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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

600TH MEETING

18 MAY 2015

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(DC)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 600th meeting held on 18 May 2016, received a briefing from the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, on her activities and the role played by the AU and its Member States in the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security.

Council recalled its earlier pronouncements on the issue of women in conflict and crisis situations in Africa and acknowledged the progress made by AU Member States in the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Council congratulated those Member States which have developed their National Action Plans in conformity with UN Resolution 1325, and called on those which have not yet done so, to urgently develop their National Action Plans.

Council noted with concern the continuing violence against women and girls in conflict and crisis situations, as well as in post-conflict settings and inadequate access to justice. Council further noted the low levels of participation of women in a variety of official roles in formal peace processes and political settlements, weak support to women's economic recovery and empowerment in post-conflict settings, and called on AU Member States to redouble their efforts to ensure that their national laws match the provisions of UNSC Resolution 1325, AU and other international instruments that protect the rights of women and children.

Council encouraged the development of more national and regional women, peace, and security Action Plans, as a tool for conflict prevention and addressing structural barriers and appealed to AU Member States to enhance cooperation with the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, in executing her mandate, particularly in providing national data and reporting on issues related to women, peace and security from their respective countries. Council further encouraged Member States to focus on early warning and responses by integrating local early warning initiatives into national and regional early warning and response mechanisms.

Council acknowledged the work already undertaken by the AU Commission in developing the Continental Results Framework and welcomed the draft report of the Commission on the State of Implementation of Women, Peace, and Security Commitments in Africa, to be submitted to the AU summit in-July 2016.

Council requested the AU Commission, through the Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, to ensure provision of training on mediation and negotiations to enhance women's participation in mediation of conflicts and peace negotiations. In this regard, Council further requested the AU Commission to elaborate defined Mediation Terms of Reference which provide for inclusion of gender-provisions and access to gender expertise.

Council emphasized the responsibility of Member States for ensuring the protection of women and children in situations where they are threatened or affected by violence, in line with relevant AU and international instruments. In this regard, Council called on AU Member States to further strengthen their mechanisms for accountability and addressing impunity for sexual and gender based violence and exploitation as a priority, using all the tools at their disposal and to implement the Zero Tolerance Policy.

Council stressed the need for close collaboration between the Commission and the Troop/Police Contributing Countries and emphasized the importance of both pre-deployment and in-mission trainings on the prevention and combating of sexual exploitation and abuses (SEA) for personnel deployed in AU-led peace support operations, to effectively counter sexual exploitation and gender-based violence and achieve more effective protection of women and girls affected by conflicts. Council also called for necessary steps to be taken by peacekeeping missions to increase the number of female personnel.

Council stressed the need to provide funding and capacity building to women on peace and security issues at the national, regional and continental levels, in order to acquaint them with peace and security knowledge, which will enable them to fully participate in conflict prevention, management, mediation, reconciliation, and peacebuilding, as well as in post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Council stressed the need to ensure that post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building efforts include well-resourced gender programming which focuses on psycho-social recovery, as well as women's economic empowerment. Council called for the implementation of the international commitment to ensure that 15 percent of peace-building funds go to projects that promote gender equality.

Council urged all Member States, that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify, without any further delay, the relevant AU instruments, notably the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999) and the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009), as well as other relevant international instruments. Council stressed the need for renewed efforts towards the implementation of these instruments, as well as of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004) and the UN Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

Council agreed to include the status of Women, Peace and Security in Africa in its Report on its Activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa to be submitted to the 27th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union to be held in Kigali, Rwanda in July 2016.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.