provision of employment opportunities as effective tools in the fight against radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism. They also called for promoting good governance, building civilian security sector capacity, promoting values based on tolerance, humanism and the sanctity of human life, infrastructural development and consolidation of the economic and financial sector, designing and providing counter-narratives and tailored sensitization programmes, taking into account the different levels of target audience, which should start from primary/elementary school level, as an initial step to foster a peace loving and tolerant generation.

Council and Participants strongly emphasized the need for Member States to adopt counter-radicalization and de-radicalization in national policies and programmes that integrate respect for human rights, diversity and freedoms. In this regard, the role of civil society, including community leaders and religious authorities, formal and informal educational institutes, addressing socio-economic problems to reduce vulnerability to extremist ideology, legislative reform, prison rehabilitation programs and building national capacities to ensure effective implementation and sustainability of counter-radicalization measures, must be emphasized. They acknowledged that the internet and social media have been used to radicalize society, particularly youths. In this regard, they appealed to Member States to adopt measures to closely monitor the use of the internet and social media and to use them to provide a counter-narrative based on tolerance and nonviolence, and stressed the need to reach a comprehensive continental strategy that governs issues related to countering cyber-crime and cyber-terrorism.

Council and Participants acknowledged the necessity to fully implement the Council decisions and United Nations Security Council resolutions concerning the financing of terrorism. They called for engaging the political will of the international community to compel States and parties funding and supporting terrorism to stop their funding and support, making sure to hold them accountable for their acts. Council and Participants also called for strengthening of capacities of Member States in order to empower them to fulfill their obligations under the resolutions and decisions referred to.

Council and Participants emphasized the importance of addressing the phenomenon of “foreign terrorist fighters”, through national efforts in addition to collective coordination, taking in to account that this phenomenon is considered one of the most dangerous aspects of

the threat of terrorism, given the multiplicity of its dimensions and causes. They noted that addressing this phenomenon requires firm political will to implement the relevant international resolutions aimed at halting the flow of foreign terrorist fighters into areas of conflict, and to hold all the relevant parties responsible for their acts in this regard.

Council and Participants urged AU Member States to harmonise and share experiences on their national strategies on counter-radicalization and de-radicalization. In this regard, Council called for an establishment of a platform for reflection that would inform a comprehensive continental counter-radicalization and counter-terrorism strategy, including the possibility of convening a conference at the level of Heads of State and Government.

Council and Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening partnership with the continental stakeholders and the international community in furtherance of the fight against radicalization, terrorism and violent extremism.

Council stressed the need to reactivate its Committees on Sanctions and Counter-Terrorism, to enable it to effectively address the issue of terrorism and radicalization in Africa.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.