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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 935TH MEETING 9 JULY 2020 ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXXXV)

COMMUNIQUE

Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 935th meeting held on 9 July 2020, on Elections in Africa, for the period from September to December 2019 and January to June 2020.

The Peace and Security Council,

Noting the opening remarks made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Burundi to the AU as the PSC Chairperson for the month of July 2020, H.E. Ambassador Joel Nkurabagaya, as well as the briefings made by the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, H.E. Ambassador Minata Samate Cessouma and the Deputy Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC), Dr Ahmed Ogwel Ouma;

Mindful of the AU determination to promote and protect human and people's rights, consolidate democratic institutions and culture, and to ensure good governance and the rule of law, as highlighted in the Preamble of the AU Constitutive Act; **also mindful** of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; **also recalling** the AU Constitutive Act, particularly Articles 3 and 4;

Acknowledging the significant contribution of credible, free and fair elections to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, as well as in promoting, deepening and consolidating democracy in Africa, within the overall context of achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa, as well as the AU Theme of the Year 2020 'Silencing the Guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa's Development';

Also mindful of the potential constitutional and legitimacy challenges, the financial constraints being faced by Member States, and the fact that the AU Commission is currently unable to deploy election observers in Member States organizing elections due to the COVID- 19 pandemic;

Deeply concerning about the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa, the attendant losses of lives and, **mindful of the importance** of saving lives, as well as the need to redouble efforts, in order to effectively fight and defeat the pandemic;

Further recalling all its previous decisions on the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly Communiqués [PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXXVIII)] and [PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXXIV)], adopted by Council at its 928th and 924th meetings held respectively on **TI** May 2020 and on 12 May 2020; and **also recalling** all its previous decisions on elections in Africa, particularly, Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM. (DCCCLXIX)] adopted at its 869th meeting held on 19 August 2019; and

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

1. **Congratulates** all Member States which have successfully conducted peaceful presidential and legislative elections from September 2019 to June 2020, including, Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Togo and Tunisia; **also congratulates**, in particular, those Member States which have successfully conducted their elections in challenging COVID-19 pandemic context; **further congratulates in particular**, the people of Malawi and Burundi for the peaceful Presidential elections and also for the peaceful transfer of power to the elected presidents, which is expected to significantly contribute

towards further deepening and strengthening the democratic culture in their countries;

2. **Commends** the AU Commission for continuing to provide technical capacity building support to the national elections management bodies of the Member States, with a view to ensuring the successful organization of credible democratic elections throughout the African Continent and, in this respect, **underscores the need** for further enhancing the institutional capacity of the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit within the Department of Political Affairs of the AU Commission, through provision of all required resources, in order to enable the Unit to more effectively discharge its mandate;

3. **Underlines** that the decision on whether or not to proceed with the organization of elections, in principle, and particularly during this COVID-19 context, is a sovereign prerogative and inalienable right of Member States; in this regard, **emphasizes the importance for** those Member States to ensure that such critical decisions are arrived at through a consultative and consensual process, involving all stakeholders, with a view to maintaining peace, as well as preventing conflicts and crisis situations in the Continent;

4. **Underscores the critical importance** of Member States which decide to proceed with the organization of elections, in line with their national elections calendars, to create the necessary conducive conditions to ensure safety and security of the population against COVID-19, in line with safeguard protocols issued by World Health Organization (WHO) and the Africa CDC, as well as to preserve the gains made and to maintain the current momentum in the fight against the pandemic;

5. **Reiterates the importance** of Member States to redouble efforts and mobilize all resources required for the successful organization of elections, with a view to promoting national ownership of their election processes;

6. **Encourages** the African Members of the UN Security Council (A3) to continue to champion African common positions and issues of interest to Africa, including removing, from the agenda of the UN Security Council, those African countries which have made progress in the area of peace and security;

7. **Commends**, once again, all those Member States which have already signed, ratified and domesticated the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and encourages all those Member States which have not yet done so, to also do the same;

8. **Requests** the AU Commission to continue to provide regular briefings to Council on elections in Africa and, in particular, to expedite the development of guidelines for the organization of credible elections, in the context of public health emergencies and humanitarian disasters;

9. **Commends** all Member States for the efforts being deployed in the fight against COVID-19, particularly those Member States which have introduced mass testing programs in their efforts to fight and defeat the COVID-19 pandemic and **encourages** the other Member States to also consider mass testing; **also encourages** Member States to continue to report accurately on the COVID-19 pandemic situation in their countries;

10. **Also commends** Africa CDC for all efforts being deployed in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic, including providing technical assistance to Member States and for deploying healthcare

workers in the Member States;

11. **Reiterates the importance** of Africa to invest more in sustained research towards the development of an effective, reliable and affordable COVID-19 vaccine;

12. **Also requests** 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.