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AU PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL  
1197<sup>TH</sup> MEETING

30 JANUARY 2024  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/RPT.1197 (2024)

THE REPORT OF  
THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION ON  
THE MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE (MNJTF) AGAINST BOKO HARAM AND  
THE RENEWAL OF ITS MANDATE

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MANDATE**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 1126<sup>th</sup> meeting, held on 12 December 2022, renewed the mandate of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against the Boko Haram terrorist group for a period of twelve (12) months effective from 1 February 2023. During its meeting, the Council welcomed the progress achieved in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group and in the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Stabilisation, Recovery, and Resilience (RSSRR) in the areas of the Lake Chad Basin region affected by Boko Haram. The PSC also welcomed the voluntary return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and called for more efforts towards mobilisation of the required humanitarian assistance including resettlement and provision of psycho-social support to the population affected by Boko Haram.

2. Despite considerable MNJTF successes, the Council noted with concern the existential threat to peace, security, and development in the Lake Chad Basin region and the continent as a whole posed by the Boko Haram terrorist group. The Council urged the countries of the Lake Chad Basin region to remain vigilant and enhance border security to curtail the proliferation of foreign fighters and illicit arms, as well as reinforcing regional engagements on the control of small arms and light weapons. In addition, the Council called for the restructuring of the MNJTF into a multidisciplinary force with robust police and civilian components that take into consideration a comprehensive approach to addressing terrorism.

3. The MNJTF, having a total strength of 16,080 personnel that includes one Senior Police Advisor to the MNJTF Commander, 99 Military Staff Officers (MSOs) from TCC and Benin at the Headquarters (HQ) of the MNJTF and 15,980 troops in the 4 MNJTF sectors, continues to operate within its Area of Operation (A o O) that spans the territories of its Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) namely, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. There is an AU Mission Support Team (MST) at the HQ MNJTF (consisting of 10 staff) coordinating the delivery of the AU additional support to the force, including monitoring, reporting and advising the Commander on Human Rights and Humanitarian coordination issues.

4. Within this context, the AU has continued to support the MNJTF in line with Communiqué [PSC/PR/2.(CDLXXXIX)] adopted by the 489<sup>th</sup> meeting of the PSC held on 3 March 2015, in which the Council requested the Commission to take all necessary steps in support of the full operationalization of the MNJTF. This report provides an update on key developments since the AU PSC meeting held on 12 December 2022, and recommendations on the way forward.

**II. SECURITY SITUATION IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN MNJTF AREA OF OPERATION**

5. The Boko Haram terrorist group continues to be a regional and continental security threat and is particularly active in the Lake Chad Islands, along the Komadougou Yobe River corridor, as well as Sambisa Forest and Mandara mountain ranges. Boko Haram has also continued to exist among two main factions of the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) and the Buduma/Jama'atu Ahli Al-Sunna li Da'wa Wai Jihad (JAS).

6. In this regard, and whilst the general security situation in the MNJTF Area of Operation (A o O) is generally calm, Boko Haram activities are characterized by direct and indirect attacks on troops, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) incidences, attacks on civilian communities, use of electronic

media propaganda as well as abductions for ransoms and smuggling of weapons across borders. The Group's operations demonstrate the desire to resist and undermine national authority and the MNJTF operations as well as terrorizing the local population. However, in pursuance of its mandate, the MNJTF has continued to record successes in its operations thereby degrading the capabilities of Boko Haram, whose attacks have reduced considerably in 2023 compared to 2022.

7. For instance, in the first three Quarters of 2023, there were: 27 attacks on military locations against 56 attacks witnessed within the same period in 2022. Also, 63 attacks were targeted at local communities against 93 similar attacks in the same period in 2022. This shows a significant decline in the attacks on military targets and civilian communities when compared with the statistics of 2022. Meanwhile, a total of 50 IED incidents were recorded in 2023 compared to 21 incidents during the same period in 2022; 34 soldiers and 57 civilians were killed during these attacks in 2023, as against 19 soldiers and 21 civilians who were killed during similar attacks in 2022. This indicates a rise in the use of IEDs by Boko Haram in 2023. It is assessed that the terrorists use this method to prevent/deter troops from entering their enclaves and from inflicting maximum casualty on troops without involving in a major firefight with advancing troops.

