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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, B. P.: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321

Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

450TH MEETING

19 AUGUST 2014

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(CDL)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 450th meeting on 19 August 2014, held an open session on the Humanitarian Situation in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and the Sahel Region, to mark World Humanitarian Day. The Open Session brought together PSC members, other AU Member States, UN agencies, partners, the wider humanitarian community, and experts.

The session noted with concern the immense humanitarian suffering that has arisen from the conflicts in South Sudan and the Central African Republic, including the loss of civilian life, high levels of population displacement, and escalating humanitarian needs due to a loss of livelihoods. The session emphasized that humanitarian considerations should be of paramount consideration in efforts to resolve these crises and in mobilizing support to address the immediate humanitarian emergency. The session also voiced concern about the regional impact of the crises, in particular the large numbers of refugees flowing into neighbouring States, and called for support to be extended to countries hosting refugees in addition to that extended to the countries in conflict. The session highlighted the need to think creatively about how to better protect populations at risk, particularly in the context of limited resources.

Regarding the situation in the Sahel region, which has been of concern to the AU for some time, the session noted that the region's conflicts and insecurity were happening in the context of a dangerous combination of severe food insecurity, chronic malnutrition and climate change, which have cumulatively eroded the communities' livelihoods, resilience and coping strategies. The session called for concerted efforts to assist Member States in developing long term plans to address chronic and structural vulnerability.

The session further noted that the recent outbreak of the Ebola Virus in April 2014 in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, three countries that have only recently emerged from years of conflict and crisis, has further increased the vulnerability of communities, worsening the humanitarian situation, and leading to over 1,000 deaths in the region to date, including doctors, nurses and other care workers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

The session acknowledged the various challenges facing these countries, including addressing access issues, the need to prioritize protection, the need to place greater attention on early warning, preparedness, and action by local and national authorities in partnership with civil society and the private sector, as well as adequate investment in community capacity to manage crises. The session moreover stressed the need to bring concerted attention to addressing the root causes of humanitarian crises in Africa. The session called for greater solidarity from within Africa to respond to the many crises and challenges facing the continent, including through the African Solidarity Initiative.

The session also expressed its appreciation to all humanitarian actors providing life-saving services to conflict and disaster affected populations and discussed the worrying incidence of violence targeted at humanitarian workers, as well as active hostilities by armed groups which continue to hinder humanitarian access. Council and participants called for a re-commitment to ensuring humanitarian access and space, and the protection of humanitarian workers and their equipment by all parties.

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