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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 775TH MEETING

22 MAY 2018

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR. (DCCLXXV)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) dedicated its 775th meeting held on 22 May 2018, to an open session on the theme: "The Principles on Protection of Civilians in Conflict areas in Africa".

Council and participants took note of the opening remarks made by H.E. Ambassador Hope Tumukunde Gasatura, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda to the AU, in her capacity as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of May 2018. They also took note of the briefing made by Dr. Admore Mupoki Kambudzi, Acting Director for Peace and Security on Behalf of the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui. They further took note of the presentations made by Mr. Zinurine Abiodu Alghali, in his capacity as the Acting Head of the Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD), within the Department of Peace and Security, as well as by the representative of the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU). They also took note of the statements made by the representatives of AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), AU partners and international organizations.

Council and participants recalled Article 4 (c) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, which provides for respect for the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, the sanctity of human life and international humanitarian law.

Council also recalled the decision adopted at its 326th meeting held on 22 June 2012, in which Council decided that protection of civilians must be an integral part of the mandate of all future AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs).

Council and participants noted that the implementation of protection of civilians mandate in AU PSOs continues to face challenges including the fact that the AU PSOs are often deployed in particularly high risk, complex and logistically challenging environments. They stressed the importance of multipronged approaches involving a combination of policing, civilian and military functions and underscored the importance of ensuring that all necessary resources are availed to all PSOs from the outset of the mandates, in order to enable them to more effectively discharge their protection of civilian tasks.

Council and participants welcomed the efforts being deployed by the AU Commission to further strengthen the protection of civilians in AU PSOs. In this regard, they welcomed the Draft Guidelines for the Protection of Civilians in African Union Peace Support Operations and the Aide- Memoire for the consideration of issues relating to the Protection of Civilians in Africa, which serves as guides for all actors in the continent, as well as the Integrated Protection of Civilians Training Standards. Council also welcomed the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians and underscored the importance of protecting civilians in Peace Support Operations.

Council and participants underlined the importance of ensuring that all civilians and their objects are protected against attacks and direct consequences of military operations, and that refugee and internally displaced people (IDP) camps, as well as the importance of ensuring that Protection of Civilian facilities maintain their civilian character and are not misused by parties to a conflict.

Council and participants emphasized that all PSOs, including those undertaken by subregional coalitions authorized by the Council, should uphold the AU Protection of Civilians Principles and ensure broader compliance and accountability to International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights and Conduct and Discipline. They also emphasized the importance of Member States to promulgate necessary legislation and to put in place necessary institutional arrangements to address violations of international humanitarian law, violation of human rights, particularly gender based violence against women and children and any other form of misconduct with a view to ensuring accountability, as well as redress and justice for the victims of misconduct by PSO personnel and violations committed by parties to a conflict.

Council encouraged Member States to publicize, familiarize and internalize all existing AU instruments relating to protection of civilians in conflict situations and to ensure that these instruments are considered as integral part of the training of all defence and security forces with a view to preparing them for participation in future AU PSOs.

Council noted that the Draft Guidelines for the Protection of Civilians in AU mandated and authorized Peace Support Operations still remain in draft form. In this regard, Council requested the Commission to expeditiously update the Draft Guidelines for the Protection of Civilians and harmonize them with all other relevant documents on the protection of civilians, including the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, for their urgent consideration and adoption by the next meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS) before its subsequent submission to the relevant AU decision making organs.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.