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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF
THE AFRICAN UNION ON THE CURRENT STATE OF
PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the 26th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU) held in Addis Ababa from 30 to 31 January 2016, Africa's peace and security landscape has continued to be fragile. This situation affecting many parts of the continent has opened some space for terrorism and violent extremism in some areas. The terrorist attacks have resulted in huge losses in human lives, injuries, maiming, displacement of persons and flux of refugees, as well as destruction of property and infrastructure. In addition, the damaging effects of climate change and outbreak of Ebola and other epidemics, have had and continue to have tragic socio-economic, humanitarian and environmental consequences on Africa and its people. Collectively, the effects of conflicts, crises and terrorism, as well as outbreak of epidemics, are severely hampering the efforts towards socio-economic integration and development in Africa.

2. Coupled with the above challenges is the issue of governance, which continues to be one of the major sources of tension and instability in some countries, thereby triggering violent conflicts and crises. Unfortunately, the resolution and management of these conflicts divert resources that could otherwise be allocated for the betterment of socio-economic conditions of African populations. The fact that instability and conflicts continue to ravage parts of our continent constitute a terrible impediment, at a time when we are mobilising ourselves to implement the initial phase of Agenda 2063. As we recognize this impediment and the imperative to urgently overcome it, we should recall our commitments to silence the guns in Africa by year 2020 and keep them silent into the future.

II. STATE OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

a) Somalia

3. The political process in Somalia has made progress with the implementation of Vision 2016, towards the holding of elections by August/September 2016, based on a consensual electoral model as established by the Somali stakeholders. The state formation process is almost completed, despite continued clan conflicts and rivalries.

4. While Al Shabaab has been significantly degraded and weakened, it retains the capacity to stage deadly attacks, as evidenced by its current attacks. Accordingly, it is important for Member States and the international community to continue to support the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) operations in Somalia to keep the momentum. In this regard, it is a concern that the European Union (EU) has reduced its funding for troop allowances by 20%. Although it has enhanced the payment procedures to AMISOM Troop Contributing Countries through a lump-sum approach aimed at accelerating disbursement, this measure does not fill the gap created by the 20% cut. Also, the EU decision to alter the payment procedure of troop allowance to the Burundi National Defence Force (BNDF) contingent could adversely impact on the effectiveness of AMISOM operations. Given these challenges, the PSC has called on the UN Security Council to enhance financial support to AMISOM through the utilization of UN assessed contributions, bearing in mind that in deploying a Mission in Somalia, the AU is acting on behalf of the UN Security

Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and aims at creating conditions conducive for long-term stabilization and reconstruction of Somalia. Furthermore, the PSC has endorsed the revised AMISOM Concept of Operations (CONOPs), focused on efforts toward enhancing AMISOM and Somalia National Security Forces (SNSF) operations and setting indicative timelines for an exit strategy of the Mission from Somalia, by 2018. In this context, the implementation of AMISOM exit strategy should be based on sustained efforts aimed at enhancing SNSF which should, by then take responsibility for the country's national security.

5. Humanitarian needs in Somalia remain acute with persistent vulnerabilities. In particular, the situation is marked, among others, by malnutrition in the Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. AMISOM continues to support efforts to improve the humanitarian situation by opening up main supply routes to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

6. In light of the encouraging situation in Somalia, and despite challenges still to be addressed, the Assembly may wish to commend the efforts of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), as well as AMISOM and the Somalia National Army (SNA) for their exemplary work contributing to peace making in challenging circumstances. The Assembly may further wish to call on the FGS, with the support of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), AU and partners to deploy all efforts to realize vision 2016, in order to place Somalia on the path of sustainable peace and development. The Assembly may welcome the revised AMISOM CONOPs, including the exit strategy within it by which AMISOM would leave Somalia by 2018. The Assembly may wish to urge the UN Security Council to lift the arms embargo imposed on Somalia as contained in UN Security Council Resolution 2244 (2015) as a critical aspect of building capable Somalia security institutions.

b) South Sudan

7. The return of First Vice President Riek Machar to Juba, on 26 April 2016, with the support of the AU, and the subsequent formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity (ToGNU) in South Sudan were viewed as positive developments in the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) signed in August 2015.

