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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
910TH MEETING

13 FEBRUARY 2020
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(CMX)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 910th meeting held on 13 February 2020, briefed by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) on Ebola and Coronavirus outbreak and the implications on peace and security in Africa.

Council took note of the opening statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti, H.E Ambassador Mohamed Idriss Farah, in his capacity as the PSC Chairperson for the month of February 2020, and the presentations made by the Commissioner for Social Affairs, H.E Mrs Amira ElFadil and the Director of Africa Centres for Diseases Control and Prevention, Dr John Nkengasong, on the AU's efforts in the fight against the Ebola virus outbreak in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the state of preparedness of the AU in context of Coronavirus outbreak, as well as the measures put in place by the Africa CDC in containing it.

Council commended the AU Commission, through its Africa CDC and the efforts by the Government of the DRC in fighting the Ebola outbreak, which has resulted in the significant decrease of the spread of the disease in the country. Council encouraged Africa CDC to continue providing support to the Government of the DRC, with a view to totally eliminate the outbreak.

While expressing satisfaction on the reduction of spread of the Ebola virus in the DRC, Council emphasized the imperative for all the neighbouring countries bordering the DRC, and the continent as whole, to continue taking necessary measures and precautions to control the spread of the Ebola virus and continue to sensitize people and communities on steps to be undertaken in a fight against the spread of the virus.

Council took note with concern of the challenges facing the efforts of Africa CDC in the DRC, including the issue related to insecurity and lack of funding in implementing its mandate. In this regard, Council appealed to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and all Member States, as well as partners, to continue providing financial and logistical support to the Africa CDC and to the Government of the DRC, in order to effectively address the Ebola outbreak.

Council requested the AU Commission, in consultation with the DRC authorities and other relevant international stakeholders, to propose measures to ensure security for health care workers with a view to allow them to perform their duties in eradicating Ebola in DRC. In this respect, Council stressed the importance of realising the AU theme of this year 2020 "Silencing the Guns in Africa: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development" by eradicating the Ebola virus and achieving peace and security in the affected parts of the DRC.

Council noted with grave concern the outbreak of the Coronavirus, which could constitute a threat to peace and security in the Continent. Council urged all Member States to remain vigilant and implement the recommended measures by the WHO and Africa CDC, including screening and monitoring processes at all ports of entry, in accordance with international health

regulations; activating rapid response centers; conducting simulation exercises to test the response system; as well as sharing of information and regular contacts with the Africa CDC and other international centers dealing with virus outbreak. Council encouraged all Member States to collaborate with Africa CDC and WHO in the fight against Coronavirus. Council emphasized the need for coordinated technical and scientific expertise to direct the actions on the ground, as well as plan for future activities.

Council welcomed the efforts deployed by the Africa CDC in collaboration with Experts from the Member States of the AU and the WHO, particularly the establishment of the Africa Task Force for Novel Coronavirus (AFCOR) to control and prevent an outbreak of Coronavirus in the Continent. Council also welcomed the planned meeting of African Ministers of Health to be held on 22 February 2020.

Council also welcomed the establishment of the Rapid Response Team by the AU Commission, based in Addis Ababa, with a view to enhance rapid deployment in situations of emergency in the Continent. In this regard, Council requested Member States to make use of the Rapid Response Team established by the AU Commission, when need arise, in order to efficiently address the outbreak in a timely manner.

Council underlined the importance of developing awareness campaigns in order to dissuade fear and stigmatization in the society, as well as educating people and communities on measures to be undertaken on prevention and combating the outbreak. Council called for joint renewed and coordinated efforts from various stakeholders, within Africa and beyond the Continent, aimed at combating the spread of the Coronavirus.

Council commended Member States for efforts taken to prevent and contain the spread of Coronavirus in their respective countries and expressed its gratitude to all countries that have contributed in different capacities. Council commended all Member States who have taken measures to ensure safety of their nationals in the Coronavirus affected areas, including evacuation and encouraged them to allow their nationals and nationals of other African countries residing in the affected areas, to return home while taking all precautionary measures to control the spread of Coronavirus.

Council commended the Member States who have established National Public Health Institutions which assists in rapid response in the fight against epidemics and encouraged those who have not done so to do the same, with a view to responding timeously to emerging outbreaks. Council encouraged the Member States hosting the regional collaboration centres to expedite the functioning of these centres with a view to timeously coordinate response mechanisms in the fight against existing and emerging epidemics.

Council expressed AU's profound solidarity with the People's Republic of China, where Coronavirus was first diagnosed, and stressed on its commitment and preparedness to work together with the Chinese Government, in addressing the Coronavirus outbreak. Council also expressed its appreciation to the Government of China for its support accorded to Africa in addressing epidemics in the Continent.

Council agreed to visit the Africa CDC to better understand the work undertaken by the Centre and challenges facing it.

Council encouraged all Member States, the international community and the private sector to extend the requisite financial and technical support towards the ongoing efforts against the Ebola virus in the affected parts of the DRC, as was the case during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, as well as putting proactive measures in place to control and prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.

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