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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
864TH MEETING
6 AUGUST 2019
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(DCCCLXIV)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) dedicated its 864th meeting held on 6 August 2019, to an open session on the theme: “Natural and Other Disasters on the Continent: Beyond the Normative Frameworks”.

Council and participants took note of the opening remarks made by H.E. Ambassador Albert Ranganai Chimbindi, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the AU, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of August 2019. They also took note of the presentation made by Dr. Khabele Matlosa, Director of the Department of Political Affairs, as well as Maj. General Francis Okello, Ag. Head of the AU Commission Peace Support Operations Division, and Dr. Amos Makarau, Director of the Regional Office for Africa of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). They also took note of the statements made by the representatives of AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), as well as partners and international organizations.

Council recalled Article 6(f) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, which stipulates that one of the functions of the Council is humanitarian action and disaster management. Council also recalled Article 7 (p) of the same Protocol which empowers Council to support and facilitate humanitarian action in situations of armed conflicts and major natural disasters.

Council recalled all AU Assembly Decisions on climate change, particularly, Decisions [Assembly/AU/Dec723(XXXII)] adopted at its 32nd Ordinary Session held in February 2019 and [Assembly/AU/Dec. 669(XXX)] adopted at its 30th Ordinary Session held in January 2018. Council also recalled all its previous pronouncements and decisions on Climate Change, including, Press Statements [PSC/PR/BR.(DCCLXXIV)]; [PSC/PR/BR. (DCCVIII)] and [PSC/PR/BR. (DLXXXV)] adopted at its 774th; 708th and 585th meetings held on 21 May 2018; on 16 August 2017, and on 30 March 2016, respectively, as well as Communique [PSC/PR/COMM. (DCLX)] adopted at its 660th meeting held on 21 February 2016 and Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.(DCCCXXVIII)] adopted at its 828th meeting held on 19 February 2019.

Council expressed solidarity with the governments and people of Member States adversely affected by climate change and emphasized the importance of addressing the factors which contribute to natural disasters and lead to the destruction of infrastructure and forced displacement of the population. In this regard, Council emphasized the need for Member States and partners to focus on adaptation measures with a view to build resilience in the communities in facing climate change.

Council stressed that natural disasters and climate change contribute to exacerbating the existing tensions among communities, threaten the availability and access to vital resources and, disproportionately, affected the most vulnerable. In this context, Council

emphasized the need for Member States to reinforce measures to address effects of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Furthermore, Council and participants urged Member States to redouble their efforts in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts within the context of the AU Solemn Declaration to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020.

Council reiterated its call for Member States to accelerate the integrated implementation of all existing international and regional commitments and agreements relating to mitigation of the effects of climate change. These include the Paris Agreement, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that deplete the Ozone Layer and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) and its four priority areas for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks, namely understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk management; investing in disaster reduction for resilience and; enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Council stressed the need for Member States to develop an effective communication mechanism on early warning on natural disasters. In this regard, Council recommended the establishment of command centers which operate on a 24 hour basis to closely monitor and timeously issue early warning alerts on impending natural disasters, with a view to further enhancing national disaster risk preparedness and response capacities. Furthermore, Council emphasized for the need coordinated effort at national, regional and continental level in planning and responding to natural disasters in Africa, in close coordination with the RECs/RMs.

Council underscored the importance of secured sustainable funding for effects of climate change on the Continent. In this context, Council commended all Member States, which have already established special funding for the response to natural disasters and urged those which have not yet done so, to do the same.

Council requested the Chairperson of the AU Commission to recommend to the Member States proposals on how best the Permanent Representatives Committee Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs can be sufficiently funded and be able to respond to the eruption of natural disasters in the Continent. Council also stressed the need to expedite the finalization of the necessary institutional framework, with a view to expediting the operationalization of the PRC Sub-Committee on Climate Change.

Council further requested the Commission to expedite the operationalization of the African Humanitarian Agency (AfHA) as provided for in the African Common Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness, with a view to supporting Member States on disaster risk preparedness and management.

Council recalled Article 13 (3)(f) of the PSC Protocol and underscored the important role of the African Standby Force (ASF) in providing humanitarian assistance to alleviate the

suffering of civilian population in conflict areas and support efforts to address major natural disasters on the continent. In this regard, Council requested the Chairperson of the AU Commission to expedite the full operationalization of the ASF and to deploy it in response to natural disasters. Council also underscored the need for the Regional Standby Forces to reinforce their engagement in responding to natural disasters, as well as in their capacity building training programmes.

Council took note of the development of the African Union Policy Guidelines on the Role of the African Standby Force in Humanitarian Action and Natural Disaster, and requested the AU Commission to expedite its finalization.

Council underscored the importance of partnerships and close working relationship between the AU Commission with relevant institutions, including the UN Agencies, such as the UN-Habitat and UN Environment and the Africa Risk Capacity (ARC), as well as the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and to learn lessons from Asian countries, including scientific and technical approaches to generate early warning and facilitate prevention, response and recovery efforts. Council underlined that this cooperation will enhance measures to strengthen climate change adaptation and mitigation measures on the Continent.

Council appealed to partners and the international community at large to enhance their support towards the AU-led efforts in the response to natural disasters in Africa.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.