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STATEMENT

BY

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**DELIVERED BY DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS
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On the Occasion of

**The Open Session of the Peace and Security Council “Refugee
Protection, Migration and Human Rights”**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

20 June 2018

**Your Excellences,
Distinguished Panellists,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I would like to thank the Peace and Security Council for convening this timely open session and for inviting the Department for Political Affairs to participate. No other topic is more intertwined as forced displacement with the challenges of peace and security.

Based on a decision by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Africa Refugee Day has been celebrated on 20 June every year in pursuit of the noble objectives of the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The same day is celebrated as World Refugee Day ever since the UN General Assembly, adopted resolution 55/76 on 4 December 2000 in line with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. This year, Africa Refugee Day is celebrated under the theme “**The World We Want: Inclusion, Empowerment and Access to Services for Refugees**”. Refugees have to be included in societal affairs in their host communities. Refugees have to be empowered in order to overcome adverse effects of forced displacement. Refugees need to have access to services in order to improve their livelihoods.

It is estimated that a total 68.5 million persons are forcibly displaced across the world, by far the highest ever recorded figure since the Second World War. Globally the number of the displaced population increased **in 2017 by 2.9 million**. A total of 40 million people remain internally displaced by conflicts as of the end of 2017. Globally 85 percent of the refugees are hosted by developing countries, putting significant strain and pressure on the resources of countries and local communities.

Most of the large-scale and protracted displacement are in Africa. By the end of 2017 there were **6.2 million refugees and asylum seekers in Africa**. The continent also hosts more than 12 million internally displaced persons, the vast majority of them are in urban communities and reside in host communities. Despite various socio-economic and political challenges and constraints governments and communities face, Africans display this admirable spirit of Pan-Africanism and a high-level solidarity towards refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and internally

displaced persons. The vast majority of African refugees are from the **DRC, Burundi, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Eritrea and Central African Republic**. It is worth-noting that the vulnerability of women and children is very high among forcibly displaced populations. The fact that the vast majority of refugees are found in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa Region as well as the Sahel Region demonstrate that forced displacement is closely associated with protracted violent conflict. This situation of forced displacement is further compounded by the prevalence of terrorism and extremism. This compels us to unearth structural causes of forced displacement including the refugee problem. Once we have identified structural root causes of the refugee problem, we are better placed to explore durable solution that address the problem beyond its mere symptoms.

The search for durable and sustainable solutions to forced displacement is too often illusive leaving affected populations in protracted displacement. Protracted displacement situations have degraded the resilience of affected populations and hosting communities. Heavy militarization of border areas have diminished access to essential resources and services and the freedom of movement of civilians. In many regions where terrorist groups operate, these groups have shown resilience. Attacks against humanitarian actors, peace-keepers, camps for refugees and IDPs and actions aimed at imposing restrictions or limiting access continue to be reported.

Member States assume **the primary responsibility towards protecting and assisting forcibly displaced persons and finding solutions for their plight**. In this regard the AUC is highly encouraged by the increased commitment shown by governments to commit to AU instruments and adopt innovative policies.

Currently eight African countries are piloting the **Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)** which aims to deliver more comprehensive and predictable response for refugees. The results of this exercise has already shown greater access for refugee in participating in decisions, improves opportunities for education and engagement in livelihood and employment opportunities. Findings and lessons-learnt from CRRF application is contributing towards the negotiation on the Global Compact for Refugees.

Building on strong and effective regional legal and policy frameworks on refugees and IDPs, the Commission has been working with Member

States and partners to further enhance national capacity to fulfill and implement responsibilities towards durable solution. “**The Livingston Syllabus**” is a series of how home grown training and capacity building initiative targeting mid-level civil service staff working on issues of forced displacement from Member States. Taking into account positive and constructive feedback from participants, the training models are undergoing additional improvements.

The African Union ***Common Africa Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness (CAP)*** calls for a 10 years transformation period 2016 – 2025 to strengthen humanitarian action on the continent. The CAP defines Africa’s new humanitarian architecture which includes creation of the African Humanitarian Agency (AfHA), as a vehicle for Africa’s future humanitarian action. The new humanitarian architecture of the AU as enshrined in the CAP-Humanitarian Effectiveness, also places emphasis on addressing root causes and searching for durable solutions, as well as building strong State and other stakeholders to tackle challenges of forced displacement on the continent in line with its long-term vision identified in Agenda 2063. Currently the AUC is advancing in preparatory work towards the establishment of the agency.

The development of the Global Compact for Refugees will also provide a strong global complement to continental and regional initiatives within Africa. These important developments provide strategic opportunities to re-commit to the values, principles and standards of Africa’s legal framework.

Your Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Before I conclude, I need to recall that this PSC open session is taking place on the backdrop of the Policy Organs’ decision declaring 2019 as the Africa Year of Refugees, Returnees and IDPs: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa. This decision is important as 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Furthermore, 2019 also marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the 2009 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. The Commission will collaborate with the PSC and the PRC to ensure the successful implementation of

the declaration of 2019 as the year of refugees focusing on structural root causes and durable solutions.

Recommendations

1. The PSC should work closely with the Commission, Member States and partners to ensure the successful implementation of the declaration of 2019 as the African Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons;
2. The PSC needs to work collaboratively in partnership with the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs and get regular briefings on the humanitarian situation in Africa including updates on the refugee problems;
3. The PSC needs to strengthen its partnership and working relationship with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in order to ensure protection and promotion of the rights of refugees, returnees and IDPs all times;
4. The PSC should give due attention to structural root causes of forced displacement investing more in prevention of conflicts and take necessary measures aimed at finding durable solutions to forced displacement.
5. Council should continue to advocate and call for robust international solidarity with countries experiencing significant humanitarian crisis.
6. In all its endeavours including on peace and security initiatives the Council must include communities and forcibly displaced persons in its actions.
7. Member States must continuously share best practices in terms of inclusion, empowerment and service delivery to refugees in the spirit of Pan-Africanism.

I thank you