

AFRICAN UNION

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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
943RD MEETING

3 SEPTEMBER 2020
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXLIII)

COMMUNIQUÉ

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 943rd meeting (open session) held on 3 September 2020, on the Africa Amnesty Month: Implementation of the AU Theme of the year 2020 “Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development”,

The Peace and Security Council,

Taking note of the opening remarks made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for September 2020, Ambassador Mohamed Idriss Farah, and the statement made by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, as well as the statement made by the UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu; also **taking note** of the presentations made by the Chairperson of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)-Peace and Security Cluster, Mr. Roll Stephane Ngomat; the Representative of the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA), Mr Baker Ntambi; the Executive Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Dr. Vasu Gounden; and the Executive Director of the Nonviolent Peaceforce, Ms. Tiffany Easthom; **further taking note** of the statements made by the representatives of the Chairpersons of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs);

Recalling the Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec.645(XXIX), adopted by the 29th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, from 3 to 4 July 2017, in which it, among others, declared the month of September, of each year, until 2020, as “Africa Amnesty Month” for the surrender and collection of illicit arms/weapons; **also recalling** its previous decisions on the conduct and commemoration of the Africa Amnesty Month, namely press statement [PSC/PR/BR.(DCCXVI)] adopted at 716th meeting held on 4 September 2017, press statement [PSC/PR/BR.(DCCXCIII)], adopted at its 793rd meeting held on 4 September 2018, and press statement [PSC/PR/BR.(DCCCLXXIV)], adopted at its 874th meeting held on 5 September 2019;

Also recalling the PSC communique [PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCCLXVIII)] adopted at its 868th meeting, held on 14 August 2019, in which the PSC strongly condemned the external interference into African peace and security issues;

Reaffirming the AU’s commitment to effective implementation of the Africa Amnesty Month, towards addressing and removing the fundamental causes and drivers of crises/conflicts, including the proliferation of illicit arms/weapons from possession of non-state actors and civilians, which is expected to contribute towards the creation of conditions for silencing the guns in the Continent; and **welcoming** the engagements and involvement of the RECs/RMs, the United Nations (UN) and other partners in the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa and the AU Theme for the year 2020 “Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development”;

Underlining that Africa Amnesty Month affords an exceptional window of opportunity for all non-state actors illegally possessing arms/weapons to freely and in confidence, surrender them to designated competent Government agencies, without being disclosed or prosecuted; and

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

1. **Commends** those Member States which have successfully conducted civilian disarmament programs, and **emphasizes** that these exercises generate important experiences and lessons, for the continent to draw from, in order to further consolidate its efforts towards creating a conflict-free Continent;
2. **Also commends** the AU Member States, the RECs/RMs, the AU Commission, the UN and partners for their efforts, amidst the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in the implementation of the Africa Amnesty Month, which facilitate removing illegal arms/weapons in the hands of non-state actors, including individuals; **stresses** that proliferation of illegal arms/weapons contributes to insecurity and violence in various parts of Africa, thereby undermining social cohesion, public security, socio-economic activities and the proper functioning of states institutions;
3. **Condemns** the actions of some external actors from outside the continent, who continue to supply arms/weapons to non-state actors in Africa, including to armed groups and militias; and **underscores** that such actions undermine the continent's effort to achieve peace and security and to "Silence the Guns" in Africa; in this regard, **highlights** that the illicit transfer, circulation and misuse of illegal arms/weapons sustains and exacerbates conflicts, international terrorism, transnational organized crime, and contributes to a series of humanitarian law and human rights law violations;
4. **Notes with deep concern that** the continued illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in Africa is perpetrated, among others, by transnational criminal networks that smuggle illicit weapons into and within Africa from almost every major arms manufacturer globally; and **calls on** the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL) to work towards enhanced cooperation among the police agencies in the Continent and at the global level, to fight against transnational organized crime; **also calls on** AFRIPOL to continue providing report to Council on its efforts to this effect;
5. **Reiterates its call** to the Member States to provide all necessary assurances and protection to all persons who freely surrender their illegally-owned weapons to the relevant authorities, in order to build confidence and trust with those people and encourage others to do the same; **emphasizes** that the Africa Amnesty Month is a complementary effort aimed at further strengthening the various amnesty processes that may already be underway in some Member States or which may be launched by them;

