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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
726^H MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
20 OCTOBER 2017

PSC/PR/BR. (DCCXXVI)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), dedicated its 726th meeting held on 20 October 2017, to an Open Session on the theme: “Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in Africa”.

Council and participants took note of the statement made by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui, read on his behalf by the Acting Director for Peace and Security, Dr. Admore Mupoki Kambudzi. They also took note of the presentations made by the United Nations Under-Secretary General Adama Dieng, Special Advisor of the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, as well as by the representative of the AU Legal Counsel. Furthermore, they also took note of the statements made by the representatives AU Member States, the representative of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to the AU, as well as by the representatives of AU partners, other institutions and organizations.

Council and participants recalled earlier decisions and pronouncements of the PSC on peace, justice and reconciliation, particularly, Communique [PSC/PR/COMM.(CDIX)] adopted by the PSC at its 409th meeting, open session, held in Addis Ababa, on 18 December 2013; Communique [PSC/MIN/COMM.(CCCLXXXIII)] adopted by the PSC at its 383rd meeting held at ministerial level in Algiers, on 29 June 2013; Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR. (DCLXXII)] adopted by the PSC at its 672nd meeting, open session, held in Addis Ababa on 28 March 2017 and Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.DXXV] adopted by the PSC at its 525th meeting, open session, held in Addis Ababa on 23 July 2015.

Council and participants underscored the mutually reinforcing link between justice, peace and security. In this context, they underlined the importance of building trust between state institutions and societies, as well as the importance of reconciling and healing societies, which have been deeply divided by violent conflicts. They also emphasized the importance of comprehensive transitional justice and reconciliation process, as being key to effectively preventing relapses and laying a strong foundation for sustainable peace in countries emerging from violent conflicts.

Council and participants acknowledged that the AU has one of the most advanced compendium of normative instruments for the holistic promotion of peace, justice and reconciliation, particularly, as enshrined in the AU Constitutive Act, the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African

Union and the Protocol Establishing the Criminal Jurisdiction of the African Court of Justice, as well as the Protocol on the Statute of the African Court on Human and People's Rights. They recalled that a number of AU Member States are state parties to these regional instruments and other relevant international conventions on justice such as the Rome Statute. They further recalled the decision of the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of AU Heads of State and Government, which declared the period 2014-2024 as the "*Madiba Nelson Mandela Decade of Reconciliation in Africa*", during which significant progress is expected in the promotion of peace, truth-telling, justice, reconciliation, healing, restoration of social cohesion, reconstruction and resilience, in particular in the framework of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020.

Council and participants commended all Member States, which have already signed, ratified and domesticated all existing AU and relevant international normative instruments relating to the promotion of human rights and urged those Member States, which have not yet done so, to also do the same.

Council and participants, once again, recognized that there is no universally accepted and applicable standard formula for sequencing peace, justice and reconciliation processes, which are usually complex and politically sensitive and, as such, they still require further elucidation, taking into full consideration the strategic priorities and peculiarities of each conflict context, including national and regional dynamics. Notwithstanding this recognition, they stressed that amnesty should not be used as a scapegoat to subvert justice and condone impunity.

Council and participants stressed that international justice systems, as particularly embodied in the International Criminal Court, should be complementary, rather than a substitute, to the national and regional justice systems. In this context, they emphasized that the primary responsibility for promoting peace, justice and reconciliation rests with the Governments of the Member States. They underscored the importance of building and further enhancing the capacity of local, national and regional justice systems, including peace committees, peacebuilding ministries and national reconciliation commissions, as well as community and traditional justice systems. In addition, they encouraged Member States to educate their populations, with a view to raising public awareness about the critical importance of justice and reconciliation, as well as of management of diversity, in building sustainable peace and stability in their countries.

Council and participants acknowledged that there are some AU Member States which are generally considered as success stories with regard to national reconciliation processes, in particular Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and South Africa. In this regard, Council congratulated all Member States, which had successfully gone through their transitional justice and reconciliation processes and requested them to share their experiences, best practices and lessons learnt with the other Member States still facing the challenges of embarking on their own transitional justice processes.

Council and participants underlined the imperative of inclusive post-conflict reconstruction and development, as well as peacebuilding and national reconciliation processes, which bring on board civil society, traditional leaders, leaders of various religious groups, women and youth, as critical role players. While expressing deep concern over the persistence of violent conflicts with the attendant human rights violations and abuses, they further underlined the imperative of comprehensively addressing the underlying causes of violent conflicts as being key to effective conflict prevention. They further emphasized the need for the AU Commission, the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) and relevant civil society organizations to regularly provide the PSC with comprehensive early warning briefings which also include a human rights dimension.

Council and participants commended AU partners for their continued support to post-conflict reconstruction and development, as well as peacebuilding efforts in Member States emerging from violent conflicts, particularly in further strengthening national infrastructures for peace, as well as efforts to bring about lasting political solutions to violent conflicts.

Council and participants, once again, emphasized the need for all Member States, RECs/RMs, civil society organizations, United Nations, AU partners and all relevant international institutions to collectively work towards the noble goal of Silencing the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020. In this regard, they recalled the terms of the Solemn Declaration adopted by the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of AU Heads of State and Government on the occasion of the OAU/AU 50th Anniversary, whose letter and spirit, with regard to the determination of Africa not to bequeath the burden of conflict to the next generation, has been translated into the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa, as adopted by the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union.

Council and participants requested the Commission to expedite the development of a Draft AU Policy Framework on Justice and Reconciliation for consideration and adoption by the relevant AU Policy Organs, as soon as possible.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.