

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

P. O. Box 3243, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Tel.: (251-11) 551 38 22 Fax: (251-11) 519321

Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

862ND MEETING

23 JULY 2019

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR. (DCCCLXII)

PRESS STATEMENT

PRESS STATEMENT

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), dedicated its 862nd meeting, held on 23 July 2019, to an open session on the theme: “Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts in Africa”.

Council took note of the Opening Statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Togolese Republic to the AU, H.E. Sebade Toba, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of July 2019. Council also took note of the Statement made by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui, read on his behalf by the Acting Director for Peace and Security, Dr. Alhaji Sarjoh Bah; as well as the statements of the Special Representative of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU), Madame Hannah Tetteh, and Minister for Women and Human Rights Development of the Federal Republic of Somalia, H.E. Ms Deqa Yasin Hag Yusuf.

Council welcomed the presentations made by the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, Mme Bineta Diop and the SRSG on Sexual Violence, H.E. Pramila Patten. Council also took note of all statements made by the representatives of Member States, AU Partners, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), as well as international institutions and organizations.

Council recalled all its previous decisions and pronouncements, on sexual violence, particularly Press Statements [PSC/PR/BR. (DCCCLIII)] adopted at its 803rd meeting held on 19 October 2018. Council also recalled UN Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000); 2467 (2019); 1820 (2018); 2331 (2016); 2106 (2013); 1960 (2010); and 1888 (2009). Council also recalled the AU Policy on Conduct and Discipline for AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and the AU Policy on Prevention and Responses to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse for PSOs.

Council noted with deep concern the persistence of conflict related sexual violence in Africa, in spite of the commitments made by Member States to end this scourge. Council also noted that the majority of the perpetrators of sexual violence are non-state actors.

Council underscored the need for all Member States to sign, ratify and fully domesticate all AU and international instruments relating to sexual violence.

Council stressed the importance for Member States to adopt zero tolerance policies and convert the culture of impunity into a culture of justice and accountability through consistent and effective prosecution of sexual violence crimes regardless of the status or rank of the perpetrators. In the same context, Council underlined the importance of fostering national ownership and leadership of holistic, sustainable, as well as victim and survivor-centered responses, including one-stop centres, in order to ensure effective healing and restoration of the dignity of the victims of sexual violence.

Council also underlined the importance of addressing the fundamental root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, including structural gender-based inequalities. In the same context, Council emphasized the importance of ensuring inclusion of women in the national

defence and security forces and their deployment in PSOs, as well as their effective participation in peace processes.

Council underscored the importance of regular capacity building training on prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, particularly for national justice and security sector actors. Council further underlined the importance of fostering regional cooperation in terms of sharing experiences, best practice and lessons learnt in preventing and addressing conflict related sexual violence.

Council encouraged all Member States to adopt broad, progressive legal frameworks that reflect a broad understanding of sexual violence, including against men and boys, as well as the rights of children conceived through wartime rape, and to engage with religious and traditional leaders to help shift harmful social norms that silence the victims and shield the perpetrators.

Council commended all Member States that have already adopted their national action plans for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which is the framework that provides for the participation of women in peace processes and reiterated its call to Member States with National Action Plans for an annual report using the AU Continental Results Framework on monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Women, peace and Security Agenda. In the same vein, Council encouraged the other Member States, which have not yet done so, to also do the same without further delays.

Council stressed the importance of harnessing and further strengthening women's national platforms and regional networks on peace and security.

Council also encouraged Member States, which have not yet done so, to endorse the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians.

Council commended all AU partners for their continued support to the continental efforts aimed at preventing and fighting sexual violence in Africa.

Council also commended civil society organizations for the important role they are playing, not only in building the capacity of Member States to prevent but also to respond to cases of sexual violence but also gender-based violence in general, including supporting the victims and survivors of this scourge. Council further commended the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security and the UNSRSG on Sexual Violence for their relentless efforts aimed at ending sexual violence against women in the Continent.

Council agreed to dedicate an annual open session to conflict-related sexual violence, which will serve as an annual forum for taking stock of progress made and challenges faced in the efforts aimed at ending sexual violence in armed conflicts in Africa.

Council agreed to remain actively seize of the mater.