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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

476<sup>th</sup> MEETING

16 DECEMBER 2014

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.1(CDLXXVI)

**PRESS STATEMENT**

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 476<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 16 December 2014, devoted an Open Session to the theme: "Sources of Instability in Africa: Root Causes and Responses: Focusing on the issue of Women, Peace and Security". Statements were made during the session by AU Member States, bilateral and multilateral partners and international organizations/institutions, as well as by civil society organisations (CSOs) and women's organizations.

Council took note of the presentations made by Ms. Bineta Diop, the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission on Women, Peace and Security, the AU Department of Political Affairs and statements made by AU Member States, bilateral and multilateral partners and international organization/institutions, as well as by CSOs and women's organizations.

Council recalled its earlier communiqués and press statements relating to the issue of women and children in conflict situations and the UN Security Council resolution 1325.

Council and Participants welcomed the presentations made by the representatives of the CSOs and women's organizations and emphasized the important role these organizations and other non-state actors play in advancing the agenda on women, peace and security in Africa.

Council and Participants reiterated the fact that a focus on women in peace and security processes brings into sharp focus the wider human security dimensions of the AU Peace and Security Agenda, as articulated in the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defense and Security Policy (CADSP), adopted by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held on 28 February 2004, to the extent that conflict in Africa cannot be delinked from the challenges of reducing poverty and promoting health, development and education, especially as the AU celebrated, in May 2013, its OAU/AU 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of tackling these very challenges.

Council and Participants recognized the growing evidence that increasing the participation of women in peace processes and other critical sectors greatly enhance conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict rehabilitation processes and responses to the needs of women and the population at large. In this regard, Council and Participants stressed the need to seize every opportunity to mainstream gender into the African peace and security agenda, increase the representation of women in decision-making processes and promote women's empowerment in the economic sector.

Council and Participants took note of the ongoing efforts of the Commission and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission on Women, Peace and Security, in bringing the issue of women and children at the center of its work with a view to developing strategies at the continental, regional and national levels, to facilitate monitoring of the situation of

women and children in conflict situations. Council further commended the Special Envoy of the Chairperson on Women, Peace and Security for the efforts she is deploying, including her recent visits to the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan, with a view to improving the participation of women in mediation and promotion of peace, political processes, conflict prevention and encouraged her to regularly brief Council on her activities, including through open sessions.

Council and Participants acknowledged the resilience and the leadership of women in the Saharawi Arab Republic in the context of the Saharawi people's struggle for self-determination.

Council urged the AU Commission, through the coordination of the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to formulate a Continental Results Framework to monitor the implementation by AU Member States and other relevant stakeholders of the various instruments and other commitments on women, peace and security in Africa.

Council and Participants recalled paragraph 17 of Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.501 (XXII), which declared 2014-2024 as the Madiba Nelson Mandela Decade of Reconciliation in Africa and, in this regard, stressed the importance of bringing and engaging women in the national reconciliation process in nation-building, conflict resolution, as well as the promotion of national healing and justice as a pre-requisites for realising a Conflict-Free Africa by the Year 2020.

Council and Participants recognized the responsibility of AU Member States for ensuring the protection of women and children in situations where they are threatened or affected by violence, in line with relevant AU and international instruments. Council and Participants further recognized the fact that, whilst the necessary instruments for the protection of women and children in armed conflict and for the promotion of their rights exist, the pace of their implementation is deplorably slow. Council accordingly, called all stakeholders concerned to fully implement them in the promotion of the rights of women and children in conflict situations.

Council and Participants strongly condemned the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and emphasized the need to fight impunity in cases of sexual violence, rape, abduction, forced marriages and other forms of gender-based violence in situations of conflict and stressed the need to hold perpetrators of these acts accountable. Council further urged all stakeholders to provide necessary assistance and support to all victims of these violations across Africa.

Council noted the progress made by the AU Member States on the ratification and implementation of the AU instruments related to the protection of the rights of women and children in conflict situations and urged all AU Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify, without any further delay, the relevant AU instruments, notably the Protocol to the

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999) and the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009), as well as other relevant international instruments.

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2014-12-16

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