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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
488TH MEETING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
23 FEBRUARY 2015

PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLXXXVIII)

COMMUNIQUÉ

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 488th meeting held on 23 February 2015, adopted the following decision on the situation in the Great Lakes Region:

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the briefing provided by the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for the Great Lakes Region, as well as of the statement made by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Council **also takes note** of the statements made by the representatives of the Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), South Africa and Zimbabwe, as Chair of the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Chair of SADC, respectively, the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), as well as by those of France, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, in their capacity as members of the UN Security Council;
2. **Reiterates** the AU's commitment to the respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of the DRC and of all the other countries of the Great Lakes Region;
3. **Recalls** its previous communiqués and press statements on the situation in eastern DRC and on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the DRC and the Region, in particular press statement PSC/PR/BR/1.(CDXLII) and communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLII) adopted at its 442nd and 452nd meetings, held on 17 June and 22 August 2014, respectively;
4. **Stresses** the crucial importance of the scrupulous and timely implementation of the PSC Framework for the promotion of lasting peace, security and stability in the Great Lakes Region, and **urges** all the signatory countries to honor their commitments under the Framework. Council **notes with satisfaction** the conclusions of the 9th meeting of the Technical Support Committee (TSC), held in Nairobi, on 9 and 10 January 2015, as well as the communiqué issued following the 5th meeting of the PSC Framework Regional Oversight Mechanism, held in Addis Ababa, on 31 January 2015, including the encouragement of efforts to promote confidence among the States of the Region, especially those deployed by President Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, in his capacity as current Chairman of the ICGLR ;
5. **Further stresses** the important role of the Guarantors of the PSC Framework, namely the AU, the UN, the ICGLR and SADC, in support of the implementation process of the Framework, **welcomes** the convening, in Addis Ababa, on 1 December 2014, of the 1st meeting of the Guarantors and **encourages** them to convene, whenever necessary, such meetings. Council **also welcomes** the close coordination existing among the international Special Envoys for the Great Lakes Region, including the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, and **encourages** them to continue and intensify their collective efforts in support of the implementation of the PSC Framework;

6. **Notes with deep concern** the insecurity that continues to affect eastern DRC and the criminal and heinous attacks committed against civilian populations, in particular women and children, due to the continued military activities, smuggling and other activities carried out by the negative forces, including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF/NALU), the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the National Liberation Forces (FNL) of Burundi, as well as the serious humanitarian consequences resulting therefrom ;
7. **Reiterates the need and urgency** of the effective neutralization of all the negative forces, in accordance with its earlier pronouncements on the issue and those of the ICGLR and SADC, as well as with relevant UN Security Council resolutions. In this regard, Council **reiterates AU's full support** to the UN Mission for the Stabilization of the DRC (MONUSCO) and its Intervention Brigade, established under resolution 2098 of 28 March 2013. Council **renews its appreciation** to the African Troop Contributing Countries of the Intervention Brigade, namely Malawi, South Africa and Tanzania, for their commitment and the sacrifices made;
8. **Expresses its deep concern** about the refusal of the FDLR to disarm and demobilize voluntarily, as they had pledged to do, by the deadline of 2 January 2015 set by the ICGLR and SADC, with the support of the AU and the UN, which constitutes a challenge to the entire international community. Council **strongly condemns** the continuation by the FDLR of their activities, and **stresses** that the achievement of sustainable peace, security and stability in eastern DRC, in particular, and the Great Lakes Region, in general, requires the unconditional and full disarmament and demobilization of the FDLR, as well as of the other negative forces, in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions;
9. **Recalls** that, pursuant to the relevant provisions of resolutions 2098 (2013) and 2147 (2014) of 28 March 2013 and 28 March 2014, as well as the decisions of the mini-Summit of the ICGLR of 14 August 2014 and the SADC Summit of 17 and 18 August 2014, MONUSCO and the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) had been entrusted with the mandate to take the necessary steps for the neutralization of the FDLR, in case of non-observance of the deadline of 2 January 2015 set for their voluntary disarmament and demobilization;
10. **Welcomes** the announcement made by the Congolese authorities, on 29 January 2015, to carry out, with the logistical support of MONUSCO, the forced disarmament of the FDLR, and **takes note** of their subsequent decision of 15 February 2015 to renounce any support from MONUSCO in the operations against the FDLR. Council **urges** the DRC Government and the UN to urgently consult in order to establish the necessary conditions that would enable MONUSCO, through its Intervention Brigade, to contribute, through the provision of the required support, to the effective neutralization of the FDLR, the pursuit of the restoration of State authority and the protection of civilian populations, in accordance with the relevant provisions of resolution 2098 (2013). Council **requests** the Commission to urgently dispatch a mission to the DRC to help overcome this difficulty;