6. **Stresses** the importance for all Member States to take effective measures to address, in a holistic manner, the root causes and drivers of violent crises/conflicts that contribute to the desire by non-state actors and civilians to arm themselves; **further emphasizes** the need for Member States to provide adequate security to citizens in order to address the demand for illegal arms/weapons;
7. **Calls on** Member States to collect and destroy all excess and obsolete small arms and light weapons and other types of weapons, strengthen management and protection of weapons depots and stockpiles, in order to minimize diversion of weapons from national arms depots, and ensure that the weapons will not fall into illegal possession and use by non-state actors;
8. **Appeals** to Member States to enhance their efforts in the marking and registration of weapons, in accordance with their respective national laws; **encourages** Member States to enact or update laws regulating civilian possession of arms/weapons, as well as further strengthening, or establishing, effective national institutions responsible for marking and registration of civilian-owned weapons;
9. **Underlines the need** for Member States and the RECs/RMs to renew their commitment to develop and implement programs to remove illicit weapons possessed by non-state actors and civilians, including addressing security, social, cultural, economic and political factors that drive non-state actors and civilians to acquire and use illegal arms/weapons;
10. **Notes with serious concern** the loopholes in the regulation of global arms trade and widespread diversion of conventional arms to the illicit markets in Africa; in this regard, **calls on** legal arms manufacturers and brokers to support the efforts to combat illicit arms trade by ensuring end-user verification and certification, in line with the Arms Trade Treaty; and **reiterates** its decision to name and shame suppliers, brokers and recipients of illicit arms/weapons in Africa;
11. **Commends** the efforts of the RECs/RMs, regional bodies with a small arms mandate, and the relevant think-tanks and research institutions, and other partners which are assisting AU Member States to effectively address the scourge of illicit proliferation and trade in small arms and light weapons in Africa; in this regard, **appeals** to them to continue supporting disarmament and arms control programs across the Continent; in this context, **looks forward** to continue to receive updates on these efforts;
12. **Encourages** the Member States, RECs/RMs and partners to actively engage in public awareness campaigns, including through their national media, religious and traditional leaders, civil society organizations, in order to effectively sensitise the community about the Africa Amnesty Month with a view to ensuring their full cooperation and support;

13. **Welcomes** the initiative by the AU Commission and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to support some Member States, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Kenya, to conduct and commemorate the Africa Amnesty Month this year; **also encourages** other AU Member States to submit their request to the AU Commission towards obtaining this kind of support;
14. **Commends** all Member States which have ratified and are implementing the relevant global, continental and regional instruments relating to combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, particularly the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which address illicit arms flows and arms trade by ratifying, acceding to, and implementing them; in this context, **urges** all Member States, which have not yet done so, to speedily sign and ratify the relevant international instruments, in particular the Arms Trade Treaty;
15. **Requests** the AUC to prepare and submit to the Member States tables to be completed on actions to be taken in relation to small arms and light weapons recovered and consolidate the information collected into a comprehensive report, as the contribution of the PSC to the Report on "Silencing the Guns in Africa" to be submitted to the Assembly in January/February 2021"; in this regard, **recommends** to the Assembly of the Union to extend the conduct of the Africa Amnesty Month, within the context of the First Ten Year Implementation Plan (FTYIP) of Agenda 2063 (2013-2023), in which silencing the guns project is included;
16. **Also requests** the Commission to conduct a lessons-learned study, that covers the experiences of the conduct and commemoration of the Africa Amnesty Month, implementation of various national programs that were implemented outside the Amnesty Month, and submit to the PSC in the course of 2020, for its consideration;
17. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.