

AFRICAN UNION
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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 926TH MEETING

19 MAY 2020

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXXVI)

COMMUNIQUE

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 926th meeting held on 19 May 2020, on the update on the progress in controlling the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and its impact in Africa,

The Peace and Security Council,

Noting the opening remarks made by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the AU and PSC Chairperson for the month of May 2020, H.E. Ambassador Professor Mafa Sejanamane, as well as the presentations made by the Deputy Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC), Dr Ahmed Ogwel Ouma and the Special Representative of the Secretary General to the African Union and Head of UNOAU, Madam Hanna S. Tetteh;

Mindful of the fact that, COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented crisis impacting the entire globe, with far-reaching political, economic, social and security consequences throughout Africa and the rest of the world;

Recalling its previous decisions on the fight against COVID-19, in particular, Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.(CMX)] adopted at 910th meeting held on 13 February 2020; Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXV)] adopted at its 915th meeting held on 9 March 2020; Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXVIII)], adopted at 910th meeting held on 14 April 2020; Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXXII), adopted at its 922nd meeting held on 6 May 2020; and Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXXIV), adopted at its 924th meeting held on 12 May 2020;

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

1. **Commends** all Member States for the African solidarity, collaboration and leadership since the outbreak of the pandemic, including the development of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak, the establishment of the African Union COVID-19 Response Fund and its Board of Trustees, the formation of Ministerial Committees, which includes key stakeholders, such as regional actors; **and encourages** them to maintain their resoluteness to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to mitigate its socio-economic impact in their countries;

2. **Also Commends** the Africa-CDC and the World Health Organization, as well as the private sector and all philanthropic organizations that are making invaluable contributions to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic; **commends in particular** healthcare workers for sacrificing their lives to the fight against the pandemic and **encourages them** to persevere until the pandemic is completely eradicated from the Continent;

3. **Welcomes** the inauguration of the AU COVID-19 Diagnostic Laboratory, at its Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre (AU-PANVAC), in Debre-Zeit, Ethiopia, which is designed to test the quality of anti-COVID-19 equipment and to conduct research leading to the development of a COVID-19 vaccine; and in this respect, **appeals** to Member States to provide all necessary support to the Laboratory;

4. **Expresses appreciation** to the support from the international community and philanthropic entities; **expresses particular appreciation**, once again, to the Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation for the delivery of the third consignment of the donation of medical equipment and supplies for the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic; and in this context, **welcomes** the arrangements being made by Africa-CDC for the distribution of the equipment among Member States, as well as arrangements for the establishment of a single procurement platform for anti-COVID-19 pandemic material and equipment for Member States, with a view to ensuring quality control;

5. **Notes with concern** the rapid increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the Continent and **appeals** to all Member States to further enhance the capacity of their national healthcare infrastructures, as well as to avail them with all resources required for the effective fight against the pandemic, including personal protective equipment, and to allocate more resources and necessary medical equipment with a view to improving services to their citizens; Council **encourages** Member States to expand testing exercises across their entire territories, with a view to defeating the pandemic;

6. **Commends** the efforts being deployed by peace support operations (PSOs) in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, while implementing their mandates and working in close collaboration with the relevant authorities of the host countries; and in this context, **urges** the host countries to provide all necessary support to the PSOs and to also include them in any healthcare services being provided in the context of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic;

7. **Emphasizes the need** for Member States to continue taking all necessary measures to effectively combat the COVID-19 pandemic, including closing their land borders, suspending international flights and banning public gatherings, as well as imposing nationwide lockdowns and curfews while respecting and protecting human rights. In the same context, Council **appeals** to Member States to facilitate the delivery of supplies for the fight against the pandemic, among others, by opening their airspaces, ensuring landing rights and for the ports of entry to expedite the clearance process of consignments for the fight against the pandemic and free movement and protection of healthcare workers, as well as guaranteeing humanitarian access to the population in need;

8. **Encourages** Member States to continue to raise public awareness on the COVID-19 pandemic and to encourage their populations to rely on official information that is disseminated by national health authorities, Africa CDC and WHO on all matters relating to the COVID-19 pandemic;

9. **Underlines the importance** for Member States to mitigate the unintended consequences of lockdowns to the population, including the potential risk of civil unrest and, in this regard, **requests** Africa-CDC to expedite the finalization of the AU Guidelines for Reviewing Lockdowns;

10. **Underscores the need** to protect marginalized and groups in vulnerable situations, such as people living with disabilities, the elderly, refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons, taking into account their peculiar vulnerabilities and the need to adapt COVID-19 response measures accordingly. Council **also underscores the importance** of ensuring protection of women and children, particularly girls, during lockdowns, as they face the risk of becoming victims of increases in cases of

domestic violence and abuse, as well as sexual exploitation and harmful practices;

11. **Encourages** Member States who are planning to conduct their elections during this period to closely examine the impact of COVID-19 and ensure that elections are conducted in a free, fair and credible manner, as well as to take all necessary steps to prevent polling stations from becoming centres for the spread of COVID-19 pandemic and to guarantee the health of the population during the election period; and **stresses the importance** for Member States to ensure that any decisions on holding or postponing elections are always made through a consultative, inclusive and transparent manner;

12. **Once again requests** the Africa CDC to continue providing regular briefings to Council on the progress, trends and challenges in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in the Continent; and

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