

AFRICAN UNION

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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 791ST MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA 22 AUGUST 2018

PSC/PR/BR. (DCCXCI)

PRESS STATEMENT

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), dedicated its 791st meeting, held on 22nd August 2018, in Addis Ababa, to an open session on the theme: 'Peace, Security, Prosperity and Embracing the Value of Democracy and Governance: Is the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance Adequate?'

Council and participants took note of the opening statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zambia to the AU, H.E. Ambassador Susan Sikaneta, in her capacity as the PSC Chairperson for the month of August 2018. They also took note of the statement made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the AU, Ambassador Sahle-Work Zewde, as well as the presentation made by the Director of the Department of Political Affairs of the AU Commission, Dr. Khabele Matlosa. They further took note of 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, international organizations and institutions, civil society organizations and think tanks;

Council and participants recalled the AU Vision of an integrated, stable, peaceful and prosperous Africa; the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG); Agenda 2063 and its seven aspirations; the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the year 2020; as well as the Organization of African Unity/AU (OAU/AU) 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration adopted on 25th May 2013, in Addis Ababa, in which the Assembly of the Union pledged not to bequeath the burden of wars to the next generation of Africans and undertook to end all wars in Africa by the year 2020. They also recalled the various pronouncements of the Council, particularly Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR. (CDXXXII)], adopted at its 432nd meeting, held on 29th April 2014, which was dedicated to an open session on the theme: "Unconstitutional Changes of Governments and Popular Uprisings: Challenges and Lessons". They further recalled Article 3 (f) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, which stipulates that one of the objectives of the PSC is "to promote and encourage democratic practices, good governance and the rule of law, protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the sanctity of human life and international humanitarian law, as part of efforts for preventing conflicts";

Council and participants stressed that democracy is neither linear nor irreversible, but a process that remains under continuous construction and a system of participatory governance that transcends the mere organization of regular elections;

Council and participants called on all Member States to consider the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as a guide for deepening and consolidating democracy in Africa. In the same vein, they called for the universal ratification of all AU pro-democracy and pro-good governance instruments,

particularly the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. Furthermore, they underscored the importance of ensuring that Africans enjoy the tangible dividends of democracy, namely: peace, stability, prosperity and socio-economic development;

Council and participants also underscored the importance of all Member States to establish and/or strengthen democracy-promotion or integrity institutions with a view to nurturing and deepening democracy in Member States;

Council and participants highlighted the imperative for AU Member States to broaden the democratic space through the equal promotion of political rights and civil liberties on the one hand, and socio-economic and cultural rights on the other in order to situate the right to development at the center of the democratization project;

Council and participants commended all Member States for the progress achieved in nurturing, promoting and consolidating democratic governance since the adoption and coming into force of ACDEG. They congratulated the Togolese Republic for being the first AU Member State to submit its initial report on the implementation of the provisions of ACDEG and strongly encouraged other State Parties to also submit their initial reports;

Council and participants stressed the importance of a vibrant civil society as well as professional and responsible media in the process of deepening and consolidating democratic governance in Africa. In this regard, they underscored the need for building the capacity of local civil society organizations, not only to reduce their excessive dependence on external sources of funding and manipulation by donors, but also in order to ensure that they positively complement the efforts of governments in promoting and consolidating democracy. African media houses were also urged to desist from circulating fake news and encouraged to enhance their capacity to articulate democratic governance issues as key stakeholders in Africa's democratisation process;

Council and participants underlined the importance of AU Member States to redouble efforts in addressing poverty as a structural root cause of most of the current violent conflicts in Africa. In the same vein, they also underlined the need for Member States to address the development challenges, as well as to meaningfully engage women and the youth in the process of deepening and consolidating democracy;

Council expressed concern over the continued interference by external actors in internal political processes of Member States, consequently triggering violent conflicts. In this regard, Council emphasized the importance of the international community to respect internal political processes of Member States as sovereign national processes;

Council further underscored the urgent need for the Commission to further strengthen the

Secretariat of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and ensure functional synergies between the AGA and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). In this regard, Council called for strong partnerships between APSA and AGA on one side, with Regional Economic Communities on the other for the purposes of promoting democracy, peace and socio-economic development in Africa;

Council further requested the Commission to expedite the development of guidelines for amending national constitutions, which will be universally applicable to all Member States. In this context, Council once again reiterated decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.269 (XIV)] on the prevention of unconstitutional changes of government and strengthening of the capacities of the AU to manage such situations, adopted by the Assembly of the Union at its 14th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, from 31st January to 2nd February 2010, as well as its Communique [PSC/MIN/BR.I (CCLXXV) adopted at its 275th meeting held at Ministerial level on 26 April 2010, in which Council:

- a) called all AU Member States that have not already done so, to sign ratify and domesticate the AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, as well as other related instruments, and reiterated the need for AU Member States to uphold the rule of law and abide by their own constitutions, especially with regard to constitutional reforms, bearing in mind that failure to respect these provisions often lead to situations of tension with serious political and security imputation, which, in turn, could trigger political crises;
- b) requested the Commission to collect the Constitutions of the all AU Member States for reference and ultimate study, subject to the availability of funds in order to identify inconsistencies with good governance and standard constitutionalism and therefore constitute a potent threat to social order, peace and stability;
- c) agreed on the need for the Council to fully exercise the powers granted to it under Article 7 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the PSC, which stipulates

that this body, in collaboration with the Chairperson of the Commission, shall follow-up, within the framework of its conflict prevention responsibilities, the progress towards the promotion of democratic practices, good governance, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the sanctity of human life by Member States";

- d) stressed the need for the AU Member States to redouble their efforts in conflict prevention and encouraged the Commission to make follow-ups on the effective implementation of the recommendations made by the Panel of the Wise in its July 2010 Report on the Strengthening of the Role of the AU in the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Elections-related tensions and violent conflicts in Africa considering the fact that differences

concerning the conduct of an electoral process contribute to the occurrence of unconstitutional changes of government;

- e) underscored the need to enhance efforts at preventive diplomacy, bearing in mind communique PSC/PR/COMM.(CCCLX) adopted by the 360th Meeting of Council held on 22nd March 2013; and
- f) welcomed the recommendations that all relevant AU instruments and provisions on unconstitutional changes of government scattered in various instruments should be consolidated into a single document.

Council further agreed to explore the possibility of facilitating the codification of AGA through a supplementary Protocol to ACDEG, along the same lines that APSA was codified through the 2002 PSC Protocol. It was noted that this will go a long way in strengthening AGA and its Platform as a complimentary conflict prevention structure to APSA;

Council agreed to institutionalize and regularize an annual open session dedicated to a review of the status of implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; and

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.