8. Unfortunately, the situation in South Sudan took a turn for the worst on 7 July 2016, when clashes erupted between the Government forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – In Opposition (SPLM-IO). At the time of finalising this report, the security situation had deteriorated significantly and the death toll was reported to be beyond 200, the free movement of citizens was restricted, the number of IDPs was on the rise. Unfortunately, joint efforts by the leadership of the country to appeal for calm and for the military commanders to ceasefire went unheeded. These latest developments have reversed whatever progress had been achieved in the past couple of months, further increasing insecurity in Juba with the potential of spreading to major parts of the country. The situation is clearly exacerbated by lack of trust between the leaders and their people, hence the need for the South Sudanese leaders to engage in confidence building measures which would lay the foundation for addressing these challenges. Once the current situation is addressed, there is need for a conducive working environment, within the TGoNU, paving the way for a proper national healing and reconciliation process, as

well as addressing issues of accountability for the human rights violations committed during the conflict. In this regard, instituting the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH), Hybrid Court for South Sudan (HCSS) and the Compensation and Repatriation Authority (CRA) as called for by both the Report of the AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan (AUCISS) and the ACRSS is a matter of high priority. The AU Commission is at an advanced stage of establishing this body, in consultation with the ToGNU. Meanwhile, the PSC, in its decisions, has expressed deep concern that South Sudan's economy requires sustained support and assistance from Africa and the international partners to avoid the possibility of a total meltdown, which would exacerbate the already precarious economic, security and humanitarian situation.

9. The Assembly may, therefore, wish to appeal the leadership of the country to exercise greater control over their forces and urge the warring factions to ceasefire with immediate effect. It may also wish to urge the parties to immediately revert to the TGoNU and live up to their commitments as outlined in the August 2015 Agreement, including through cooperating with the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), in order to achieve durable peace. The Assembly may also wish to urge the international community to provide assistance to the TGoNU in order for it to begin to fully function and meet the needs of the people, as part of providing peace dividends. The Assembly may further wish to commend the decision by the PSC to visit South Sudan in the near future, as well as calling for a pledging conference in support of South Sudan. Furthermore, the Assembly may welcome the IGAD ministerial meeting on the situation in South Sudan held on 11 July 2016. In this respect, The Assembly may wish to endorse the recommendations of the meeting for revision of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) mandate in order to enable establishment of an African-led Intervention Brigade and for the increase in the number of troops to, *inter-alia*, provide protection to civilians in the country.

c) Sudan

10. The situations relating to the National Dialogue, cessation of hostilities in Darfur and the two areas of Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan remain unresolved to date. The Chairperson of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) convened a meeting for strategic consultations with key Sudanese parties, namely, the Government of Sudan (GoS), leaders of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minawi (SLM-MM), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the National UMMA Party (NUP) from 18 to 21 March 2016, in Addis Ababa, to address the matter. The meeting agreed on a Roadmap Agreement, which captured key concessions that had been made by the parties. On 21 March 2016, the GoS signed the Roadmap Agreement and the AUHIP also signed as a witness. The opposition parties and the armed movements expressed reservations over the document and are yet to sign it. On 18 April 2016, the Sudan Call, comprised of some Sudan opposition parties and armed movements, unilaterally declared a cessation of hostilities in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan States, for a period of six months. Subsequently, the GoS also made a similar announcement, for a period of 4 months, starting from Saturday 18 June 2016.

11. At the same time, Darfur has faced further challenges from January 2016, when Sudan Liberation Army of Abdul Wahid Nur (SLA/AW) launched attacks, which resulted in the eruption of fighting between this movement and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), in the Jebel Marra area of Central Darfur at the initiative of this Movement. Following these

clashes, the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) reports indicated that the clashes resulted in the displacement of over 100,000 people. Meanwhile, the UNAMID continued to implement its given mandate, albeit with some challenges. In June 2016, the AUPSC and the UNSC renewed the mandate of UNAMID for another period of 12 months.

12. In April 2016, an administrative referendum was conducted by the Government of Sudan (GoS) to determine whether Darfur should be a unitary state or retain the five states. On 23 April 2016, it was announced that more than 97% of voters supported the option of maintaining the five states structure. The AU Commission observed the referendum and reported that it was generally peaceful. In May 2016, the Joint Working Group (JWG) established in 2015 by the AU, UN and the GoS, to develop a strategy that would lead to a smooth exit of UNAMID, visited Darfur and agreed that there was some improvement in the security situation. The JWG agreed to resume its work in September 2016.

13. In light of the above, the Assembly may wish to reiterate its support for an inclusive Sudanese National Dialogue and the need for more efforts to be undertaken to achieve it. Furthermore, the Assembly may wish to urge the opposition parties and the armed movements to cooperate with the AUHIP to sign the Roadmap Agreement, given that it represents an important milestone in determining a practical way forward in addressing the challenges facing Sudan. Furthermore, the Assembly may wish to urge the GoS and the Darfur armed movements to exert more efforts towards ending the conflict in Darfur, through agreeing on the cessation of hostilities and respecting it; and joining the Roadmap Agreement, for the armed movements, in order to participate in an inclusive National Dialogue. The Assembly may also wish to encourage the GoS to continue facilitating the work of UNAMID, inter alia, through allowing access to conflict areas and also allowing UNAMID equipment into the country.

d) Burundi

14. The political, security and human rights situation in Burundi is still of major concern. The continuing insecurity, targeted assassinations against political and military personalities, violence against civilians, as well as serious violations of human rights recorded over the last 6 months remain a source of deep concern. The East African Community (EAC), with AU support, has deployed its efforts in reactivating the regional and international initiatives for an inclusive Inter-Burundian Dialogue.

