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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
653rd MEETING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
20 JANUARY 2017

PSC/PR/COMM.(DCLIII)

COMMUNIQUE

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 653rd meeting, held on 20 January 2017, in Addis Ababa, adopted the following decision on Elections in Africa:

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the briefing provided by the Commission, on "Elections in Africa: September – December 2016" covering the following countries: Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, Seychelles and Zambia. Council **also takes note** of the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Gabon.

2. **Commends** the continued commitment and efforts of the Commission in supporting Member States in enhancing electoral democracy on the continent;

3. **Welcomes** the progress being made by Member States in consolidating the democratic culture through the holding of periodic credible elections, as well as peaceful transfer of power, in line with Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 towards an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law. In this context, Council **commends** Member States which successfully and peacefully conducted their elections and had peaceful transfers of power during the third and fourth quarters of 2016;

4. **Emphasizes** that the postponement of elections in violation of provisions in a country's constitution can have negative implications for peace and security in the country concerned;

5. **Notes with concern** the low participation of citizens in elections, particularly the low turnout by the youth and women during elections due to declining public trust in the institutions entrusted with managing the conduct of elections. Council **urges** Member States to make deliberate efforts in ensuring and promoting popular participation in democratic processes including, in particular, elections;

6. **Also notes with concern** that whilst the media plays a significant role in supporting electoral processes in Africa, media space has been prone to abuse by some political actors, thereby undermining their independence and credibility during elections, particularly in situations where the stakes are very high and the election is very competitive and results are highly contested. In this context, Council **urges** Member States to ensure that all basic freedoms are assured during elections, including freedom of the press and media;

7. **Reaffirms** the continued commitment of the Commission to support all Members States in ensuring that regular, credible, democratic and transparent elections are held in line with the provisions of relevant AU instruments, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), the OAU/AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, the Guidelines for African Union Electoral Observations and Monitoring Missions and the African Peer Review Mechanism;

8. **Commends** the Commission for strengthening its engagement, harmonisation of its work and building synergies with Secretariats of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in election related work, particularly through deploying Joint High Level Political Missions (JHLPMs) with RECs and championing joint election observation missions. In this context, Council **commends in particular,** the AU and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for co-leading the election observer mission in Gabon and the JHLPM deployed with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to The Gambia and Ghana;

9. **Reiterates** the need for AU Member States to pay special attention to building, or strengthening where they exist, national infrastructures for peace as part of conflict prevention efforts, particularly on issues relating to election disputes;

10. **Requests** the Commission to continue conducting its early warning programmes for timely detection of signs of vulnerability and instability in order to inform early response from the respective AU and RECs organs;

11. **Urges** Member States to discourage political parties from establishing party leaning vigilantes ahead of, during and after elections, as this undermines the credibility of the electoral process and threatens peace and security in the country concerned;

12. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.

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2017-01-20

Communiqué, Peace and Security Council 653rd Meeting Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 20 January 2017

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