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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
269TH MEETING
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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR(CCLXIX)

PRESS STATEMENT

PRESS STATEMENT OF THE 269th MEETING
OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 269th meeting held on 28 March 2011, devoted an open session to the theme: *“Women and children and other vulnerable groups in armed conflicts”*. The meeting was held in pursuance of the decision adopted by Council at its 223rd meeting held on 30 March 2010.

Council took note of the statement made by the Commission on the status of implementation of the African Women’s Decade. Council also took note of the Preliminary Report of the Panel of the Wise on the theme: *“Mitigating Vulnerabilities of Women and Children in Armed Conflicts”*, whose final version will be submitted to the Assembly in January 2012, presented by two of its members, M^{me} Mary-Chinery-Hesse and M^{me} Marie-Madeleine Ngoy-Kalala. Council also welcomed the statements made by Mrs. Margot Wallström, the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, on the need to develop joint AU-UN response to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence.

Furthermore, Council saluted the courage and resilience of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, who delivered poignant messages to the meeting. Council was moved by those testimonies, which further highlight the need for a collective and determined effort to effectively address the problem of sexual violence.

Council recognized the efforts made by Member States to address conflict-related sexual violence. At the same time, Council expressed concern at the situation of women and children in conflict situations and post-conflict contexts, stressing the need to fully investigate cases of crimes committed against women and children, to launch preventive campaigns specifically aimed at the armed forces and the police, and to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. In addition, Council emphasized the specific vulnerabilities of women and children who are refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Council urged Member States that have not yet done so, to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), and requested those countries that have ratified the Protocol to domesticate it. Council further urged Member States to ensure that their annual reports on the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2005), the African Charter on the Protection and Welfare of the Child (1999), as well as the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009), are submitted on time.

Council emphasized the importance of developing strategies at the continental and regional levels, to enable the monitoring of the situation of women and children in conflict. Council also stressed the need, in situations where conflict-related sexual violence takes place,

to provide support for facilitating the psychological rehabilitation of the survivors of such violence.

Council recognized that, despite the many challenges faced by women and children during conflicts, post-conflict settings also provide opportunities for promoting women's leadership, enhance access to justice, and build momentum for the fundamental rights of children and women.

Council welcomed the efforts of the Chairperson of the Commission to ensure the mainstreaming of gender aspects into AU activities aimed at promoting peace and security, including through the deployment of gender experts in AU Liaison Offices and Peace Support Operations, the appointment of women as Special Envoys/Representatives, as well as the involvement of women in peace processes. Council further expressed support to the decision of the Chairperson of the Commission to appoint a Special Representative on Women, Peace and Security.

Council called for the mobilization of the required resources to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender aspects into the AU peace-related activities, including the implementation of relevant AU and United Nations decisions and resolutions.

Council recognized the positive role that women have played in the past in bringing about peaceful resolution to conflicts and encouraged them to continue with such efforts. Council further underscored the need to strengthen women's participation in formal peace mediation/negotiation processes, as well as in security sector reforms and peacebuilding. In this context, Council acknowledged the contributions of *Femmes Africa Solidarité*, Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR), Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICEE), Network of Women's Organizations on Peace and Security in the ECOWAS Region (NOPSWECO), City of Hope/V-DAY (Bukavu, DRC), OXFAM and UN Women, among others.

Council stressed the need to urgently finalize the Training of Trainers (ToTs) Manual for engendering African peace-keeping operations, including the African Standby Force, and called on Member States to designate focal points to be trained as ToTs and to uphold the code of conduct as articulated in the Manual.

Council paid tribute to the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for her commitment and efforts to enhance cooperation and coordination with the AU. Council stressed the importance of such cooperation and coordination in addressing conflict-related sexual violence and encouraged the Commission to take all steps required to this end.

Council reiterated the need to involve the Panel of the Wise, supported by civil society and women's organizations, in a coordinated advocacy campaign for the ratification, domestication and implementation of relevant instruments relating to the situation of women and children in armed conflict.

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