11. **Commends** the FARDC and MONUSCO on their joint operations in Beni and its environs to fully neutralize the ADF/NALU, and **stresses** the urgent need for the completion of these operations, considering in particular the massacre, by the ADF/NALU, of hundreds of innocent civilians in this region. Council **welcomes** the support provided by the FARDC and MONUSCO to the affected civilian populations;
12. **Welcomes** the efforts made by the Government of the DRC to honor its commitments under the Nairobi Declarations of 12 December 2013 which concluded the Kampala Dialogue between the Government and the former rebellion of the M23, and **notes with appreciation** the results already obtained. Council **calls for** the acceleration of the implementation process of the Nairobi Declarations, including aspects related to the amnesty and the voluntary repatriation of M23 ex-combatants;
13. **Welcomes** the signing by the DRC and Uganda, on 16 December 2014, in Entebbe, of a Memorandum of Understanding which enabled the DRC to recover the weapons and other equipment of war carried away by the M23 elements, and through which the two countries agreed to take practical steps to facilitate the repatriation, on a voluntary basis, of the M23 ex-combatants eligible for amnesty. Council **notes with satisfaction** the repatriation of almost 500 elements of the ex-M23, as announced by the DRC, and **encourages** other concerned elements already beneficiaries of the amnesty to join the ongoing process;
14. **Further welcomes** the signing in Kigali, on 3 February 2015, of a joint communiqué between the DRC and Rwanda, to facilitate the return to the DRC of elements of the ex-M23 located in Rwanda and who are among the amnesty beneficiaries;
15. **Stresses the need** for renewed efforts to implement the socio-economic aspects of the PSC Framework, including through the enhancement of regional cooperation and integration and the promotion of private investment, as provided for in the Plan of Action endorsed by the 3rd meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held in Addis Ababa on 31 January 2014. In this regard, Council **notes with satisfaction** the outcome of the regional consultations on the possibilities of private investment in the Great Lakes Region, held in Luanda on 17 and 18 December 2014, and the convening of a Conference on Private Investment in the Great Lakes Region;
16. **Calls** for the accelerated allocation and disbursement of the additional US\$ 1 billion in funding to the Great Lakes Region announced by the World Bank Group in May 2013 to help countries in the region provide better health and education services, generate more cross-border trade and fund hydroelectricity projects, in support of the PSC Framework. Council **notes** that this funding will help revitalize economic development, create employment and improve the lives of the people, and therefore represents an important peace dividend;
17. **Requests** the Chairperson of the Commission to take the necessary steps to enhance the capacity of the AU Office for the Great Lakes Region, in order to enable the AU to further contribute to the implementation process of the PSC Framework and to support more

effectively the efforts of the countries of the region. Council **decides** accordingly to adjust the mandate of the Office, which shall focus on: (i) the monitoring of the overall situation in the Great Lakes Region, (ii) support to the implementation process of the various aspects of the PSC Framework, including coordination of relevant activities of other AU field missions in the Region, and (iii) coordination with the ICGLR and SADC, as well as with the UN, the EU and the other concerned multilateral and bilateral partners;

18. **Decides** to undertake, at a date to be determined, a visit to the Great Lakes Region, to better assess the situation and the challenges at hand, reiterate AU's support to the ongoing efforts and identify additional measures to be taken in support of the implementation process of the PSC Framework;

19. **Request** the Chairperson of the Commission to submit quarterly reports on the evolution of the situation in the Great Lakes Region and follow-up of the implementation of the related decisions of Council;

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