

AFRICAN UNION

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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
976TH MEETING

29 JANUARY 2021
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.(CMLXXVI)

COMMUNIQUÉ

COMMUNIQUE

Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 976th meeting held on 29 January 2021, on AU Guidelines on Elections in Africa in the Context of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic and Other Public Health Emergencies.

The Peace and Security Council,

Noting the opening remarks made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal to the AU and PSC Chairperson for January 2021, H.E. Ambassador Baye Moctar Diop, as well as the briefings made by the AU Director of the Political Affairs Department, Dr. Khabele Matlosa, on behalf of the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, H.E. Ambassador Minata Samate Cessouma and by Dr. Wessam Mankoula on behalf of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC);

Mindful of the AU determination to promote and protect human and people's rights, deepen and consolidate democracy, good governance and the rule of law, in line with the Preamble and Articles 3 and 4 of the AU Constitutive Act, as well as the provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance;

Acknowledging the significant contribution of credible, free and fair elections to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and political stability, as well as in promoting, deepening and consolidating democracy in Member States, within the overall context of achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa, as well as the AU Theme of the Year 2020 'Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development';

Deeply concerned about the unprecedented socio-economic, political, humanitarian impact of COVID-19, including potential constitutional and legitimacy challenges, as well as the financial constraints being faced by Member States and **mindful of the utmost importance** of saving lives, as well as the need to redouble efforts to effectively fight and defeat the pandemic;

Recalling all its previous decisions on elections in Africa, particularly, Communique [PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXXXV)] adopted at its 935th meeting held on 9 July 2020, as well as all its decisions on the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly Communiques [PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXXVIII)] and [PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXXIV)], adopted, respectively, at its 928th and 924th meetings held on 27 May 2020 and on 12 May 2020; and

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

1. **Congratulates** all Member States which have successfully conducted their elections in unprecedentedly challenging COVID-19 pandemic context;
2. **Reiterates** that the decision on whether or not to proceed with the organization of elections during this COVID-19 context and any other public health emergency situations remains a sovereign prerogative and inalienable right of Member States and, in this regard,

emphasizes the importance for the Member States to always ensure that such critical decisions are arrived at through consultative, transparent and consensual processes, involving all relevant stakeholders, with a view to preserving and promoting peace and stability in their countries;

3. **Also reiterates the critical importance** for Member States which decide to proceed with the organization of elections, in line with their national elections calendars, to create the necessary conducive conditions to ensure safety and security of the population against COVID-19, in line with safeguard protocols issued by World Health Organization (WHO) and the CDC Africa, as well as to preserve the gains made and to maintain the current momentum in the fight against the pandemic and other public health emergencies;

4. **Welcomes** the AU Guidelines on Elections in Africa in the Context of COVID-19 pandemic and other Public Health Emergencies; **commends** the AU Commission for developing these Guidelines, and **requests** Member States to provide their inputs with a view to further enriching this document, on the basis of their national experiences, before the Guidelines are submitted to the Permanent Representatives Committee, as soon as possible;

5. **Also commends** the AU Commission for continuing to provide technical capacity building support to the national elections management bodies (EMBs) of the Member States, with a view to ensuring the successful organization of credible democratic elections throughout the African Continent and, in this respect;

6. **Encourages** the national EMBs to familiarize themselves with these Guidelines, once adopted, and to develop appropriate policies to guide the organization of credible elections in their countries particularly in the context of public health emergencies; **also encourages** all relevant government institutions, political parties, civil society organizations, the media, election observers and the rest of the international community to also familiarize themselves with, and popularize, these Guidelines;

7. **Also reiterates the importance** of Member States to redouble efforts and mobilize all resources required for the successful organization of elections, with a view to reducing dependence on external support, as well as promoting national ownership of their election processes;

8. **Commends**, once again, all Member States for the efforts being deployed in the fight against COVID-19, particularly those Member States which have introduced mass testing programs in their efforts to fight and defeat the COVID-19 pandemic; and **encourages** the other Member States to also consider mass testing and to continue to report accurately on the COVID-19 pandemic situation in their countries;

9. **Also commends** Africa CDC for all efforts being deployed in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic, including providing technical assistance to Member States and for deploying healthcare workers in the Member States, as well as in assisting Member States in the process of acquisition of the COVID-19 vaccine; **underscores** the urgent need for Africa to redouble efforts and invest more resources in efforts aimed at developing its own COVID-19 vaccine;

10. **Requests** the Africa CDC to continue providing regular briefings to Council on the progress, trends and challenges in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in the Continent; and;
11. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.