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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

555<sup>TH</sup> MEETING

5 NOVEMBER 2015

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(DLV)

**PRESS STATEMENT**

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 555<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 5 November 2015, devoted an open session on the commemoration of the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Council took note of the statements made by the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council for November 2015, Ambassador Ahmat Awad Sakine, Permanent Representative of Chad to the AU, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui and Mr. Haile Menkerios, Special Representative of the United Nations (UN) Secretary General to the AU, as well as of the presentations made by the representatives of Women Peacekeepers in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Medecins d'Afrique, la Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix et le Développement Intégral (SOFEPADI) and C'Observatoire des Droits de la Femme et de l'Enfant (ODEF). Council also took note of the interventions made by AU Member States and partners, as well as civil society organizations and think tanks.

Council recalled its earlier pronouncements on the issue of women and children in conflict situations and noted with concern the impact of conflict-related sexual violence, including sexual exploitation and abuses. Council and Participants acknowledged that there are several existing AU instruments in place which are designed to protect women and children. In this regard, they called on Member States to promote the effective implementation of those instruments.

Council and Participants acknowledged the progress made by AU Member States, partners and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Council and Participants stressed that despite the progress made, women and children continue to account for the vast majority of casualties in conflict situations and called for AU Members States to redouble their efforts to ensure that their national laws match the provisions of Resolution 1325 and other international instruments that protect the rights and wellbeing of women and children.

Council and Participants underscored the need for capacity building in favour of women to enable them play a full role in all aspects of life. They stressed that those working in conflict and post-conflict situations need to be well-trained and well-informed to address women's concerns to build a critical mass of female experts in peace and security to drive the implementation of Resolution 1325 forward.

Council and Participants commended those Member States which have developed National Action Plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and insisted on development

of strategies for their implementation, as well as further engagement with different sectors and departments in Government to ensure a holistic application of the Resolution. Council and Participants further called for collaboration in the implementation of Resolution 1325 at the national, regional and international levels.

Council and Participants, while commemorating 15 years of Resolution 1325, commented that women continue to be the target of violence in conflict situations around the world. In this regard, Council recalled its zero tolerance policy for sexual violence in conflict situations and reiterated its call to all Member States to ensure the protection of women and children in situations where they are threatened or affected by violence, in line with relevant AU and international instruments. To this effect, they called on Member States to enact legislations against all forms of impunity and stressed the need to hold accountable perpetrators of these crimes.

Council and Participants stressed the need to seize every opportunity to mainstream gender into the African peace and security agenda and to promote women's empowerment and contributions. In this regard, and while recognizing the growing awareness that increasing the presence of women in peacekeeping and other critical areas greatly enhance conflict resolution, post-conflict rehabilitation processes and peace agreements, Council and Participants emphasized the need to increase the number of women involved in peacekeeping operations, as well as having them involved in all levels of decision making on matters relating to peace and security in Africa.

Council and Participants stressed the need to provide funding and capacity building related to Resolution 1325 activities, enhancing national ownership and other activities on women, peace and security issues, which will enable women to fully and effectively participate in conflict prevention, management, mediation, reconciliation and peacebuilding, as well as in post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Council and Participants stressed the need for parties to a conflict to facilitate humanitarian assistance to ensure that health infrastructures for women and children are not destroyed. Where access to health services, such as immunization, is hindered by conflict, governments and parties to the conflicts should facilitate humanitarian ceasefire and corridors to enable access.

Council and Participants acknowledged the role of CSOs in the promotion of peace and security in Africa, and urged them to ensure that women, as well as gender related issues, including sexual atrocities against women and girls, are adequately reported to the appropriate authorities. Council and Participants also called on the CSOs to play a more active role in advocacy, reporting infringements on women and children's rights.

Council and Participants strongly encouraged women in positions of higher status and positions of influence to promote the rights, interests and concerns of women.

Council, once again, commended the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Nkhosazana Dlamini Zuma, for her tremendous efforts on the protection of women and children in conflict situations and for the appointment of Ms. Bineta Diop, as the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission on Women, Peace and Security.

Council urged all Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify, without any further delay, the relevant AU instruments, notably the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999) and the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009), as well as other relevant international instruments. Council stressed the need for renewed efforts towards the implementation of these instruments, as well as of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2005) and UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Council also called all Member States that have not yet done so to develop National Action Plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.

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