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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
366TH MEETING
16 APRIL 2013
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR(CCCLXVI)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security of the African Union (AU), at its 366th meeting, held on 16 April 2013, followed a briefing by the Commission on the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR). Council also followed the statements made by the representatives of Chad, in its capacity as the Chair of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), South Africa, Rwanda, the ECCAS Secretariat and the United Nations. The representative of Togo also attended the meeting.

Council expressed its deep concern at the abuse, rape, looting and other violations of human rights and of International Humanitarian Law involving the elements of the rebel group Seleka and causing increased displacement of the civilian population, both within the CAR and towards the neighboring countries, particularly Cameroon, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Council made an appeal for the mobilization of adequate humanitarian assistance for the affected populations, and expressed appreciation to all neighboring countries hosting CAR refugees.

Council stressed that this situation, which confirms the concerns expressed on several occasions by the AU about the risk of the resumption of hostilities and the entry of the rebellion into Bangui, called on those concerned to take effective measures for the protection of the civilian population and respect for relevant international instruments. Council requested the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to gather as comprehensive information as possible about the situation and to submit to it a report thereon within one month. Council also requested the AU partners to effectively contribute to the efforts to protect the civilian population. Council stressed that the leaders of Seleka and other concerned actors will be held accountable before the court of law for the abuses and other violations of human rights perpetrated on the ground.

Council reiterated its appreciation to ECCAS, in particular its current Chairman, President Idriss Deby Itno, and to the Chairman of the ECCAS Follow-up Committee on CAR, President Denis Sassou N'Gouesso, for their engagement and efforts regarding the situation in CAR. Council noted, in this regard, the outcome of the ECCAS extraordinary summit held in N'Djamena, on 3 April 2013. Council also noted with satisfaction the efforts of the UN Secretariat, in particular those of its Special Representative in Bangui.

Council reiterated the strong condemnation by the AU of the unconstitutional change and the illegal and violent seizure of power by the rebel Seleka and endorsed the decision of ECCAS that members of Seleka will be prevented from standing for elections, in line with the relevant provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, particularly those forbidding the perpetrators of unconstitutional changes of Government to occupy positions in the political structures of their countries and to stand for elections to restore constitutional order.

Council noted with deep concern that the leaders of the rebellion have acted in defiance of the Libreville Agreements, the decisions of the leaders of the region and the relevant AU instruments. Council reiterated the centrality of the Libreville Agreements in any efforts to find a way out of the current crisis, and called on all CAR stakeholders to fully abide by its provisions.

Council reiterated all its earlier decisions on the situation in CAR and AU's determination, in collaboration with ECCAS, the United Nations and other stakeholders, to ensure the return to constitutional order. Council looked forward to the outcome of the ECCAS extraordinary summit scheduled to take place in N'Djamena, on 18 April 2013.

Council urged the AU partners, including the Security Council, the European Union (EU) and bilateral partners, to fully support the ongoing efforts of the continent to promote the rule of law, democracy, good governance and observance of human rights in the CAR.

Council re-affirmed the critical contribution of the AU-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) contingent in CAR. In this regard, Council expressed deep concern over the safety of the contingent and the impact of this situation on the effectiveness of the fight against the LRA, following information that the Seleka rebel group was calling for their withdrawal.

Council requested the Commission to keep it regularly informed about the evolution of the situation and ensure the effective follow-up of its decisions on the situation in CAR, in order to ensure their scrupulous implementation.

In the meantime, Council requested the Chairperson of the Commission to initiate the necessary consultations with the relevant stakeholders, particularly ECCAS and other concerned African actors, for the establishment of an International Contact Group on the Situation in the CAR, so as to mobilize the broadest possible support for the efforts to restore constitutional order on the basis of relevant AU instruments and promote lasting peace, security, stability and good governance in the CAR.

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