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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
603RD MEETING
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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(DCIII)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 603rd meeting, held on 7 June 2016, in Addis Ababa, dedicated an open session to the theme: Prevention and Settlement of Border Disputes in Africa. Council listened to a statement delivered by Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, as well as presentations by the AU Commission and Mr. Danny Mubanga, former Surveyor General of Zambia and statements from AU Members, Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), international partners, specialized institutions and civil society organizations.

Council recalled the relevant decisions taken by the OAU and the AU on the peaceful settlement of border disputes, particularly, Resolution AHG/Res.16 (1) of the Heads of State and Government in July 1964, which enshrines the principle of respect for borders existing on achievement of national independence and reaffirmed in the African Union Constitutive Act of 11 July 2000 and the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union of 9 July 2002. Furthermore, Council highlighted the AU Convention on Cross Border Cooperation of 2012 (Niamey Convention), whose objectives include, inter alia, to facilitate the peaceful resolution of border disputes.

Council and participants commended the efforts deployed by the AU Commission through the AU Border Programme, particularly its facilitation provided to AU Member States in resolving border disputes, as well as border programme projects undertaken by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Council called on Member States to reaffirm their commitments to peacefully resolve border disputes and effectively use the facilitation provided by the AU Border Programme.

Council and participants expressed deep concern about the persistence of border disputes and the tendency to increase especially when natural resources are discovered in border areas. In this context, Council and participants stressed the urgent need for peaceful settlement of existing border and territorial disputes.

Council and participants recalled that the primary responsibility of finding solutions to the border disputes lies with Member States. In this regard, Council and participants urged the AU Member States, in resolving border disputes, to promote the spirit of dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation in the promotion of peaceful resolution of disputed borders and judicial or arbitral action should be a last resort.

Council and participants underscored the importance of promoting awareness on resolving and preventing border disputes on the continent and called on all Member States to support the creation of forums or platforms for sharing experience and create awareness. Council requested all AU Member States to establish National Boundary Commissions in their respective countries as competent authorities responsible for border related matters.

Council and participants emphasized the need for the AU to establish a long term mechanism mandated to facilitate studies and resolution of the existing border conflicts in Africa and develop a roadmap providing a guideline on how to prevent further border conflicts on the continent.

While noting challenges on border management of the continent, Council and participants called all Member States to manifest a strong African consensus and political will to transform the inherited borders from barriers to bridges which can facilitate cross-border economic opportunities, cultural exchanges, and integration of the continent. Council and participants urged Member States and partners to invest on such cross-border activities in the promotion of development on the continent. .

Council called upon all the Member States that had not yet done so to carry out the delimitation and demarcation of their common border as it is the guarantee of the establishment of a climate of understanding and harmony and good neighborly relations between border communities. Council further welcomed the cross border cooperation initiatives taken by some Member States, which, while developing the border areas, turn borders into bridges rather than barriers.

Council noted with serious concern the lack of adequate funding in implementing the activities of the AU Border Programme. In this regard, Council appealed to all AU Member States to financially support the implementation of the AU Border Programme activities. Furthermore, Council appreciated the financial and technical support provided by partners in supporting border programme activities, in particular the Federal Republic of Germany.

Council took note of the request of the Commission to extend the deadline for completion of the demarcation of African Borders which expires in 2017, and requested the Commission to submit a comprehensive report on AU Border Programme and its activities for the consideration of Council.

Council urged all Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify, without any further delay, the relevant AU instruments, in particular the AU Convention on Cross border Cooperation of 2012, as well as other relevant international instruments. Council stressed the need for renewed efforts towards the implementation of these instruments.

Council agreed to remain seized of the matter.