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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1148TH MEETING

13 APRIL 2023
ADDIS-ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.1148 (2023)

COMMUNIQUÉ



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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 1148th meeting held on 13 April 2023, on “Cyber Security: Impact on Peace and Security in Africa”.

The Peace and Security Council,

Recalling the AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention) and Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.1120.1.(2022)] adopted at its 1120th meeting held on 9 November 2022 on the Inaugural Engagements between the PSC and the AU Commission on International Law, which affirmed that international law applies to cyberspace and stressed that the prohibition on the threat or use of force, the prohibition on intervention in the internal or external affairs of states, and the inviolability of the political independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of states are foundational rules of international law;

Recalling Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.1097.1 (2022)], adopted at its 1097th meeting held on 4 August 2022, on Emerging Technologies and New Media: Impact on Democratic Governance, Peace and Security in Africa; Communiqué [PSC/PR./COMM. (DCCCL)], adopted at its 850th held on 20 May 2019; and Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.(DCXXVII)] adopted at its 627th meeting (Open Session) held on 26 September 2016; as well as Assembly Decision [Ext./Assembly/AU/Dec/(XVI)] adopted by the 16th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government held on 28 May 2022, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, as well as all its previous decisions and pronouncements on cyber-security;

Deeply concerned by the growing threat to peace, security and stability in the Continent emanating from the increasing cyber-attacks, malicious use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and incidents of unethical and hostile cyber-activities undertaken by both, state and non-state actors, including the targeting of government institutions and public infrastructure; the spread of misinformation and disinformation, subversive activities and interferences with national government processes, as well as the promotion of ideologies of hate and hate speech;

Mindful of the ongoing open-ended deliberations and outcomes of the United Nations (UN) Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behavior in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security and the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information Telecommunications in the Context of International Security;

Acknowledging the critical importance of the cyber technologies; information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the promotion of national, regional and continental development; as well as in the promotion of peace, security and stability in Member States;

Noting the opening statement made by H.E. Ambassador Abdelhamid Elgharbi, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tunisia to the Africa Union and Chairperson of the PSC for April 2023, and the introductory remarks read by Ms. Patience Chiradza, the Director for Governance and Conflict Prevention, on behalf of H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security; **also noting** the presentations by the representatives of the AU Department of Energy and Infrastructure; the AU Office of the Legal Counsel, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA); and

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

1. **Expresses deep concern** over the increasing global cyber threats and attacks, which constitute a serious threat to national, regional and international peace and security and, in this respect, **strongly condemns** all cyber-attacks, particularly the recent large-scale attack on the AU Commission information technology (IT) infrastructure and **strongly warns** the perpetrators that they shall be brought to account for their heinous acts;
2. **Stresses the need** for effective internet governance as a matter of urgency and strategic importance and in this regard, **encourages** Member States to develop national cybersecurity strategies and to create national and regional computer emergency response teams (CERT) and/or computer security incident response teams (CSIRT);
3. **Also encourages** Member States to develop, in collaboration with all stakeholders, national cybersecurity policies and adopt other necessary measures to more effectively secure their cyberspaces;
4. **Underlines the importance** of mainstreaming cyber security in all AU activities and; in the same context **requests** the AU Commission to expedite the establishment of a Unit within the Political Affairs Peace and Security Department, which will work together with all other stakeholders in monitoring and reporting on cyber-security issues within the Continent, pursuant to Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.(DCXXVII)] adopted at its 627th meeting (Open Session) held on 26 September 2016;
5. **Encourages** Member States to develop robust regulatory frameworks that facilitate the ethical use of ICTs, including the establishment of credible data governance infrastructure and to work together with the private sector, with a view to further strengthen the national cyber security capacities;
6. **Underscores** the importance of a Common African Position on cyber security and, in this context, **requests** the AU Commission on International Law to expeditiously complete, and submit to the Peace and Security Council, the draft statement of a Common African Position on the Application of International Law to Cyberspace, and **encourages** those Member States, which have not yet done so, to urgently complete the questionnaire that was circulated by the AU Commission on International Law on this matter;
7. **Welcomes** the capacity-building program that is being organized for the representatives of Member States by the AU Commission on International Law in cooperation with the Government of Canada on the rules of international law applicable to information and communication technologies, and **encourages** Member States to participate in the upcoming session of this capacity-building program that will be held at the AU Headquarters during the period June 7-9, 2023;
8. **Encourages** civil society organizations, educational institutions, think tanks and the media to also contribute in civic education and public awareness raising on cyber security and the threat posed by cyber attacks to national security and development;
9. **Underlines the need** for the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms to also actively contribute in the efforts of Member States to combat cyber-attacks and, to this end establish regional cyber security centers;
10. **Requests the AU Commission** to establish mechanisms and platforms, such as the regional forums dedicated to address cybersecurity issues, with a view to facilitating an efficient platform for

sharing experiences, lessons learnt and best practices related to cybersecurity issues among AU Member States, as well as to further enhance regional and international cooperation in this area;

11. **Encourages** Member States to make full use of existing capacities within the Continent, including AFRIPOL and CISSA under the overall coordination of the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department; in this regard, **welcomes** the offer by CISSA to provide training and capacity building to the PSC Committee of Experts on cybersecurity issues;
12. **Strongly encourages** all Member States, which have not yet done so, to urgently sign, ratify and fully domesticate the AU Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection; and
13. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.

2023-04-13

Communiqué of the 1148th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council, Held on 13 April 2023, on Cyber Security: Impact on Peace and Security in Africa.

Peace and Security Council

African Union Commission

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