15. The High Level Delegation comprised of President Jacob Zuma of South Africa, President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz of Mauritania, President Macky Sall of Senegal, President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon and Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn of Ethiopia, accompanied by Ambassador Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security, visited Burundi from 25 to 26 February 2016, in line with Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec.598(XXVI) taken by the 26th Ordinary Session of the Assembly on 30 to 31 January 2016.

16. During the consultations, the Delegation agreed with the Burundian authorities to increase to two hundred (200) the number of AU human rights observers (100) and military experts (100). The members of the High Level Delegation expressed their readiness to continue their action, in support for the mediation efforts led by President Yoweri Museveni

of Uganda, on behalf of the EAC, especially as regards the need to bring all Burundian stakeholders to participate in the Inclusive Dialogue and preserve the gains of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.

17. On 2 March 2016, the Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the EAC, held in Arusha, reaffirmed the need to resume the Dialogue and appointed former President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, as Facilitator in the Burundi crisis, under the authority of President Yoweri Museveni, Head of the EAC Mediation. It was with this renewed momentum that, from 21 to 24 May 2016, the Inter-Burundian Dialogue resumed in Arusha. On 10 and 11 June 2016, in Brussels, the Facilitator met with the leaders of the CNARED Council and other concerned leaders.

18. With regard to the security and human rights situation, the attention of the AU focused on the various violations of human rights, including targeted assassinations, torture cases, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances of youths, arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions carried out by the police services, the army, Imbonerakure and other covert forces. The Commission pursues its efforts for the deployment of human rights observers and military experts in Burundi. At the time of finalizing this Report, 32 human rights observers and 15 military experts had been deployed. It should be noted that, the AU Commission has been informed that the Government of Burundi is going back on the commitment that it made to the AU High Level Delegation regarding the deployment of 200 human rights observers and military experts, arguing that the security situation has changed and there is need for fresh assessment before further deployment is done. In this regard, it should also be pointed out that the process is blocked due to the demand by the Government that the AU unarmed military experts to be deployed at the border with Rwanda and also to have access to reports of AU observers and military experts before they are sent to the AU Commission. These two conditions are naturally unacceptable.

19. On 12 July 2016, the Inter-Burundian Dialogue resumed in Arusha, under the facilitation of former President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania. Regrettably, the Government of Burundi boycotted the first plenary on the ground that the CNARED should not have been invited to participate in that plenary. . After bilateral meetings, the Government delegation pulled out of the reconvened Dialogue.

20. The tense situation in Bujumbura has caused an increase in the number of Internally Displaced Persons and the flow of refugees towards the camps located mainly in Tanzania Rwanda and more now to DRC. The economic situation has deteriorated further due mainly to the impact of the suspension of cooperation between Burundi and some of its development partners, especially the EU.

21. In light of the tense situation in Burundi, the Assembly may reaffirm the determination of the AU to spare no effort to help Burundi restore and rebuild peace, security and stability. In this regard, the Assembly may reiterate the imperative need for a truly inclusive dialogue, involving all the Burundian stakeholders, led by the EAC Mediator, with the support of the Facilitator, former President Benjamin Mkapa. The Assembly may wish to call on all Burundian stakeholders to remain engaged in the inclusive Inter-Burundian Dialogue and to extend the necessary cooperation to the EAC Mediator and Facilitator. The Assembly may congratulate the members of the High Level Delegation on their invaluable efforts to find an African solution to the crisis obtaining in Burundi. The Assembly may also urge the Burundian Government and all Burundian stakeholders to

facilitate the deployment of AU 200 human right observers and military experts. The Assembly may further express its appreciation to the AU partners for their support to the efforts of the region and the continent and request them to continue to support the initiatives of Africa in Burundi.

e) Democratic Republic of the Congo

22. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remained marked by issues related to the electoral process, the conduct of the National Political Dialogue and the continued insecurity in the provinces in the East of the country. On 26 March 2016, the Governors and Deputy Governors of the 20 new provinces were elected, while the modalities and the timetable for the organization of 11 other elections, including the presidential and the legislative ones, expected during this year 2016, are still to be determined. The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) faces many challenges related particularly to financing, the revision and finalization of the voters' lists and the security of the various elections, as well as logistics and the adoption of a consensual timetable acceptable to all Congolese stakeholders.

