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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
728TH MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
31 OCTOBER 2017

PSC/PR/BR. (DCCXXVIII)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), dedicated its 728th meeting held on 31 October 2017, to an Open Session on the theme: “The role of women in preventing and countering violent extremism in Africa”, in commemoration of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Council and participants took note of the opening statements made by the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of October 2017, H.E. Ambassador Dieudonne Ndabarushimana and the Commissioner for Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui, read on his behalf by the Acting Director for Peace and Security, Dr. Admore Mupoki Kambudzi, as well as the opening statement by the Deputy Joint Special Representative of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operations in Darfur (UNAMID), Madame Bintou Keita. Council and participants also took note of the presentation made by the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Madame Bineta Diop, as well as by the Executive Director of Somali Women’s Leadership Initiative, Ms. Asha A. Siyad; the representative of the G-5 Sahel Women Network in Mali, Ms. Fatoumata Mohamed Toure and by the representative of Rural Women in the Lake Chad Basin, in Chad, Ms. Bevia Respa. They further took note of the statements made by the representatives of AU Member States, AU partners, other international institutions and organizations.

Council and participants recalled previous pronouncements by Council, in particular, Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR. (DCLIX)] adopted by the PSC, at its open session on the role of women in peace and security, held on 16 February 2017. They also recalled UN Security Council Resolution 2242, which addresses the linkages between women, peace and security (WPS) and prevention of violent extremism (PVE), and called on the international community to invest in efforts aimed at supporting meaningful participation of women in countering the scourge of violent extremism;

Council and participants noted that violent extremism is posing a serious threat to peace and security, as well as to sustainable development in the African continent. Acknowledging the critical role that women play in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as in combating violent extremism, they underscored the importance of ensuring societal inclusiveness, facilitating effective participation of women in peace processes at all levels, as well as respecting and promoting women’s rights, as some of the success factors in preventing and combating the scourge of violent extremism.

Council and participants expressed deep concern over the growing trend of abuse of women and girls, by terrorist and violent extremist groups, that are used as suicide bombers, sex

slaves and are subject to other forms of abuses and violations. In this regard, they condemned, in the strongest of terms, the abductions, trafficking and all forms of abuses and violations against women and girls by terrorist and violent extremist groups operating in various parts of the African continent, which include Boko Haram and Al Shabaab. In the same vein, they underscored the urgent need for the redoubling of national, regional and continental efforts in the prevention and fight against terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization. They commended the efforts and sacrifice made by women in combating terrorism in Somalia, Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel.

Council and participants emphasized the importance of further strengthening the administrative capacity of local and national governments, among other by ensuring effective border control and management systems, as well as judiciary services, in order to more effectively prevent and combat terrorism, violent extremism, human trafficking, in particular exploitation of women and girls.

Council and participants welcomed the significant progress being made in terms of putting in place national, regional and continental policies on gender, including gender parity and zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls. They reiterated the importance of Member States to guarantee the protection of women and girls against all forms of abuses, including the establishment of protection infrastructures that provide comprehensive responses, such as legal, medical and psycho-social support. They also underlined the need for ensuring full compliance with the AU zero tolerance policy on sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the need for imposition of stiff penalties against perpetrators of sexual violence and other forms of abuses against women and girls, regardless of their status or rank, with a view to combating impunity and promoting justice for the victims of violations and abuses.

Council and participants underscored the importance for all Member States to develop national action plans for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 and other subsequent resolutions. In this context, they commended all AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, which have already adopted action plans and encouraged those that have not yet done so, to also do the same;

Council and participants, acknowledging that poverty and hardship exacerbates the vulnerability of women and girls to manipulations, abuses and violations by violent extremist groups, underlined the need to fight poverty in Member States, including empowering women and girls. In this context, they underlined the importance of education and gender sensitization campaigns, as well as effective communication strategies, in order to raise public awareness on

the importance of respecting and promoting women's rights as part of the best means and ways of preventing and combating violent extremism.

Council and participants, noting that only when women are allowed to meaningfully participate in shaping comprehensive counter-violent extremism strategies will societies be in a position to more effectively address all conditions conducive to violent extremism, underlined the importance of harnessing and further strengthening women's national platforms and regional networks on peace and security.

Council and participants also underscored the importance of Member States to develop a deeper understanding and to mainstream gender analysis into national, regional and continental efforts to effectively prevent and counter violent extremism. Similarly, they underscored the importance of institutionalizing the integration of gender perspectives in all national policies and programmes, as well as of promoting and ensuring women's effective participation in decision-making, particularly, in the implementation of the peace and security agenda in the African continent. In this regard, they welcomed the establishment of the network of African Women Mediators, FemWise.

Council and participants commended the AU partners for their continued support to the overall AU women, peace and security agenda, particularly in building the required capacity to effectively prevent and combat violent extremism in Africa.

Council and participants welcomed the recent AU-UN joint solidarity visit to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, under the joint leadership of the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed and the AU Special Envoy for Women Peace and Security, Madame Bineta Diop, within the context of the African Women Leaders Network. They looked forward to similar joint visits to other parts of the continent, which are affected by violent conflicts.

Council and participants congratulated Madame Bintou Keita on her appointment by the UN Secretary-General as the new UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. They commended her for her sterling job as the UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative and expressed the hope that her successor will maintain the positive trend she had developed in that Hybrid Mission

Council and participants reiterated the need for the AU Commission to expedite the finalization of the Continental Results Framework for monitoring and reporting on the

implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa for consideration by Council, as soon as possible;

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.

2017-10-31

Press Statement: Peace and Security Council 728th Meeting Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 31 October 2017

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