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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 461ST MEETING

14 OCTOBER 2014

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLXI)

COMMUNIQUE

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 461st meeting, held on 14 October 2014, in Addis Ababa, convened an open session on sexual violence in conflict situations in Africa and adopted the following decision:

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the statements made by the Acting Commissioner for Peace and Security and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission in Somalia and Head of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), as well as by the Special Representative of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the representatives of bilateral and multilateral partners and civil society organizations;
2. **Recalls** its earlier pronouncements on the issue of women and children in conflicts and **notes with concern** the impact of conflict related sexual violence, including sexual exploitation and abuses (SEA). Council **further notes with concern** the increased vulnerability of women and girls, as well as men and boys, to sexual violence, which claims the lives of innocent people and results into serious and irreparable consequences for the survivors, their families and communities;
3. **Reiterates AU's strong condemnation** of all acts of sexual violence and their use as a weapon of war. Council **underscores** the imperative for renewed efforts to prevent sexual violence, protect and assist its survivors, and fight impunity by holding perpetrators of such acts accountable. In this respect, Council **stresses** the critical importance of investigating and documenting all acts of sexual violence in conflict situations, as part of the overall efforts to address this scourge in all its dimensions;
4. **Calls on** all Member States to take the required steps, including strengthening where required their legislative measures, in order to combat sexual violence and facilitate the investigation of such acts and the prosecution of their authors, and to take all steps required to provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual violence, including through the provision of adequate health services and support in terms of livelihoods;
5. **Emphasizes** the important role of civil society, think tanks, research and academic institutions in combating sexual violence in conflict situations and, in this regard, **acknowledges** the need for strategic synergies and coordination of efforts;
6. **Stresses** the importance of a consolidated and broad approach to sexual violence in conflict situations, aiming at women's empowerment, gender equality and active participation in peace efforts and processes, as part of long term strategies to prevent conflict-related sexual violence;
7. **Commends** the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission on Women, Peace and Security for the important work she is undertaking, with a view to improving the participation of women in political processes, including conflict prevention and mediation, and **requests her** to regularly brief Council on her activities;
8. **Welcomes** the steps taken by the Commission to develop strategies to facilitate effective monitoring

of the situation of women and children in conflict situations in Africa. In this regard, Council **appeals** to all AU Member States and, in particular, the countries concerned, to collaborate with and support these initiatives;

9. **Commends** the Commission for the measures being taken to enhance the mainstreaming of gender, particularly in AU-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs);

10. **Urges** 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 **stresses** the need for renewed efforts towards the implementation of these instruments, as well as of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2005);

11. **Underlines** the need for continued mobilization to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and children, including kidnapping. In this regard, Council, recalling that the young Nigerian girls who were kidnapped in Chibok have now been in captivity for six months, **reiterates its appeal** for renewed and coordinated international efforts to ensure their release and prevent the recurrence of such cowardly and criminal acts;

12. **Reiterates** its zero-tolerance stance on SEA and, noting with concern the allegations made by Human Rights Watch regarding acts of SEA by AMISOM uniformed personnel, **welcomes** the decision taken by the Commission to thoroughly investigate these allegations and take appropriate action if they were to be found accurate. Council **further welcomes** the additional steps being taken by the Commission and the AMISOM leadership to prevent and combat SEA, including the adoption of a one-year plan on SEA, the envisaged inclusion of a specific Annex to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) on SEA, and the improvement of welfare and recreation facilities for the AMISOM civilian and uniformed personnel;

13. **Underlines** the importance of both pre-deployment and in-mission trainings on the prevention and combating of SEA for personnel deployed in AU-led PSOs. Council **urges** AU Member States which have not yet done so, especially T/PCCs to AU PSOs, to develop comprehensive and robust systems to effectively address sexual violence and SEA;

14. **Requests** the Chairperson of the Commission to submit regular reports on the implementation of Council's decisions related to women, children and sexual violence in conflict situations;

15. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.