23. The government-estimated budget to support the electoral process is \$1.2 billion. Of this amount to the Government has earmarked about \$ 500 million in its 2016 budget. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), within the framework of its support programme to the electoral cycle in The Congo (PACEC), has set up a Trust Fund, in which, no contribution has yet been received. Faced with these constraints, the elections, especially the parliamentary and presidential elections, scheduled for this year 2016, are unlikely to be organized within the set deadlines as stipulated by the Constitution. It is in this context that, in its judgment of 11 May 2016, the Constitutional Court stated that the President of the Republic would remain in office until the election of the new President of the Republic. The Court also ruled on the status of the National Assembly and the Senate, whose members continue to validly serve until the next legislative and senatorial elections. This decision of the Constitutional Court raised strong protests from various opposition political parties and civil society actors, which insisted that the elections should be organized within the constitutional deadlines.

24. It should be noted that on 4 May 2016, Moïse Katumbi confirmed his candidature for the presidential election. However, Mr. Katumbi then became subject of a criminal investigation for recruiting foreign mercenaries. It was in this context that he was sentenced to prison in absentia, as he had already travelled to Europe on medical grounds.

25. With regard to the National Political Dialogue, the Assembly may recall that I appointed Mr. Edem Kodjo as Special Envoy and Facilitator of the said Dialogue on the basis of the relevant AU instruments. At the time of finalizing this report, the presidential majority and the civil society had already provided a list of their representatives to the Preparatory Committee of 30 members. But the opposition led by the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), had not yet designated its representatives. It was against this background that the Commissioner for Peace and Security recently travelled to Brussels for consultation with the hold out DRC opposition groups to impress upon them the need to urgently join the dialogue. The security situation in eastern DRC and in the border areas with DRC's neighbouring countries remain a source of concern. Armed

groups such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continue to spread terror.

26. The Parties to the Framework Agreement for Peace, Security and Cooperation in the DRC and the Region, which was signed in Addis Ababa, on 24 February 2013, have continued to implement it. In its capacity as a co-guarantor of the Agreement, the AU is endeavouring, with the other co-guarantors, namely the United Nations (UN), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and International Conference on the Great Lakes (ICGLR), to take up the challenges to the full implementation of the Framework Agreement.

27. The Assembly may wish to urgently appeal to all the Congolese actors to join in the process of inclusive dialogue, under the auspices of Mr. Edem Kodjo and in close cooperation with the Support Group comprising of the AU, ICGLR, SADC, UN, EU and *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF), with a view to finding a consensual solution regarding the electoral process, including the mobilization of resources for the elections. The Assembly may also urge the countries of the Region to persevere in the implementation of the Framework Agreement, thus enhancing their cooperation to neutralize the negative forces operating in the east of the DRC. The Assembly may further appeal to the Government of the DRC and MONUSCO to further enhance their cooperation for greater efficiency in the fight against the armed groups in eastern DRC.

f) Libya

28. The situation in Libya has witnessed significant political developments. On 14 February 2016 the Presidency Council announced the formation of a Government of National Accord (GNA). Subsequent to this development, international efforts focused on convincing the members of the House of Representatives (HoR), and its Speaker, Mr. Agila Saleh, to endorse the proposed GNA so as to reinforce its legitimacy. Parliament's endorsement is needed to create the necessary conditions to reconstitute the fractured state institutions and restore stability by effectively reorganizing the multiple armed militias. On a related note, on 23 February 2016, the majority members of the HoR signed a statement in which they declared their approval of the GNA, as proposed by the Presidency Council.

29. In addition to the political track, there are also complimentary efforts being undertaken, including the work of the Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA), which is aimed at finalizing the draft Libyan constitution that will subsequently be submitted to the Libyan people for referendum. As part of facilitating this effort, an all-inclusive consultative meeting of the CDA was held in Oman on 17 March 2016, and deliberated on the remaining constitutional issues that are yet to be resolved.

30. As part of the implementation of the Libya Political Agreement, the members of the Presidency Council arrived in Tripoli on 30 March 2016. Subsequent to the arrival of the Presidency Council in Tripoli, the roadmap for the completion of Libya's democratic transition was expected to focus on first, the endorsement by the HoR of the GNA; second, building the various fractured institutions, and third, reorganizing the security sector in order to effectively fight the expansion of Islamic State terrorist group. Libya's neighbours continue to be actively engaged in the search for a solution to the conflict.

31. The humanitarian and human rights situation in the country, compounded by terrorist activities, including those of Islamic State has continued to deteriorate. Throughout the country, 2.4 million people need humanitarian assistance, and more than 40 per cent of the health facilities in Libya are not functioning. Over one million children under the age of five face the risk of vaccine shortage. Moreover, some 1.3 million people are food insecure in the country.

