

AFRICAN UNION

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 960TH MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA 28 OCTOBER 2020

PSC/PR/COMM. (CMLX)

COMMUNIQUE

Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 960th meeting held on 28 October 2020, on the Establishment of the Special Unit on Counter- Terrorism within the framework of the African Standby Force (ASF):

The Peace and Security Council,

Noting the opening remarks made by the Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for October 2020, H.E Ambassador Osama Abdelkhalek, as well as the statement read by the AU Director for Peace and Security Department, Dr Admore Kambudzi, on behalf of the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui; **also noting** the presentations made by the representatives of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), namely: the East African Standby Force Coordination Mechanism (EASFCOM), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the North African Regional Capability (NARC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA);

Recalling article 17 of the AU Assembly Decision [AU/Dec.753.XXXIII] directing "the PSC to consider all the aspects related to the proposed Special Unit within the ASF for combatting terrorism, and to present the conclusions and recommendations thereon at the next Ordinary Session in February 2021, while also taking note of the offer by the Arab Republic of Egypt to host a future Extraordinary Summit dedicated to this subject";

Also recalling its previous decisions and pronouncements through communiqués and statements on the establishment and operationalization of the ASF, particularly, Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCXCV)] adopted at its 795th meeting held on 20 September 2018, Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCLXVII) adopted at 767th meeting held on 25 April 2018, Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCV)] adopted at its 705th meeting held on 25 April 2017, and Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.(DCLVII)] adopted at its 657th meeting held on 9 February 2017;

Faithful to the relevant provisions of Article 13 of the Protocol of the Peace and Security Council relating to the establishment of ASF composed of multidisciplinary contingents ready for rapid deployment according to article 4(h) and (j) of the Constitutive Act;

Reaffirming its respect to each Member State's inalienable right to independent existence and sovereignty, as well as the primary role of managing its internal affairs, as well as the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States; and

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

1. **Expresses deep concern** over the growing threat to peace, security and prosperity of Africa posed by terrorism and violent extremism causing instability and destruction to lives, and undermining ongoing AU efforts to promote and achieve peace in fulfilment of the aspirations as espoused in the AU's flagship project of "Silencing the Guns" of the broader developmental blueprint of Agenda 2063 and the theme of 2020, and **also expresses concern** over the growing linkages between terrorism and transnational organized crime, including money laundering, drug trafficking and human trafficking, as well as illicit financial flows;

2. **Reaffirms** the AU conviction that terrorism, radicalization and violent extremism can only be effectively addressed through the use of a holistic approaches, that include effectively addressing the root causes and the underlying conditions that give rise to this growing security threat, along with the taking necessary security and military action to address any existing immediate threat;
3. **Calls** for the full operationalization of the ASF to enable rapid deployment and timeous intervention in crises; in this respect **underscores** the significance for the AU Commission and the RECs/RMs to redouble their efforts in strengthening the Regional Brigades of the ASF and availing the requisite necessary support, such as financial, technical, human and material resources, to expedite their full operationalization to enhance Africa's collective defence and security;
4. **Stresses** the imperative of harnessing the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantages through strengthening coordination between the PSC and the RECs/RMs, which serve as primary responders in their respective regions, aimed at harmonization of decision-making and reinforcing synergies to effectively and expeditiously respond to security threats in the Continent;
5. **Underscores** the importance of sharing experiences and best practices, as well as lessons arising from continental and regional mechanisms deployed against terrorism, violent extremism and other related transnational organized crime, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chan Basin and the G5 Sahel, as well as the Nouakchott and Djibouti processes; **also underscores** the importance of strengthening AU intelligence sharing mechanisms, platforms and instruments, given it's critical role in the fight against terrorism and all its manifestations;
6. Welcomes the offer of the Arab Republic of Egypt to host a future Extraordinary Summit dedicated to the "establishment of a special unit for combatting terrorism within the structure of the African Standby Force". In this regard, underscores that the deployment of the special unit, when established, will be governed by article 4(j) of the constitutive act, by which a formal written request by the concerned Member States would be submitted to the PSC for its consideration.
7. **Requests** the AU Commission to establish a task force comprising all relevant stakeholders, including the PSC Military Staff Committee (MSC), including representatives from their respective capitals, RECs/RMs, Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), as well as the focal points of Djibouti and Nouakchott processes, to provide technical guidance and submit concrete proposals on the technical aspects related to the establishment of the Special Unit for combatting terrorism within the ASF, aimed at combatting terrorism in the Continent, and **further requests** the AU Commission to brief and seek input from the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS) on all aspects related to the establishment of this Special Unit;
8. **Requests** the AU Commission to submit an update report to the PSC, within six months of adoption of this communique, on the work undertaken by the above-mentioned task force;
9. **Decides** to include, in the 'Report on the State of Peace and Security in Africa and Activities of the PSC' to be submitted to the 34th Ordinary Session of the AU in January/February 2021, the progress made on the aspects related to the proposed Special Unit for combatting terrorism within the ASF, in line with the AU Assembly Decision [AU/Dec.753.XXXIII];

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