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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
871ST MEETING
22 AUGUST 2019
ADDIS- ABABA

PSC/PR/BR.(DCCCLXXI)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 871st meeting held on 22 August 2019, had a brainstorming session on the concept of “popular uprisings” and how it impacts on peace and security in Africa,

Council took note of the statement made by H.E. Ambassador Albert Ranganai Chimbindi, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the African Union and Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) for August 2019 and the presentations made by the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, H.E. Ambassador, Minata Samate Cessouma; and the representatives of the Institute for Security Studies, as well as Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

Council recalled the relevant existing AU normative frameworks/instruments, in particular, the AU Constitutive Act; the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of Peace and Security Council of the African Union; the Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government, as well as the Ezulwini Framework for the Enhancement of the Implementation of Measures of the African Union in Situations of Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa, and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and other relevant AU human rights instruments.

Council also recalled its earlier decisions and pronouncements, in particular, Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR. (CDXXXII)], adopted at its 432nd meeting, held on 29 April 2014, which was dedicated to an Open Session on the theme: “Unconstitutional Changes of Government and Popular Uprisings in Africa”, in which Council, in light of the recurrence of unconstitutional changes of Government and ‘popular uprisings’ and the difficulties encountered at times in implementing AU instruments, decided to establish a subcommittee to undertake an in-depth review of the existing normative frameworks, with a view to developing a consolidated AU framework on how to respond to situations of unconstitutional changes of government and ‘popular uprisings’.

Council stressed that the notion of ‘popular uprising’ is complex, contested and controversial and emphasized the absence of a universally accepted and applicable definition of what constitutes a ‘popular uprising’. Council highlighted that the concept is not provided in any of the existing AU normative frameworks, in this regard, it is an invention that needs to be interrogated and reflected upon before it is embraced by the Union. In this regard, and in line with Press Statement [(PSC/PR/BR. (CDXXXII)], adopted at its 432nd meeting, held on 29 April 2014, Council requested the Chairperson of the Commission to expedite the finalisation of the draft AU framework on responses to popular uprisings and to submit the draft for consideration by Council, as soon as possible. Council stressed the importance of avoiding re-opening debate on the existing AU normative frameworks on constitutionalism during the review and underlined the need to involve the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in the said review.

Council observed the growing trend of 'uprisings' in parts of the Continent, and cognisant that while some may be peaceful, others may be and have been before significantly destructive and undermine the capacity of governments to effectively discharge their mandates, and constitute a serious threat to peace and security.

Council underscored the importance of Member States to address the root causes of crises and conflicts, including issues of governance and, in this regard, Council encouraged Member States to further strengthen good governance and accountability, deepen and consolidate democracy and rule of law to enhancing peace, security and stability on the Continent.

Council urged to Member States to build strong institutions and formulate policies that are responsive to the legitimate need of the people.

Council underscored the need to further strengthen the national, regional and continental early warning mechanisms with a view to timeously anticipate and manage the 'uprisings'.

Council noted with concern, over the increasing misuse of the media, including through fake news, which cause despondence and lawlessness, and, in this regard, called upon the media to execute its role in a responsible manner.

Council expresses **concern over the external interference** and in this regard urged the AU Member States to remain vigilant against forces that may hijack and manipulate the legitimate concerns.

Council underscored the need for all the stakeholders to operate within the provisions of the Constitution.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.