32. At the time of finalization of this report, the HoR had not still convened a formal meeting to endorse the Government of National Accord. It is also important to note that forces loyal to the GNA reported, on 11 June 2016, that they had reached the outskirts of Sirte, a city that had been under the control of IS for a long time. The city has witnessed heavy fighting most recently. Looking ahead, the AU, through the High Representative for Libya, intends to play an important role both in assisting the new Libyan Government through concrete actions, including assisting in security sector reforms, as well as sharing experience in the process of national reconciliation and healing.

33. The Assembly may wish to commend the Chairperson of the AU, President Deby Itno, for his initiatives and support provided towards the reconciliation in Libya . The Assembly may further wish to commend and reiterate its support to the efforts of the AU High Representative, former President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania and encourage him to persevere. The Assembly may also wish to reiterate the commitment of the AU to assist the Libyan parties in finding a lasting solution to the crisis facing their country.

g) Guinea-Bissau

34. In recent months, the situation in Guinea-Bissau has been marked by the continued political and institutional crises that gripped the country, which almost paralyzed every aspect of the economy, including security and socio-economic development. It was in this context that the PSC undertook a field mission to Guinea Bissau from 16 to 21 March 2016, to assess the situation on the ground and to identify ways to contribute to the resolution of the political and institutional crisis prevailing in the country. The PSC commended the ECOWAS Authority for the decision taken on Guinea-Bissau, during its 49th Ordinary Session held on 4 June 2016, in particular to send a High-Level Delegation in Guinea-Bissau and to renew the mandate of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) for an additional period of one year.

35. In this regard, the Assembly may wish to call on the President and all political stakeholders to engage in a genuine dialogue to bring the crisis to an end through the full respect of the Constitution of the country. The Assembly may also wish to welcome the efforts made by ECOWAS, particularly through the action of its outgoing Chairman, President Macky Sall of Senegal and the former President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, as well as the initiatives taken by CPLP in support to peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau. The Assembly may further commend the critical role being played by ECOMIB in stabilizing the country.

h) Mali and the Sahel

36. The situation in Mali has been marked by the pursuit of efforts to implement the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, issuing from the Algiers process, signed on 15 May and 20 June 2015 by the Government and the armed movements.

37. During the recent months, real progress has been made in the implementation of the Agreement. Concerning the political and institutional issues, the new regions of Menaka and Taoudéni entered in an operational phase with the appointment towards the end of January 2016, their respective Governors, who were sworn in March. The National Assembly adopted, on 31 March 2016, the texts amending the law relating to Local Authorities to enable the establishment of the interim authorities in charge of the local administration in northern Mali. This issue, pending since October 2015, has become a source of blockage in the implementation of the Agreement, in so far as the Movements link it with the launch of the Operational Coordination Mechanism (OMC) and the cantonment of combatants. The Members of Parliament of the Malian opposition appealed for unconstitutionality against the law on the establishment of the interim authorities. In a ruling adopted on 5 May 2016, the Constitutional Court declared that the law on the establishment of the Interim authorities was conforming.

38. On the eve of the first anniversary of the signing of the Peace Agreement, the Follow up Committee on the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (CSA), met on 18 June 2016, in Bamako, under the chairmanship of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Algeria, to assess the first year of implementation of the Agreement. However, the implementation process of the Agreement is hindered by challenges that delay its progress and concretization. These challenges are related on the one hand to the lack of funding for projects and programmes provided for in the Agreement, and on the other, to the threat of terrorism and transnational crimes, which continue to slow down all development activities. To this end, the Follow up Committee appealed to all the partners of Mali to provide increased and urgent support in the areas of development financing and the fight against terrorism. On this occasion, the international community particularly welcomed the loyal and rigorous commitment of Algeria, which gave rise to the hope that Mali would soon return to the path of peace, stability and development.

39. It should be stressed that the Malian parties signed on 19 June 2016 the Memorandum of Understanding on the Interim authorities, which is a significant progress, paving the way for the accelerated implementation of other provisions of the Agreement.

40. With regard to the security situation, the period under consideration was marked by some deterioration on the ground. The recent ambushes, the bombings and complex attacks against the positions and elements of the Malian armed forces, the international forces, MINUSMA and the French Operation Barkhane all speak for themselves. The increasing violence and attacks in the regions of Mopti and Timbuktu in the central part of the country, particularly related to the activities and the growing influence of some terrorist groups, whose activities extend to neighbouring countries.

