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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

635TH MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

20 OCTOBER 2016

PSC/PR/BR. (DCXXXV)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 635th meeting held on 20 October 2016, dedicated an open session to the theme: 'The role of the media in enhancing accountability on women, peace and security commitments in Africa'. The Open Session followed a two-day capacity building workshop for media on 'Gender-responsive reporting in conflict, post-conflict, and fragile contexts' that was organized by the Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, in partnership with United Nations (UN) Women.

Council listened to statements that were delivered by the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Madame Bineta Diop and by the representative of UN Women, Ms. Letty Chiwara. Council also listened to statements that were delivered by representatives of AU Member States, bilateral and multilateral partners, international organizations, civil society organizations and the media, including the Network of Reporters for Women, Peace, and Security.

Council recalled its earlier communiqués and press statements relating to the issue of women and children in conflict situations and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In particular, Council and participants recalled decision EX.CL/Dec.928(XXIX), adopted by the AU Executive Council at its 29th Ordinary Session held from 13-15 July 2016 in Kigali Rwanda, which stressed that effectively combatting violence against women requires a synergy of action between organs responsible for enforcing the law, institutional partners, the civil society and the media. Council also recalled that in that Decision, the Executive Council requested the Commission, in collaboration with its development partners, as well as other stakeholders, to launch an African media campaign on sensitization about violence against women and girls, particularly in cyberspace to mitigate its impact on potential targets.

Council and participants acknowledged and stressed the important role that the media can play as an agent of peace. In this context, Council welcomed the formation of the Network of Peace Journalists on Women, Peace and Security.

Council and participants noted with deep concern that sexual violence, particularly against women and girls, continues to destroy individuals and communities and undermining development.

Council and participants also took note of the many challenges facing the media, in particular, the lack of gender-responsive media in fragile contexts, under-representation of the voices of the victims of sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violations, lack of expertise and shortage of African women journalists who can effectively report on issues of peace and security insofar as they directly affect women and girls. Council also took note, with deep concern, of the continued stigmatization and stereotypical portrayal of women in conflict and crisis reporting, lack of women-owned media houses, lack of women in leadership and editorial

positions and lack of ethical considerations in reporting, as well as lack of engagement with survivors of violence, particularly women and girls.

Council and participants acknowledged that gender-sensitive reporting can help empower women and girls by highlighting the challenges they face and by promoting open discussions on the best means and ways of addressing those challenges. In this regard, they stressed the need for media reporting to be context-sensitive, as well as to take into consideration existing gender and power relations.

Council and participants encouraged Member States to increase the representation of women in state-owned media institutions and to allocate additional funding to these institutions, in order to increase women's participation, particularly in decision-making positions, including in community radios, particularly in fragile, conflict, crisis and post-conflict contexts.

Council further stressed the need for Member States to create an enabling environment for media to more effectively play a constructive role, with a view to facilitating the achievement of Agenda 2063 and the goal of silencing the guns in Africa by the year 2020. In this context, Council called on AU Member States to further strengthen their legal frameworks, combat impunity and to guarantee the safety and security of media personnel, particularly female journalists.

Council reiterated its commitment to continue to create conducive conditions for civil society organizations, in line with the Livingstone Formula and to maintaining dialogue with the media, including during their field missions.

Council urged the media to report responsibly and to amplify the voices of women and girls, particularly in conflict, post-conflict and fragile contexts.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter

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