8. During the Year 2023, the MNJTF conducted one large-scale operation: OPERATION HARBIN ZUMA and other minor/limited operations. The operations achieved their objectives and led to the neutralization of 115 terrorists and the surrender of 2,121 terrorists and their families. It also led to the arrest of 1,176 persons associated with Boko Haram across the 4 Sectors as well as the rescue of 945 captives comprising men, women, and children. Additionally, the MNJTF captured/recovered 4 gun trucks, 6 Anti-Aircraft guns, 8 Rocket Propellant Guns (RPG) tubes and one RPG bomb, 61 AK 47 rifles, 4 Pulemot Kalashnikova Mordenizirovannyi (PKM), one Lance-Roquette Ant Char, and 37,351 rounds of ammunition. The OPERATION HARBIN ZUMA reduced the capacity of the terrorists to conduct coordinated attacks on troops as well as the civilian communities in the MNJTF A o O. Furthermore, the MNJTF's use of Mine Resistance Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles and improvement in Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IEDs) capacity assisted to minimize the effects of Boko Haram's IED/VBIED attacks.

9. The MNJTF operations have created an enabling environment for the return and resettlement of Internally Displace Persons (IDPs) as well as the implementation of humanitarian activities in local communities by the Government and non-governmental organizations. Up to November 2023, the MNJTF had facilitated the return of about 10,000 refugees to Banki town in Nigeria, 6,000 IDPs to their hometown in Baroua, Diffa Region of Niger, over 3,000 indigenous of Bagatelerom to their ancestral homes over 6,000 indigenous to Cross Kauwa, Baga and Doron Baga and other communities within the MNJTF A o O. The MNJTF also ensured the resumption of social, economic, commercial and agricultural activities such as farming, fishing and trading in Damasak, Baga, Doron Baga, Kirawa and other communities after over 4 years of closure. While the number of resettled populations has continued to rise, most of these communities received little or no form of humanitarian assistance and there is a need for urgent actions to enhance the livelihoods of these resettled communities.

10. Significant numbers of Boko Haram fighters and sympathizers continued to surrender in 2023 like in the previous year. A total of 2,121 terrorists and their families surrendered to the MNJTF from January to October 2023 as compared to 2,185 within the same period in 2022. The MNJTF received, processed and handed over surrendered persons associated with Boko Haram activities to the respective national governments in line with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Human Right Standards. Whereas the MNJTF provides a safe corridor for insurgents to surrender, there is a need for the establishment of transit facilities at the four MNJTF Sector headquarters to facilitate better handling and management of surrendering Boko Haram fighters.

### **III. EUROPEAN UNION –AFRICAN UNION ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO THE MNJTF**

11. In line with the communique of the 484<sup>th</sup> AU PSC meeting that called on AU Member States and the international community to extend all necessary support to the efforts of the Member States of the LCBC and Benin in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group, the European Union (EU) is providing funds, through the AU, to meet the MNJTF requirements. These requirements are part of AU additional support to the MNJTF whose provision is guided by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Support Implementation Agreement (SIA) signed between the AU Commission, LCBC and MNJTF Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs). The EU funding to the MNJTF for the period of January to December 2023 amounted to Euros (€)20 million, as part of the EU's Euros (€) 40 million funding package for the MNJTF for the period 2023-24.

12. The AU additional support to the MNJTF during the course of 2023 continued to be: Air Mobility services comprising 3 helicopters for logistics and personnel movement, casualty evacuation, Level III medical services, Fuel, Command-Control-Communication and Information System (C3IS), Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), Mission Subsistence Allowance (MSA) for the MNJTF HQ Staff Officers, salaries to civilian staff supporting the MNJTF, and MNJTF HQ running costs that allow the MNJTF HQ to effectively plan, coordinate and sustain military operations in line with the given mandate and the tasks set out in the approved Strategic Concept of Operations.

13. During the year 2023, the Commission conducted two Joint Steering Committee (JSC) meetings, amongst the AU Commission, the LCBC Executive Secretariat, and the MNJTF TCCs to coordinate and share information on funds and other support mobilised and provided by the AU to the MNJTF. In addition, the Commission conducted two assessment missions to the MNJTF to assess and establish the impact of the provided additional support. The above meetings and assessment missions generated confidence that the AU additional support, in various forms, is being judiciously utilized and that it is achieving the desired impact. The support's huge positive impact on MNJTF operations was recognised and the continuation of the same is recommended.