41. Within the framework of its action in the Sahel and taking account of these developments in Mali, the Commission, including through the MISAHEL, continued its efforts to implement the AU Strategy for the Sahel Region, adopted by PSC on 11 August 2014. Thus, in the context of the follow-up of the decisions of the 1st meeting of the Ministers of Defence and Chiefs of Defence Staff of the member countries of the Nouakchott Process, held in Bamako, on 4 September 2015, the AU dispatched to Mali a Joint Preliminary Assessment Mission of security threats in northern Mali, for a possible deployment of a Regional Intervention Force to fight against terrorism in northern Mali and

in the Region. At the time of finalizing this report, the Commission was making preparations to dispatch, from 23 to 31 July 2016, to northern Mali the Assessment Mission composed of the AU, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the UN and the countries of the Region.

42. The Assembly may congratulate the Malian parties on the tangible progress made in the first year of implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation issuing from the Algiers Process and encourage the Malian parties to redouble efforts to promote lasting peace and reconciliation in Mali. The Assembly may express its appreciation to Algeria, Chairman of the Follow up Committee on the Agreement (CSA) for continuing its mediation, to the countries and organisations, members of the CSA for their support to the Malian parties. The Assembly may reiterate its firm condemnation of the terrorist attacks in Mali against the Malian armed forces, the international forces, MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane and stress the need for the speedy establishment of an Intervention Force to be deployed in northern Mali, to combat terrorist and criminal groups operating in this part of the country. The Assembly may reiterate its full support for the MINUSMA and its Troop Contributing Countries and call for the strengthening of the Mission. The Assembly may make an urgent appeal to the international partners to further increase their support to the Sahel countries in their efforts against terrorism and transnational organized crime. Within the framework of the efforts for the coordination and enhancement of the synergy in the actions in the Sahel, the Assembly may revive the idea of an International Conference on Peace and Development in the Sahel, to be held under the joint auspices of the AU and United Nations.

i) Central African Republic

43. In the Central African Republic (CAR), the political and security situation has improved considerably, following the successful organization of the presidential and legislative elections and the establishment of a new government. It was in this context that the PSC, at its 586th meeting, held on 31 March 2016, decided to lift the suspension of the participation of the CAR in the activities of the AU, as well as all other measures taken to ensure that stakeholders in the CAR work irreversibly for the restoration of the normal constitutional order.

44. However, the security situation is still marked by incidents of violence and abuses committed against the population by unidentified armed individuals, who often operate with elements of the terrorist group Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). It is in this context that the LRA still continues to pose a threat to peace and stability in the CAR and its eradication requires increased African and wider international cooperation. The humanitarian situation has improved significantly. Notably, the number of IDPs has declined significantly since February 2016, but there are still 466,091 Central African refugees, mainly in the neighbouring countries. The country continues to face shortage of food. It is estimated that about 2.35 million people are in a situation of food insecurity, and also needing health care support and access to safe drinking water.

45. At the time of finalizing this report, consultations were underway between the AU, UN and the Government of CAR, to convene, in August 2016, a meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) on CAR. This meeting will be the occasion to transform the ICG into an International Support Group.

46. The Assembly may commend the authorities of the Transition in the CAR, particularly President Catherine Samba-Panza, and countries of the sub-region for their multifaceted and decisive contribution to the resolution of the Central African crisis, as well as the successful conclusion of the political transition in the country. The Assembly may also thank the AU partners for their support to the efforts to stabilize the situation in the CAR and encourage them to continue their efforts to help peace and stability in the CAR, and boost the economic recovery programme.

j) Western Sahara

47. The conflict in Western Sahara, which has been on the decolonization agenda of the UN for over fifty years, including twenty-five of which is in the context of the peace process currently underway following the acceptance, by Morocco and the POLISARIO of the OAU Settlement Plan, as endorsed by the UN Security Council in April 1991, remains unresolved to date.

48. The continuing impasse prompted the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon to visit the region in April 2016 – the first for a UN Secretary-General since 1998. Although Morocco refused to allow the UN Secretary-General to visit Rabat and the Territory under its occupation, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon nonetheless visited the POLISARIO refugee camps in Tindouf, liberated territory in Bir Lahlu, as well as Algiers and Nouakchott and emphasized the imperative need for making speedy progress in the search for a solution to the dispute underlined the risks involved to peace and stability in the Sahelo-Saharan region due to the continuation of the conflict. Further, he stressed the growing frustrations and deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the camps as worrying developments.

49. Morocco, which did not welcome the Secretary-General's visit, expressed its disaffection over the outcome of the visit of the Secretary-General and accused Mr. Ban Ki-moon of partiality. In an extreme and brutal move, Morocco expelled 81 UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and 3 AU personnel within a 72 hour deadline, thus throwing MINURSO and the entire peace process into total disarray and unprecedented paralysis. This creates a dangerous precedent for all peace operations. It is indeed a grave precedent as countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Sudan are denied the right of calibrating the presence of UN Missions in their sovereign territories; while Morocco is behaving in such irresponsible way in a non-self-governing territory where the UN shoulder the primary responsibility of its decolonisation.

