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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1144TH MEETING

14 MARCH 2023
ADDIS-ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.1144 (2023)

COMMUNIQUE

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 1144th open session held on 14 March 2023 dedicated to Women, Peace and Security in Africa on the theme: *Integrating Women, Peace and Security agenda in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a focus on women in cross border trade in conflict and post-conflict situations*;

The Peace and Security Council,

Recalling its previous decisions and pronouncements on Women, Peace, and Security in Africa, and related themes, particularly Communiqués [PSC/PR/COMM.1109 (2022)] adopted at its 1109th meeting held on 3 October 2022, [PSC/MIN/COMM.1063 (2022)] adopted at its 1063rd meeting held at the Ministerial level on 8 February 2022, and PSC/MIN/COMM.(CMLXXXVII) adopted at its 987th meeting held at the Ministerial level on 22 March 2021;

Faithful to the advancement of the AU Theme of the Year 2023: “Acceleration of the AfCFTA Implementation”, endorsed during the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the Union held on 18 – 19 February 2023, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which seeks to generate more significant political commitment in the trade as a developmental agenda for Africa, in line with Agenda 2063;

Reaffirming its commitment to the ideals of the landmark United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) on Women, Peace and Security adopted on 31 October 2000, and its implementation, **while noting** women integration in cross border trade in the continent;

Noting the opening remarks by H.E. Ambassador Innocent Shiyo, the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the AU and PSC Chairperson for March 2023, and the statements by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and H.E. Mme. Bineta Diop, Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Women, Peace and Security, as well as the statement read on behalf of H.E. Wamkele Mene, Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Secretariat;

Further noting the statement read by H.E. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, on behalf of H.E. Mme. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and statements by H.E. Mme. Awa Ndiaye Seck, UN Women Special Representative to the AU Commission and United Nations Economic Commission (ECA), and the statements by the representatives of women from the Democratic Republic of Congo and from the Republic of Sierra Leone; and

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

1. **Underscores** the significant role that women traders continue to play in transforming communities and eradicating poverty; in this regard, **emphasises** the need for greater political will to create conducive conditions to enable women to trade without impediments, including ensuring gender equality in trade, reducing financial exclusion and developing appropriate safeguard measures for women traders to facilitate intra-African trade;
2. **Welcomes** the proven contribution of women in the promotion of peace at the local, national, regional and Continental levels; **reiterates** its call for ensuring meaningful participation of women in development activities and peace processes, from preventive diplomacy, mediation and conflict

management, as well as post-conflict, reconstruction and development; and **underscores** the potential for women cross-border traders to use their networks to contribute to cross-border peacebuilding;

3. **Reaffirms** the nexus between trade, economic development, peace and security and **takes note** of the envisaged contribution of the AfCFTA to Africa's development aspirations per Agenda 2063; **emphasises** the need for Member States to put in place the necessary regulatory and institutional frameworks for the meaningful, inclusive, and effective participation of Women in the implementation of the AfCFTA for continental integration and the delivery of economic growth that fosters lasting peace, stability and development;

4. **Notes with deep concern** that women continue to be disproportionately affected in conflict and post-conflict situations, including the adverse impact faced by women traders, the majority of whom are self-employed and involved in informal cross-border trading; **further notes** the detrimental impact of conflict and insecurity along borders on the safety and livelihoods of women cross-border traders;

5. **Strongly condemns** any form of violence perpetuated against girls and women, especially in conflict and crisis situations, as well as along borders, in the form of gender-based violence, harassment, societal marginalisation, forced displacement, and the loss of livelihood;

6. **Applauds** the various initiatives aimed at connecting and empowering women cross-border traders and **calls** for more concerted efforts to support women informal cross-border traders in complex political transitions, as well as conflict and post-conflict situations to enable them to continue with their trading activities without hindrance; in this regard, **encourages** Member States and Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) to redouble their efforts in facilitating access to support facilities for women cross-border traders, including access to start-up capital and safety nets with a view to eventual transitioning into the formal economy to benefit from the AfCFTA; to this end, **urges** Member States to create a favourable environment for investments in women-led, and youth-led businesses, to meet the standards, quality, and scale required to supply and integrate into regional value chains;

7. **Calls Upon** Member States and RECs/RMs) to improve access to trade finance for women and youth by developing financial products and instruments tailored to trading activities carried out by them, including in informal cross-border trade;

8. **Welcomes** the development of the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade and **pays tribute** to the leadership of H.E. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and AfCFTA Champion on Women and Youth in Trade, and **calls** for the inclusion of the women, peace and security agenda in the development of the Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade; and **reiterates** the need for lessons learning and sharing of best practices from Member States and or RECs/RMs on Trade Facilitation of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises and Cross Border Trade as building blocks for the AfCFTA Protocol on Women, Youth and Trade, to allow women and Youth to take advantage of opportunities offered by the AfCFTA;

9. **Encourages** Member States which are yet to do so to sign, ratify and fully domesticate all AU and international instruments relating to women, peace, and security; and **urges** Member States which are yet to develop National Action Plans (NAPs) to do so and prioritise women's empowerment initiatives;

10. **Reiterates** the need to capacitate the Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to enable it to fully discharge its mandate and monitor the implementation of all decisions on Women, Peace and Security;
11. **Requests** the AU Commission, in close coordination with relevant stakeholders and partners, to continue rendering support to the Member States in their respective national efforts of implementing AU-relevant decisions, to address challenges related to trade, peaceful coexistence and stability, as well as the safety and security of women and girls in borderlands;
12. **Further requests** the AU Commission, specifically the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, in collaboration with the relevant Department within the AU Commission, to further enhance its support, within available resources, towards women cross-border traders and empower them in their intra-African trade and regional integration endeavours; and
13. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.