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**PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 708<sup>TH</sup> MEETING**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA 16 AUGUST 2017**

**PSC/PR/BR. (DCCVIII)**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

## PRESS STATEMENT

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), dedicated its 708<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 16 August 2017, to an Open Session on the theme: "The Drought Situation and its Implication on Peace and Security in Africa";

Council and participants took note of the statement made by the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs H.E Mrs. Amira El Fadil. They also took note of the presentations made by the AU Commission Director of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Economy, Dr. Godfrey Bahigwa; the representative of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Ms. Alice Sequi, and the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to the AU, Dr. Patrick Kormawa. They further took note of the statements made by the representatives of AU Member States, the AU partners, including the United Nations, the European Union and other international organizations;

Council and participants recalled the AU Assembly decisions on climate change, particularly Assembly/AU/Dec.246(XII), Assembly/AU/Dec.580(XXV) Rev1 and Assembly/AU/Dec.603(XXVI) adopted at 12<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Sessions of the Union, respectively, on the African Common Position on Climate Change and the Mitigation Factor, as well as Council's previous decisions and pronouncements on the phenomenon of drought, particularly, Communique PSC/PR/COMM. (DCLX) adopted at its 660<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 21 February 2017 and Press Statement PSC/PR/BR (DLXXXV) adopted at its 585<sup>th</sup> meeting, held on 30 March 2016;

Council and participants noted the close connection between drought, peace and security in Africa. In particular, they noted that the impacts of drought undermine peace, security and stability in most of the affected countries and their neighbours and, unless its effects are urgently contained, can metamorphose into social tension leading to civil strife;

Council and participants observed a minute silent in honour of all people who lost their lives and other victims of the floods which occurred in Freetown, Sierra Leone and to express solidarity with the people and the Government of that country. They encouraged AU Member States and all those in a position to do so, to extend any form of support they can, to the people and Government of Sierra Leone. They appealed to the members of the international community to provide sustained humanitarian assistance to the affected communities in that country;

Council and participants commended all Member States and Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), which have been providing humanitarian assistance, particularly food aid, to the populations affected by drought spell and urged them to pursue their assistance until the affected communities would have fully recovered from the adverse effects of drought;

Council and participants also urged Member states to accelerate the integrated implementation of existing international and regional commitments and agreements related to mitigation of the effects of climate change, namely the Paris Climate Agreement, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030;

Council and participants welcomed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Food

Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) which is aimed at deepening cooperation between the two organizations. They expressed the hope that the two organizations will cooperate in improving the dissemination of agro-meteorological data, tools and methods, as well as enhancing access by all farmers, with a view assisting them to anticipate and to be more proactive in preparing for the adverse effects of drought;

Council and participants reiterated the need for Member States to continue to develop effective strategies for protection against the adverse effects of drought. They encouraged farmers to diversify their activities and invest more in drought-resistant varieties of both, crops and livestock. In the same vein, they encouraged Member States, while strictly respecting principles of international law and regional agreements, to also enhance investments in irrigation, rain water harvesting infrastructure and practice modern methods of farming, including inter-cropping;

Council and participants underscored the importance of disaster risk reduction. In this regard, they reiterated the importance for Member States, RECs/RMs and partners to actively pursue collective and integrated approaches to boost resilience that focus on prevention and strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus, as well as improve communication on drought through timely sharing of early warning data to inform disaster preparedness and response at the national, regional and continental levels;

Council and participants, once again, underlined the need for the replenishment of the AU Special Emergency Assistance Fund on Drought and Famine in Africa, in order to enable the Fund to more effectively assist Member States affected by drought and other related negative effects of climate change. In the same context, they underscored the need to mobilize funds in support of African communities affected by droughts, particularly women, children and other vulnerable groups, affected by food insecurity resulting from drought conditions. In this regard, they requested the AU Commission to expedite consultations with all relevant stakeholders, with a view to organizing an international conference on drought impacts in Africa for purposes of mobilizing resources for immediate response;

Council and participants stressed the importance of Member States, particularly those affected by drought and famine, coupled with violent conflicts, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the population need and also to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian aid agencies operating in their countries;

Council and participants reiterated its call to all Member States, which have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement and expedite its implementation, as it represents a historic turning point in international cooperation on climate change;

Council and participants stressed the need for the AU to consider re-visiting the proposal for the establishment of an African Humanitarian Response Agency for purposes of ensuring coordination of rapid responses to humanitarian emergency situations in the continent;

Council and participants also stressed the importance of building effective synergies and coordination of effort particularly in research which focuses, among others, on drought resistant crops for arid and semi-arid areas in the Member States;

Council and participants, mindful of the upcoming Conference of the Parties (COP23) to be held in Germany in November 2017 and the 72<sup>nd</sup> United Nations General Assembly session in September 2017

under the theme "Focusing on People: Striving for Peace and Decent Life for All in a Sustainable Planet", called for active participation of all AU Member States in promoting Africa's common positions;

Council and participants agreed to remain actively seized of the matter