50. Subsequently, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon submitted to the UN Security Council his report on the situation in Western Sahara and, among other things, recommended the renewal of MINURSO's mandate for another 12 months, until 30 April 2017. In response to Morocco's expulsion of UN and AU personnel, the Secretary-General called on the Security Council to restore and support the mandated role of MINURSO, uphold peacekeeping standards and the impartiality of the UN and, most importantly, avoid setting a precedent for United Nations peacekeeping operations around the world.

51. The UN Security Council considered the report of the UN Secretary-General and adopted, on 29 April 2016, resolution 2285 (2016) on Western Sahara, not by a unanimous vote as previously, but by a vote of 10 to 2 against (Venezuela and Uruguay) and 3 abstentions (Angola, New Zealand, Russia). The Security Council addressed the crisis that was triggered by the Moroccan expulsion measures and emphasized the urgent

need for MINURSO to return to full functionality. Furthermore, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to inform Council, within 90 days, whether MINURSO had returned to full functionality and, if it had not done so, to consider how best to facilitate the achievement of this goal. So far, and despite that the deadline will expire by the end of July 2016, no progress has been officially reported to date in allowing the expelled civil component to return to MINURSO.

52. For its part, the PSC reviewed the situation in Western Sahara at its meeting held on 6 April 2016, and, among other things, commended the efforts of the UN Secretary-General, in the search for a solution to the conflict in Western Sahara, including his recent visit to the region and condemned Morocco's expulsion of MINURSO and AU personnel in Western Sahara. The PSC also reiterated its calls made to the UN to set a date for the holding of a referendum on the self-determination for the people of Western Sahara – an inalienable right of those long suffering people.

53. In addition, I dispatched, from 25 to 28 April 2016, my Special Envoy, former President Joaquim Chissano, to New York to share Africa's position on the issue with the UN Security Council and discuss on how to break the current impasse. Upon procedural arrangements as facilitated by Angola and Venezuela, President Chissano was able to brief an informal yet largely-attended session of the UN Security Council.

54. The Assembly may wish to urge the UN Security Council to take definitive measures to enable the people, without further delay, of Western Sahara determine their future in a referendum of self-determination, in conformity with international legality, to restore full-functionality of MINURSO, including AU representatives, to reactivate the political process and reinforce the necessary direct dialogue between the two parties and demand active and urgent measures for the protection of Natural Resources of Western Sahara, as well as human rights in the territory. The Assembly may wish to request the AU Commission to undertake steps, in consultation with the UN, in order to hold at the Headquarters of the AU, the special session on Western Sahara decided by the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence of Colonial Countries and Peoples (Committee of 24).

k) AU's efforts in combating terrorism and violent extremism

55. An increasing number of AU Member States continue to be victims of various heinous acts of terrorism, with terrorists increasingly directing their attacks at soft targets resulting to death and injury of scores of innocent civilians, as well as destruction of property. The recent terrorist attacks on hotels in Mali, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire by groups allied to Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), are indicative of the continued tactic of picking out soft targets as part of its propaganda in order to undermine the State and its institutions and dishearten the population. In this regard, the Commission is currently working with the ECOWAS, the United Nations and the countries of the Region to dispatch, on 23 July 2016, to northern Mali a Joint Assessment Mission to assess the possible deployment of a Regional Intervention Force to fight against terrorism in northern Mali and in the Region.

56. The AU Commission, in particular through the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), continues to support the efforts of the Member States in the prevention and combating of terrorism through various capacity building initiatives to

strengthen national capacities of the relevant agencies, and strengthening of national institutions. The Commission also continues to support Member States in reviewing their national laws in line with the African Model Law on Counter-Terrorism.

57. Regarding specifically the fight against terrorist group in the Lake Chad Basin, huge progress has been made by the Multinational Joint Task force (MNJTF) fighting the Boko Haram terrorist group. Thanks to these efforts, Boko Haram has been largely degraded and contained with most of the ground formally occupied by Boko Haram being retaken, a substantial number of its fighters killed in combat and others arrested. Boko Haram's combat capability has been significantly degraded, but still possesses the capacity to launch Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and suicide bomb attacks, particularly along main supply routes and against the populace. Boko Haram has over the last few months shifted its main operations from the southern part of MNJTF Area of Operation to the North-Eastern part, a tri-border area that joins Niger, Nigeria and Chad.

