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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 661<sup>ST</sup> MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

23 FEBRUARY 2017

PSC/PR/COMM.I(DCLXI)

## COMMUNIQUE

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 661<sup>st</sup> meeting held on 23 February 2017, at the ministerial level, adopted the following decision on Free Movement of People and Goods and its Implications on Peace and Security in Africa:

### **Council:**

1. **Takes note** of the statements made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda, Honourable Louise Mushikiwabo, in her capacity as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of February 2017 and by the Acting Director for Peace and Security, on behalf of the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security. Council **also takes note** of the presentations made by AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Dr. Aisha Abdullahi and by Brigadier-General Joseph Nzabamwita, of the Republic of Rwanda, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA). Council **further takes note** of the statements made by representatives of Member States, representatives of the African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3), the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), as well as by the representative of the United Nations;
2. **Acknowledges** that the AU Heads of State and Government have adopted important policy decisions on free movement of people and goods, including Agenda 2063. In this context, Council **recalls** decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.607 (XXVII)] on the Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport adopted by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government at its 27<sup>th</sup> ordinary session held in Kigali, Rwanda, in July 2016 in which the Assembly urged all Member States to adopt the African Passport and to work closely with the AU Commission to facilitate the process towards the issuance at national level based on international, continental and national policy provisions and continental design and specifications;
3. **Also Acknowledges** that besides facilitating regional and continental integration, the benefits of free movement of people, goods and services, far outweigh the real and potential security and economic challenges that may be perceived or generated;
4. **Commends** all Member States which have already signed and ratified all relevant AU instruments on free movement of people and goods, and **encourages** those Member States which have not yet done so, to also do the same. In the same context, Council **urges** Member States to address all institutional and regulatory capacity gaps, in order to have a common policy on free movement of people and goods;
5. **Stresses the need** for AU Member States to further enhance mutual trust, cooperation and collaboration in addressing security challenges that are related to free movement of people

and goods, in order to prevent terrorist and criminal groups from taking advantages and exploiting such facilities;

6. **Also commends** the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the East African Community (EAC) for the significant progress recorded to date in the promotion of free movement of people, goods and services and urges other RECs/RMs to emulate the ECOWAS example;

7. **Further commends** Member States that have already started to issue visas on arrival to fellow African citizens, namely: Benin, Ghana, Mauritius, Rwanda and Seychelles and **urges** other Member States to also put in place necessary measures to ensure the issuance of visas on arrival for African citizens while at the same time taking the necessary security precautions;

8. **Appeals** to Member States, within the spirit of promoting free movement of people and goods in the African continent, to refrain from imposing harsh penalties to fellow African citizens who would have over-stayed in their countries beyond the period stipulated in the visas and to facilitate their exit to destinations of their choice;

9. **Underscores** the importance of expediting the process of issuing an African Passport to all AU Heads of States and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Members of Permanent Representatives Committee, Heads of AU Organs, senior leadership of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) and their respective staff. In the same context, Council **requests** the AU Commission to provide necessary technical support to Member States, in order to enable them to produce and issue the African passport to their own citizens;

10. **Also underscores** the importance of further enhancing collaboration between and among Member States, particularly their immigration, defence, security and intelligence services, and working in close collaboration with the relevant African and international institutions, in order to ensure timely sharing of intelligence and build mutual confidence and trust, with a view to dispelling any fears that may be generated by the promotion of free movement of people, goods and services;

11. **Stresses the urgent need** for all national intelligence and security services of the Member States to be innovative and adapt to the contemporary security threats, among others, by using advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) and highly skilled personnel, in order to prevent terrorist and criminal groups from abusing the free movement of people, goods and services, which is also in line with the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2178 of 2014 which requires Member States to prevent the movement of terrorist groups by ensuring effective border management and control;

12. **Encourages** Member States to sensitize their citizens on all AU decisions relating to free

movement of people, goods and services, with a view to forestalling any resentment to foreigners from other African countries and preventing xenophobia;

13. **Underlines the need** to ensure a phased approach in implementing AU policy decisions on free movement of people and goods, mindful of the variances in the legitimate security concerns of Member States. Council **also underlines** the need to ensure that effective measures are put in place in order to prevent situations whereby upholding the freedom of movement of people will not lead to situations whereby the arrival and settlement of migrants in a given country will create/ exacerbate inequalities or will constitute challenges to peace and security;

14. **Requests** the AU Commission to expedite the finalization of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in Africa, pursuant to Assembly decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.607 (XXVII)];

15. **Also requests** CISSA to provide necessary support to the Member States and the RECs/RMs, with a view to expediting the implementation of all AU policy decisions relating to free movement of people and goods;

16. **Further stresses** the need for the African Members of the UN Security Council to work closely with the PSC in ensuring that Africa's determination to facilitate free movement of people and goods is not impeded by external influences, given the emerging trends in some parts of the world whereby some countries are moving in the direction of closing their borders and imposing restrictions on the free movement of people;

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