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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 898th MEETING 28 NOVEMBER 2019 ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM. (DCCCXCVIII)

COMMUNIQUE

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 898th meeting held on 28 November 2019, on the renewal of the mandate of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against the Boko Haram terrorist group:

The Peace and Security Council,

Taking note of the opening remarks made by the Permanent Representative of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, H.E. Ambassador Rachid Benlounes, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of November 2019, and the statement read by the AU Director for Peace and Security Department, Dr. Admore Kambudzi, on behalf of the Commissioner of Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui; ***also taking note*** of the report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and AU support to the force as well as the presentation by the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Head of Mission of the MNJTF, H.E. Amb. Mamman Nuhu; ***further taking note*** of the statements made by the representatives of the Republic of Niger, in its capacity as the Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gabonese Republic, in its capacity as the Chair of the Economic Community of the Central African States (ECCAS);

Recalling its earlier decisions and pronouncements on the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group and efforts aimed at eradicating it, in particular Communique [PSC/PR/COMM. (DCCCXVI)] adopted at its 816th held on 5 December 2018, Communique [PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLXXXVIII)] adopted at its 738th meeting held on 7 December 2017, Communique [PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCXXI)] adopted at its 721st meeting held on 28 September 2017, Communique [PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLXXXIX)] adopted at its 489th meeting held on 3 March 2015 and Communique [PSC/AHG/COMM. 2(CDLXXXIV)] adopted at its 484th meeting held on 29 January 2015;

Also recalling the Final Communique of the Joint Summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS Heads of State and Government on Peace, Security, Stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism held on 30 July 2018 in Lome, Togo; ***further recalling*** the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2349 (2017) which recognised the determination of the Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) plus Benin to address the impact of Boko Haram terrorist activities;

Acting under Article 7 of the Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council,

1. ***Commends*** the efforts and significant progress made by the MNJTF and the Member States of the LCBC plus Benin in the fight against Boko Haram terrorist group, which have significantly degraded the operational capability of the group and continued to successfully dislodge it from its strongholds;

welcomes the deployment of the new Force Commander, Major General Ibrahim Manu Yusuf;

2. **Emphasises** that, despite MNJTF considerable successes, Boko Haram still retains the capacity to continue to threaten peace and security for the countries of the region, and this requires concerted efforts to completely eliminate the terrorist group; in this respect, **also emphasises** the imperative for enhanced synergy, coordination and collaboration between the Member States of the LCBC plus Benin with the AU, ECOWAS and ECCAS in order to consolidate the gains made thus far in the fight against Boko Haram terrorist group;

3. **Condemns in the strongest terms** the continued attacks and appalling atrocities perpetrated by Boko Haram against innocent civilians, particularly women and children, as well as the kidnapping and killing of humanitarian aid workers, which have resulted in widespread displacement and exacerbated the Humanitarian crisis in the region; in this regard, **calls for** enhanced efforts by the LCBC Member States and Benin towards deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration of the captured and surrendered Boko Haram combatants, as well as for the concerned Member States to protect civilians on their territory and resettle the displaced population in a dignified manner;

4. **Expresses deep concern** over the continued use by Boko Haram of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for reconnaissance operations within the MNJTF Area of Operation; to this effect, **requests** the Commission, in coordination with the LCBC Member States plus Benin, to engage with relevant stakeholders to urgently explore the possibility of effective responses to this threat including through identifying and blocking the source of acquiring these technologies and equipment as well as any other form of political, military and financial support to Boko Haram terrorist group;

5. **Pays tribute** to the gallant soldiers that have paid the ultimate price and expresses once again its sincere condolences to their families and respective countries of origin; and **encourages** MNJTF to sustain combat operations and remain resolute until the Boko Haram terrorist group is completely eradicated;

6. **Welcomes** the outcomes of the Ministerial meeting of the MNJTF Troop Contributing Countries' (TCCs), held on 15 November 2019 in N'Djamena, Chad, which endorsed the implementation of the signed service contracts of Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), Command Control, Communication and Information System (C3IS) and Air Mobility; **also welcomes** the decisions of the said Ministerial meeting to review the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) and to continue and intensify MNJTF operations against the Boko Haram terrorist group;

7. **Commends** the AU and its partners for their continued substantial and financial support to the MNJTF, **urges** the LCBC and the MNJTF TCCs to cooperate with the AU to facilitate the implementation of the signed service contracts of ISR, C3IS, and Air Mobility capabilities; in addition, **stresses the need** for the AU to continue its efforts to mobilise resources for the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Support Implementation Agreement (SIA) signed between the AU, LCBC and MNJTF TCCs in support of MNJTF operations, as well as the Regional Strategy for Stabilisation, Recovery

and Resilience;

8. **Requests** the Commission to make efforts towards mobilising more additional support for the MNJTF to fill its regional capability gaps especially, Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) equipment, Amphibious Equipment, counter drones equipment and Information Operations, the necessary resources for Quick Impact and Peace Strengthening Projects as well as Humanitarian support for the affected population; and in this respect **underscores the importance** of ensuring that all support provided to the MNJTF is channelled through regional mechanisms, with a view to ensuring collective ownership by countries of the region;

9. **Commends** the efforts that have been undertaken by the Member States of LCBC plus Benin and the significant progress made in the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience in the areas affected by the Boko Haram menace; in this regard, **stresses the importance** for full operationalisation of the strategy in order to address political, social and developmental challenges affecting the region, including food insecurity exacerbated by the shrinking water resources of the Lake Chad, and **welcomes** the Inter-Water- Basin-Transfer initiative aimed at restoring the ecological level of the Lake Chad with a view to supporting socio-economic activities in the region;

10. **Stresses the imperative** of adopting a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy to address the Boko Haram threat, including measures aimed at strengthening social cohesion, deconstructing the extremist narrative and combatting conduct inciting hatred and violence; **also stresses the need** to strengthen cross-border operations as well as to devise communication strategies with a view to winning the hearts and minds that will go a long way in countering damage caused by the Boko Haram terrorist group, as well as ensuring recovery and return to normality of the affected people and communities;

11. **Calls for** redoubling of national, regional and international efforts to target root causes of terrorism with a view to improving the livelihoods of the populace through improved access to education, increased employment opportunities, as well as deploying efforts towards the protection of human rights, including those of women and children, in order to address alienation and marginalisation which create conducive conditions for violent extremism to fester, and **also calls for** the provision of humanitarian assistance to the affected populations; **further calls on** the Member States, the ECOWAS Commission and ECCAS Secretariat to work towards the implementation of the joint ECOWAS-ECCAS summit decisions in accordance with the Lome Declaration;

12. **Decides** to renew the mandate of the MNJTF for another period of twelve (12) months, effective from 31 January 2020;

13. **Requests** the Commission, in coordination with the LCBC Secretariat, to regularly update Council on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin, in line with the relevant provisions contained in the Communiqué PSC/AHG/ COMM.2(CDLXXXIV) of 29 January 2015;

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