58. To enhance MNJTF operations against Boko Haram, the AU has put mechanisms in place to support the Force. These are the AU-LCBC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Provision of Support to the MNJTF that was signed on 16 October 2015, as well as the Support Implementation Agreement (SIA) that was signed on 29 January 2016 between the AU, LCBC and Defense Ministers of Troop Contributing Countries. The AU has also set up a Strategic Support Cell in the Commission to coordinate AU's support to the 2015 MNJTF, which is being provided by a Mission Support Team of international and local civilian mission support staff based in N'Djamena, Chad. The AU organized a Donors Conference in Addis Ababa on support to the LCBC, on 1st February 2016, to mobilize additional resources for the MNJTF. It is to be noted that the EU announced the release of its long-awaited financial support to the AU for the MNJTF, by end of July 2016.

59. Furthermore, still on a related fight against terrorism, the AU Regional Task Force (AURTF) within the framework of the AU Regional Cooperation initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA), has over the recent years, put on tremendous pressure on the LRA. The impact is that the terrorist group has been severely degraded. The LRA, now has less than 150 armed fighters under the overall command of its founder, Joseph Kony. But, despite this degradation, it still poses a serious threat to defenceless civilians in the affected areas. This has been demonstrated by the series of attacks and abductions the group has conducted in the recent past. Between January and February 2016, LRA abducted 232 civilians in eastern CAR in a series of raids.

60. The Commission, based on the PSC decision of its 601st meeting held on 30 May 2016, conducted a Technical Assessment Mission to the LRA-affected areas, between June and July 2016, to amongst others, facilitate the possible transformation of the RTF/RCI-LRA into a multi-dimensional mission and to strengthen the participation of FACA (robust unit of the CAR Army) in the RTF. At the same meeting, the PSC also extended the mandate of the RCI-LRA up to 22 May 2017. The Commission remains focused on the need to rehabilitate the LRA-affected areas and communities, including through the reinvigoration of the AU-led and World Bank/African Development Bank-supported study of the rehabilitation needs of LRA-affected areas.

61. The Assembly may wish to call for the UN and the international community to support the AU's initiative to deploy a Regional Intervention Force, within the UN, to fight against terrorism in northern Mali and Sahel. The Assembly may wish to welcome the

efforts of LCBC and Benin and call for sustained efforts towards eliminating Boko Haram. The Assembly may also appeal to the international community for additional material and financial resource to ensure adequate support for the LCBC efforts against Boko Haram. The Assembly may wish to underline the need to help train, equip and deploy a robust unit of the CAR Army (FACA) into the RTF, in order to avoid a security vacuum that would otherwise be created in eastern CAR, if the Ugandan troops withdraw from the RTF as announced by Uganda. The Assembly may wish to urge Member States and partners to provide the necessary support to the ACSRT in order for it to effectively discharge its mandate.

l) Women, Peace and Security in Africa

62. During the period under review, AU Member States, with the support of the AU Commission and partners continue to make progress in the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and Resolution 1612 on children at risk and protection of civilians. There has been growing awareness of increasing the presence of women in peacekeeping, mediation, reconciliation and other critical activities relating to the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa. In this regard, the PSC held a number of meetings dedicated to women, peace and security in which it underlined the need for women to be more integrated in the negotiation processes and peace agreements in the continent. Despite the progress made, women and children continue to account for the vast majority of victims in conflict situations. The Assembly may wish to urge all Member States to redouble their efforts to ensure that their national laws match the provisions of UNSC resolution 1325, AU instruments and other international legislations that protect the rights of women and children.

m) Children in Conflict Situations in Africa

63. Member States continue, with the support of the AU Commission, to redouble their efforts in protecting children in conflict situations in Africa. Progress has been achieved to strengthen the existing legal frameworks and to address grave violations of children's rights in conflict areas in the continent. Albeit the progress made, there is still weak and slow implementation of existing AU and international legal instruments relating to protection of children's rights. In this regard, the PSC, in its meetings, underlined the need for all Member States to mainstream the protection of children, educational infrastructure and personnel in their public administration and management systems. The Assembly may wish to emphasize the primary responsibility of governments of the Member States in ensuring that children are protected and that their rights and welfare are promoted.

III. CONCLUSION

64. I commend the PSC which has continued, with the support of the Commission, RECs/RMs and CSOs, as well as partners, to deploy sustained efforts to address the challenges and to further consolidate the progress already made in promoting peace, security and stability on the continent. These efforts are laudable and I call for their strengthening in order to provide the required energy and momentum to silence the guns in Africa by 2020 and beyond.

65. Africa's peace and security challenges require our renewed commitment and innovative approaches to resolve conflict and crises situations. In this context, I call for

robust action towards early response to crises and conflicts, as the continent intensifies its prevention and mediation efforts. Accordingly, given the current trend of relapses in some countries, I appeal for redoubled efforts for the implementation of post-conflict and stabilization activities. For the continent to achieve all this and for us to realise our principle of African solutions to African problems, it is imperative to provide, from within the continent, the necessary funding and other requirements to fulfil the commitment made to promote a conflict-free Africa.

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