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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1070th MEETING (VIRTUAL MEETING)

29 MARCH 2022
ADDIS ABABA

PSC/CN/**1070**(2022)

**DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE ON THE CONSIDERATION OF POLICIES ON CHILD PROTECTION IN AU
PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS AND MAINSTREAMING CHILD PROTECTION IN AFRICAN PEACE
AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE (APSA)**

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of African Union (AU), in implementing Assembly decisions recognize that, the mainstreaming of child protection in conflict prevention, peace-making and peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction processes is fundamental to the achievement of sustainable peace and security in Africa. This acknowledgement provides an underlining peace and security rationale for ensuring child protection. It implies that failure to protect children has wide-ranging implications for the peace, security and development agendas of the African Union, including Agenda 2063 and the Silencing the Guns initiative by 2030.
2. To this end, the PSC has adopted a number of decisions intended to protect children on the impact of armed conflicts and crises on children in Africa, namely, Communiqués [PSC/PR/COMM.(CMLXV)] adopted at its 965th meeting held on 19 November 2020, [PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXXIV)] adopted at its 924th meeting held on 12 May 2020 and [PSC/MIN/COMM.2(DCLXI)] adopted at its 661st meeting at a ministerial-level held on 23 February 2017 sessions, and its recent communique PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXCIV) of the 994th meeting held in 11 May 2021.
3. To realize peaceful Africa, the Assembly also has adopted several decisions for the institutional reforms including Assembly/AU/Dec.718 (XXXII), 2019, and Assembly/AU/Dec.755(XXXIII), 2020, reinforcing the imperative of child protection in Africa's peace, security and development agendas.
4. Furthermore, the Assembly at its 35th Ordinary Session held in February 2022, acknowledged that to end child marriages, efforts must chiefly address the societal constructs and norms that perpetuate these practices and Member States, leaders and communities must uphold, respect and deliver girls' human rights and be accountable to their commitments to child protection hence argued Member States to mobilize action around the 2021 African Union theme of the year on "Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want", by Interrogating the nexus between Culture, Human Rights and Accountability in efforts to eliminate harmful practices undertake concrete measures to protect children from all forms of violence, including child marriage during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. The nature and scope of these decisions and recommendations place enormous responsibility on those making and implementing peace and security policies to have a clear idea of the consequences and impact of these policies on the rights, protection and well-being of children.

6. In addition, AU legal instruments such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child call for the protection of the rights and welfare of children at all times including in conflict situations.

7. Accordingly, PSC communique PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXCIV) of the 994th meeting held in 11 May 2021, requested AU Commission to institutionalize a child protection architecture within the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and develop policy aimed at mainstreaming child protection in all phases of intervention from conflict prevention and mediation to conflict management and also requested the AU Commission to integrate child protection in armed conflicts and in post conflicts situations in the AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD), and further requests the AU Commission to finalize the drafting of the policy and submit to the PSC for its consideration.

8. In the implementation of the Assembly and PSC decisions, the Commission has drafted two comprehensive policies. The first draft policy is entitled “Policy on Integration of Child Protection into African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).” The main purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance on how child protection should be mainstreamed or integrated into all policies, procedures and practices of the Pillars of APSA. It outlines the principles and methodologies that should guide child-protection mainstreaming or integration and sets out the purpose, roles, and scope of activity of all APSA actors to meet the stated goals of this Policy.

9. The second policy is entitled “Child Protection in African Union Peace Support Operations (AU PSOs).” The purpose of this Policy is to outline the preventive, responsive and remedial roles that PSOs mandated, authorised, or endorsed by the AU shall play in the protection of children from egregious violations of their rights in situations of conflict; and in the promotion of the overall well-being of children throughout the duration of a PSO, including enforcement, monitoring, and humanitarian missions.

II. AIM OF THE MEETING

10. Conflicts have devastating effects on children. Children living in such situations are more likely to be killed, separated from their families, abducted, trafficked, sexually assaulted, maimed and recruited into armed groups. They are less likely to be in schools or to be able to meet their basic needs for health care, clean water and sanitation. They are more vulnerable to death from disease and malnutrition. Armed conflicts disconnect children from traditional means of child protection. The experience is catastrophic for their sense of well-being, affecting them emotionally, socially, economically and even spiritually. If the rights and welfare of children are not protected in situations of conflict, the achievement of sustainable peace and security in Africa may be curtailed.

11. This meeting is organized to provide an opportunity for the PSC and other relevant stakeholders to consider and adopt two comprehensive draft child protection policies responsive to the plight of children in conflict situations in Africa.

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

12. Discussions in the session are expected to lead to the identification of how the protection of children in situations of conflict will be enhanced by the adoption and implementation of the two draft policies on child protection by all relevant actors.

13. At the end of the session, it is expected that Council will adopt a communique to reflect on the adoption of the Policy on Integration of Child Protection into African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the Policy on Child Protection in African Union Peace Support Operations.

IV. FORMAT AND PARTICIPATION

14. The meeting will start with an Open Session of the Peace and Security Council and will be in the form of consultation and general debate, at the end of the discussion, the PSC members will adopt outcome documents in a closed session.

A. OPEN SESSION: It will be presided over by welcoming/opening remarks by H.E. Prof. Mafa Sejanamane, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of March 2022, followed by key remarks by Ambassador Bankole Adoye, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) and Ambassador Cessouma Minata Samate, Commissioner of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHS). Participants will include the AU Member States, representatives of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) who will address the council as well as members of the international community and partners represented in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia who will be requested to submit their remarks ahead of the meeting.

B. CLOSED SESSION: This will be for AU PSC Members and AU Commission only.

15. The meeting will be conducted virtually using the ZOOM platform. Presentations will be made by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security. This will be followed by responses, comments and statements from member states.

V. DATE AND VENUE

16. The session will be held virtually on Tuesday, 29 March 2022, starting from 10:00 a.m., Addis Ababa local time. It will be conducted in English, and French.

2022-03-29

Communiqué of the 1070th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council Held on 29 March 2022, on the Update on the Policies on Child Protection in AU PSOs and Mainstreaming Child Protection in APSA.

Peace and Security Council

African Union Commission

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