Speaking Notes Humanitarian Action in Africa, 18 May 2023

1. May I call this 1155th meeting to order

   A. OPENING REMARKS

Your Excellency Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner Political Affairs Peace and Security

The Director for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development

Your Excellency the Representative of the United Nations Office to the African Union

Your Excellency the Representative of the World Food Programme

Your Excellencies Ambassadors, Members of the Peace and Security Council

   Good afternoon!

2. You will recall that the last time we discussed humanitarian action in Africa was on 04 May 2022 during the 1081st meeting. Conflicts, terrorist activities, and natural disasters have continued to cause a dire humanitarian situation in Africa. Terrorist activities for instance in the Horn of Africa, Great Lakes Region; the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, have resulted in the loss of lives and property; and the displacement of persons both internally and across borders

3. Africa accounts for the highest numbers of displaced persons, and bears a heavy burden of hosting them. According to the Commission, more than 37 million Africans have been forcibly displaced since the entry into force of the Kampala Convention on the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa on 06 December 2012.

4. Climate change has caused cyclones and storms in the southern part of Africa; while drought and famine are observed in the West, East and the Horn of Africa, affecting millions of our people
5. In many conflict areas, humanitarian actors have had challenges accessing populations and communities in need due to actions of state and non-state actors, parties to a conflict.

6. This meeting is taking place on the backdrop of an ongoing raging conflict in Sudan which has caused untold destruction of property including the vandalization of diplomatic premises; loss of many lives; and has aggravated the humanitarian situation in the country including displacements of people. We should spare no effort in calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Your Excellencies,

7. The situation in Ukraine has had a negative effect on the cost of food and fuel which has left refugees, internally displaced persons, and host communities struggling to afford food and basic services. This situation was worsened by funding shortfalls for food assistance faced by the UNHCR and the World Food Programme in many countries leading to reductions in rations affecting more than 3.8 million people.

8. In May 2022, the African Union held an Extra Ordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference in Malabo with the view to inter alia, raising money to address the various humanitarian challenges confronting Africa. The Summit also agreed to establish an African Humanitarian Agency as a new humanitarian response mechanism. I wish to request the Commission to provide an update on where we are in terms of the operationalization of the African Humanitarian Agency

Your Excellencies,

9. I wish to inform you that this morning, Uganda and Switzerland, as Chairs of the month for the AU PSC and UN Security Council, co-convened a breakfast meeting in partnership with the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the AU, and Amani Africa on the Protection of Civilians in situations or Armed Conflict. I wish to pay tribute to Ambassador Pietro Mona
for this collaboration in further drawing a spotlight on humanitarian action in Africa.

10. As I close, I wish to propose to you, that there is need for us to silence the guns in Africa and try to the greatest extent possible to settle all our difference through dialogue and peaceful means. Conflict is one of the largest contributory factors to many of the challenges we have in this area.

11. In the meantime, and in line with the principle of burden and responsibility sharing, there is need for more international support towards refugees, and host communities, including through the provision of adequate and consistent humanitarian financing to enable host countries and communities respond to their humanitarian, and development, needs.

12. In order to guide our debate today, I wish to invite you to reflect on the following areas:

   (i) How do we address the issue of recurring humanitarian crises in Africa;

   (ii) How do we deal with the perennial challenges of funding humanitarian response plans;

   (iii) How do we ensure that those in need can have access to humanitarian support especially in conflict situations;

   (iv) How do we ensure that states and non-state actors comply with their obligations under International Humanitarian law and International Human Rights Law; and

   (v) I also invite you to share best practices on humanitarian action in your respective countries.

I thank you