14. The provision of the AU additional support to the MNJTF is coordinated and managed by Five (5) Staff of the Strategic Support Cell (SSC) at the AU Headquarters and 10 Staff of the Mission Support Team (MST) embedded within the MNJTF HQ. These staffs coordinate the delivery of the additional support, including accounting for the utilization of funds, implementation of the services and delivery of fuel, advising the MNJTF on Human Rights and Humanitarian Coordination issues, as well as linking the strategic and operational levels of the MNJTF mission management.

### **IV. AU SUPPORT TO THE REGIONAL STABILISATION STRATEGY THAT CONSOLIDATES THE MNJTF SUCCESSES**

15. The LCBC, in collaboration with the Commission, organised the 4<sup>th</sup> Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum from 5-7 July 2023. The Governor's forum urged the AU to continue and enhance its support for the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilisation, Recovery, and Resilience (RS-SRR), including coordination of Commission-wide efforts for stabilization and additional support to the MNJTF to work towards broader stabilization measures in the Lake Chad Basin region. In addition, the forum called for more support to assist national and sub-national authorities with their efforts to provide protection and sustainable comprehensive solutions to the difficult situation faced by refugees and IDPs in the Lake Chad Basin region.

16. Likewise, the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Committee of the RS-SRR of the Lake Chad Basin areas affected by Boko Haram was held on 27 September 2023. The steering committee urged the LCBC member states and the LCBC Secretariat to operationalise police and civilian components as

contained in the MNJTF Strategic Concept of Operation (CONOPs) in order to secure liberated spaces, as well as invest more in addressing the root causes of terrorism and cut off financing and supply channels for terrorist groups.

17. Overall, there was sustained and progressive improvement of the security situation in the Lake Chad Basin, which led to the massive surrendering of Boko Haram combatants and their families, increased return of IDPs and refugees to their homes as well as the resumption of commercial and agricultural activities in the region.

## **V. CHALLENGES**

18. The AU and the MNJTF noted that the force faces the following challenges:

- a. Insufficient funds to sustain major operations.
- b. Presence of illegal financing networks of Boko Haram.
- c. Aging fleet of vehicles whose repair is increasingly not economically viable.
- d. Lack of modern counter – Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

## **VI. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

19. The MNJTF has remained an effective and resolved regional coalition fighting against the Boko Haram terrorist group in the Lake Chad Basin region, backed by the collective commitment and efforts of the TCCs, as well as the support of the AU and the international community. The force's sustained operational pressure against Boko Haram has led to waves of surrender of Boko Haram combatants and their families, in addition to the remarkable reduction in Boko Haram's lethal capacity. These gains have contributed to increased resettlement of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and refugees and implementation of stabilisation, recovery and resilience activities in the Boko Haram affected communities.

20. The timely provision of the AU and AU partners' additional support has contributed to the overall achievement of the MNJTF mandate by addressing the MNJTF's operational support requirements and needs in the planning, conduct and sustainment of military operations against Boko Haram. The sustained contributions of the MNJTF TCCs, both to national and MNJTF operations, is commendable in spite of their lean resources.

21. The continued implementation of the RS-SRR presents a vehicle for the long-time solution to Boko Haram and other insecurity, as well as for solutions of managing the surrendering of Boko Haram combatants and resettlement of IDPs and refugees. The Commission encourages the LCBC and MNJTF TCCs to work closely to ensure coordinated and integrated management of the surrendering Boko Haram combatants, ensuring a community-centered approach.

22. Considering the above observations, the PSC may consider the following recommendations:

- a. Calling on the AU and the international community to continue supporting the MNJTF to overcome its challenges, in order to consolidate and sustain the gains and achievements in its operations against the Boko Haram terrorist group;
- b. Requesting the AU Commission to maintain institutional support for the implementation of the RS-SRR, particularly the development, implementation and enhancement of coordinated and integrated management of the surrendering Boko Haram combatants;

- c. Urging the countries of the Lake Chad Basin region to continue to enhance border security to curtail the proliferation of foreign fighters and arms, as well as reinforce regional engagements on the control of small arms and light weapons;
- d. Requesting the AU and the LCBC to renew the MoU and SIA that guides the provision of the AU additional support to the MNJTF for a period of one year (01 February 2024 to 31 January 2025);
- e. The renewal of the MNJTF mandate for 12 months effective from 01 February 2024.

2024-01-30

# Communiqué of the 1197th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 30 January 2024, on the Consideration of the Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram and the Renewal of its Mandate.

Peace and Security Council

African Union Commission

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