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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
921ST MEETING

28 APRIL 2020
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXXI)

COMMUNIQUÉ

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 921st meeting held on 28 April 2020, on the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, returnees, migrants and peacekeepers in Africa in the context of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic situation,

The Peace and Security Council,

Noting the opening remarks made by H.E. Ambassador Catherine Muigai Mwangi, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the AU and PSC Chairperson for the month of April 2020, as well as the briefings made by the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, H.E. Mrs. Amira Elfadil Mohammed and the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs H.E. Mrs. Minata Samate Cessouma; **also noting** the statement made by the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC), Mr. Peter Maurer;

Mindful of the disproportionate and multifaceted humanitarian challenges faced by refugees and IDPs, which include lack of basic social services; **also mindful** of the plight of peacekeepers in the line of duty to ensure peace and protection of civilians, public institutions and infrastructure in conflict zones in parts of the African Continent, which has been further compounded by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the plight of illegal African migrants in various parts of the world who are being subjected to compulsory deportations;

Deeply concerned about the negative impact of ongoing violence waged by terrorist organizations and armed groups in some parts of Africa, which undermine efforts being deployed in the fight against the COVID-19 and **also deeply concerned about** the total disregard and violation, by belligerents, terrorist organizations and armed groups, of the clarion call made by the Chairperson of the Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat and the UN Secretary-General, H.E. Antonio Guterres for all belligerents to fully embrace and uphold the Global Ceasefire in order to facilitate efforts being deployed in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic; and

Recalling all its previous decisions on COVID-19 and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa and **emphasizing** the need for full inclusion of internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees and migrants, as well as peacekeepers, in COVID-19 responses across the continent;

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

1. Commends AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities, the Africa CDC and the World Health Organization (WHO) for the relentless efforts being deployed in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the ICRC for its efforts in assisting refugees, IDPs, migrants

and detainee; and **urges** them to adopt all-inclusive, holistic and human rights-based approaches that are underpinned by respect for the sanctity of human life, social wellbeing and international human rights law;

2. Encourages Member States to ensure effective communication and dissemination, including through civic education campaigns, with a view to raising public awareness on the COVID-19 pandemic and the responses, including in refugee and IDP camps, as well as in holding centres for illegal/ undocumented migrants and, in the same context, **also encourages** Member States to ensure that the efforts being deployed by governments go beyond addressing the immediate healthcare challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to also comprehensively addressing the broader socio-economic impacts of the pandemic that include endemic poverty and hunger, unemployment, social inequalities, lack of clean water, proper shelter and sanitation, urban slums and informal settlements, as well as food insecurity;

3. Demands all belligerents in conflict zones within the African Continent to immediately and unconditionally cease all hostilities and to fully embrace and uphold the clarion call for a Global Ceasefire that was made by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat and United Nations Secretary-General H.E. Antonio Guterres, with a view to facilitating efforts being deployed in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic;

4. Appeals to Member States to facilitate the continental efforts against COVID-19 pandemic, among others, by opening up their airspaces for humanitarian purposes and to also facilitate access, as well as to offer protection to healthcare workers and humanitarian actors, Africa-CDC staff and UN agencies in the field, with a view to ensuring continuity of coordinated programmes that contribute towards preventing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, saving lives, livelihoods and addressing some of the needs of vulnerable groups in society;

5. Strongly condemns mass deportations, xenophobia, stigmatization, racism, intolerance, inhuman treatment of irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, which are negatively impacting on the anti- COVID-19 efforts, and in this context, **encourages** Member States to ensure protection of human rights of all people in their countries including refugees, IDPs and undocumented migrants. In view of the relevance of African hospitality extended to people of different origins in the Continent, Council **appeals** to countries outside Africa, currently hosting undocumented African migrants, to provisionally stop the ongoing indiscriminant mass deportations of those migrants on spurious allegations of spreading COVID-19 and **underlines** the need to respect human rights and international humanitarian law;

6. Underscores the urgent need for consultations among the AU Commission, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the WHO, with a view to reaching a moratorium to ensure temporary regularization of irregular migrants and a halt on all large-scale

deportations until the COVID-19 pandemic has been defeated and appropriate arrangements are put in place to cater for the migrants;

7. **Requests** the Commission to mobilize specific support for Member States hosting large numbers of refugees, IDPs and undocumented migrants, within the spirit of Pan-African solidarity and in this context, **underscores the importance** of ensuring that part of the African Union COVID-19 Response Fund, is directed towards provision of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable sections of society, including refugees, IDPs and undocumented migrants. In this regard, Council **continues to encourage** Member States, which have not yet done so, to also make their contributions to the Fund in the spirit of pan-African solidarity and promotion of African solutions for problems facing the Continent;

8. **Commends** the peacekeepers for remaining determined and committed, in spite of harsh conditions in the field, as now further aggravated by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, to promoting peace and security, as well as protecting humanitarian workers and corridors, in conflict zones in Africa. In this context, Council **stresses** the imperative of operational synergy in the work of peacekeepers and healthcare workers in the fight against COVID-19;

9. **Urges** Member States to support the efforts of the Commission to expedite the operationalization of the African Humanitarian Agency, which will go a long way towards boosting Africa's preparedness and response for complex humanitarian emergencies and also to complement efforts of the Africa-CDC, Regional Economic Communities and Member States in addressing the humanitarian challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic;

10. **Encourages** Member States, that have not yet done so, to sign, ratify, domesticate and implement all relevant international, continental and regional instruments aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of displaced persons, especially the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention and the 2009 AU Convention on IDPs;

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

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