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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1110TH MEETING

5 OCTOBER 2022
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM. 1110 (2022)

COMMUNIQUE

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 1110th meeting held on 5 October 2022, on the Prevention of Recruitment and Use of Children in Conflict Situations.

The Peace and Security Council,

Recalling all previous decisions and pronouncements on the plight of children in armed conflicts, particularly, PSC communiqués [PSC/PR/COMM. 1101(2022)] of the 1101st meeting held on 18 August 2022 and [PSC/PR/COMM.1070(2022)] of the 1070th of the meeting held on 29 March 2022. **Also recalling** AU Assembly Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.718 (XXXII)] adopted by the 32nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union held from 10 to 11 February 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, through which, among others, the Assembly requested the Commission, working in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, to explore ways to strengthen the existing AU and Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) mechanisms for the protection of children in situations of conflict; and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Deeply concerned by the continued recruitment and use of children in conflict situations by armed forces, armed groups and terrorist groups, in violation of existing Continental child protection instruments, particularly the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; and **determined** to effectively prevent the recruitment and use of children in conflict situations in the African Continent;

Noting the opening remarks by H.E Mohammed Arrouchi, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the AU and the Chairperson of the PSC for October 2022, the statement by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and Co-chair of the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (AP CAAC), the statement by H.E. Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the AU and Co-chair of the AP CAAC as well as Honorable Robert Nanima, Special Rapporteur on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts and member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC); as well as by the representatives of UNICEF, Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security and Save the Children and the experience and views of a child formerly associated with armed groups from South Sudan; and

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

1. **Strongly condemns** the continued recruitment and use of children by armed forces, armed groups and terrorist organizations on the Continent, **strongly warns** all armed forces and armed groups against the continued recruitment and use of children in conflict situations and, **urges them** to fully respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law and also to respect and maintain the civilian and humanitarian character of education centres, refugee and IDP camps, as well as to immediately stop targeting and using schools and refugee/ IDP camps as recruitment centres;

2. **Commends** the efforts being deployed by Member States in preventing the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups, as well as in supporting the demobilization and reintegration and rehabilitation of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups and **encourages** them to take robust accountability and punitive measures against all perpetrators of violations and abuses against children and when unable to do so, to refer them to relevant continental and international mechanisms;
3. **Emphasizes the need** for Member States to comprehensively address the underlying structural root causes and factors that contribute to the continued recruitment and use of children in conflict situations, such as underdevelopment, abject poverty, youth unemployment, climate change, child abuse and marginalization;
4. **Stresses the importance** for Member States to develop holistic national action plans for strengthening efforts to effectively end the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups, which may include but are not limited to, demobilization, family reintegration, compulsory education, skills and competencies development, preserving their mental emotional, social, spiritual and physical well being and, to this end, **requests** the AU Commission and all stakeholders, including traditional leaders, faith-based organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and development partners to effectively support the implementation of such holistic national action plans;
5. **Reiterates the need** for Member States, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), as well as the AU Commission to mainstream child protection in early warning mechanisms and conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace-making and peace-building processes, as well as in post-conflict reconstruction and development;
6. **Also requests** the Commission to support Member States to mainstream child protection in peace processes, including in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) programmes, as well as to incorporate children's rights in humanitarian advocacy and to ensure equal access to reintegration support for all children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups;
7. **Underscores the importance** of sustained psychosocial support for all children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups and, once again, **encourages** Member States to treat children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups primarily as victims and to take appropriate steps to prevent the detention or prosecution of children solely for their participation in armed conflicts or mere membership in armed groups, as well as to prosecute children only in accordance with international juvenile justice standards if there is evidence that a child has committed a criminal offence;
8. **Commends** the AU Commission, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts and all international development partners, and non-governmental organizations, including Save the

Children, for the continued support to the efforts of Member States to end the recruitment and use of children in conflict situations;

9. ***Underlines the importance*** for Member States to ensure universal birth registration for all children including in refugee and IDP camps, documentation, creation of credible databases and age verification mechanisms in ascertaining children's ages to facilitate the effective implementation of action-oriented measures and initiatives to stop the recruitment and use of children in conflict situations;

10. ***Highlights the need*** for collective efforts by all stakeholders in addressing the factors/drivers that motivate children to be recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups and provide vulnerable families with socio-economic development support to reinforce resilience and prevent the recruitment and use of children;

11. ***Stresses the need*** for effective sensitization of all stakeholders, particularly the armed forces, on relevant national, Continental and global/international instruments for promoting child protection, and, in this regard, ***commends*** the critical role of civil society in educating and raising public awareness;

12. ***Applauds*** all Member States which have signed and ratified all regional and international instruments on the protection of children's rights, particularly, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and ***encourages*** those Member States which have not yet done so to also do the same;

13. ***Also applauds*** all Member States which have endorsed and are domesticating the Safe Schools Declaration and ***encourages*** those that have not yet done so to also consider doing the same, in order to ensure its universalization and full implementation;

14. ***Reiterates its request*** in paragraph 20 of Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.1101(2022)], for the Chairperson of the AU Commission to appoint a Special Envoy for Children Affected by Armed Conflicts in Africa to facilitate effective implementation of the AU Child Rights Agenda;

15. ***Requests*** the Commission to undertake a study on the specific impact of terrorism on children and to submit the report of the study for consideration by the Council, as soon as possible; and

16. ***Decides*** to remain actively seized of this matter.