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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
279TH MEETING
18 MAY 2011
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(CCLXXIX)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 279th meeting held on 18 May 2011, discussed the issue of the protection of civilian populations in armed conflicts, on the basis of the *Progress Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Development of Guidelines for the Protection of Civilians in African Union Peace Support Operations [PSC/PR/2(CCLXXIV)]*, as well as the statements made by the representatives of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Council recalled decision Assembly/AU/Dec.294(XV).2 of the Assembly of the Union, adopted at its 15th Ordinary Session, held in Kampala, Uganda, from 25 to 27 July 2010, in which the Assembly welcomed the efforts deployed to develop a Framework of Action and AU Guidelines on the Protection of Civilians in Peacekeeping Operations. Council further recalled communiqué PSC/MIN/1(CCXXXV) on the situation in Somalia, adopted at its 245th meeting held on 15 October 2010, which, *inter alia*, encouraged the Commission to mainstream the *Draft AU Guidelines for the Protection of Civilians in Peace Support Operations* into the activities of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), as well as the relevant provisions of the Declaration of the 4th Ordinary Meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS), held in Addis Ababa, on 7 December 2010, as endorsed by the 18th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, held in Addis Ababa, from 27 to 28 January 2011 [EX.CL/Dec.626(XVIII)].

Council stressed the relevance of a number of AU instruments to the protection of civilians, including the AU Constitutive Act, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, as well as the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons. Council further stressed the imperative of ensuring the effective implementation of the commitments made by Member States in these instruments, in particular with respect to the protection of civilians.

Council emphasized the importance of the protection of civilians, and urged the Commission to finalize, as early as possible, the Draft Guidelines, drawing lessons from relevant experiences. Council encouraged the Commission to mainstream the protection of civilians into the whole spectrum of the African Peace and Security Architecture. Council welcomed the efforts being made by the Commission, including the steps taken to mainstream the Draft Guidelines for the Protection of civilians into the work of AMISOM. Council encouraged the Commission to pursue its efforts, notably through the development of: (i) an AMISOM approach for the protection of civilians, (ii) a lessons learned report, (iii) protection threats, vulnerabilities and risks indicators for the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), (iv) a Guidance Note on protection mandates, (v) a Framework for developing mission-specific protection strategies, (vi) and drafting of training guidelines, as well as through the conduct of awareness-raising and outreach activities.

Council requested the Commission to provide it with regular reports on progress made in the implementation of this press statement and other relevant AU decisions.

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