

Statement by H.E Prof. Mafa Sejanamane Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the African Union and chairperson of the AU PSC for the month of March 2022 on the occasion of the AU reflection forum on unconstitutional changes of government of the continent

March 15th ,2022- Accra ,Ghana

Your Excellency, Nana Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana,

Your Excellency, Chairperson of the AU Commission

Your Excellency Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana

Your Excellencies, Former Heads of State and Government present,

Your Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Peace and Security Council

Your Excellency, Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union,

Distinguished representatives of various AU Organs and RECs/RMs present,

Distinguished partners and invited guests

Ladies and gentlemen, all protocol observed.

First of all, I wish to express my sincerely gratitude and those of the Members of the Peace and Security Council, for the warm reception accorded to the PSC and other participants by the Government and the people Ghana, since our arrival here in Accra. We have been enjoying the beautiful city of Accra and the delicious traditional food of Ghana. I thank you so much Mr. President.

It is my honour to be here today, in my capacity as Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council for the month of March 2022, to contribute on the critical topic of Unconstitutional Changes of Government, a

challenge which is hampering our Continent at the moment. I have to say that, there is no right time like now for our continent to brainstorm with a view to addressing this scourge. I am glad to know that, this Reflection Forum brings not only AU Member States and AU Organs, but also civil society organizations and institutions across the Continent. The composition of participation, gives us confidence that the outcome of this Forum will reflect the views of the majority from the grass root level, as civil society organizations work very close to the people on the ground. You will all agree with me that their views in this topic are critically important.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is sad to say that, today, in the history of the African Union, since its establishment, it is the first time for four Member States (Sudan, Mali, Republic of Guinea and Burkina Faso) to be on suspension at the same time. All suspensions are due to unconstitutional changes of government. This is a wakeup call for Africa and its organizations, from the national to the continental levels, to seriously reflect on governance structures.

The Peace and Security Council has been deeply concerned with the resurgence of coup d'états in the Continent, and without failure, as a standing decision-making Organ and on behalf of all AU Member States, the PSC has been consistent and firm on issues of military take overs and any other form of unconstitutional changes of government, in line with AU instruments. The AU has zero tolerance policy of unconstitutional changes of government, and this is what is guiding the Union. Furthermore, the PSC has been backing-up and supporting the decisions of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms on their decisions with regard to coup d'état. An excellent example is the decisions of ECOWAS Authority on the situations in Mali, Republic of Guinea and Burkina Faso. I want to emphasize here that the PSC's efforts will not stop here but will be enhanced.

Our Continent faces serious of threat in the peace and security landscape, but the most critical issue to be considered is the issue of governance at our national levels. It is regrettable Your Excellencies that in some circumstances we have been in denial and have consider it as a taboo to admit that our governance structures are facing challenges

that need to be addressed. This has largely been a result of the sensitivities about the interface between sovereignty and AU instruments on democratic governance particularly Article 23 (5) of the **African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**. If we don't diagnose the problem, we will not be able to treat it. The PSC at its 1030th meeting held in September 2021, when considering the issue of military take-over in the Republic of Guinea, for the first time decided to request the AU Commission to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the root causes and impact of unconstitutional changes of government arising from non-consensual and politically manipulated democratic processes. This is clear evidence that we are realizing that we need to reshape our thinking, as we strive together to promote constitutionalism, democracy and inclusive governance to strengthen peace, security and stability, under the framework of the **African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**, as well as the ever-closer alignment of the **African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)** and **African Governance Structure (AGA)**.

In addition, in January 2022, the PSC, under the Chairship of Ghana, held an open session on **Promotion of Constitutionalism, Democracy and Inclusive Governance to Strengthen Peace, Security and Stability in Africa**", and decided to hold a brainstorming session/seminar of the PSC and other relevant stakeholders on unconstitutional changes of government in Africa and Ghana volunteered to host the event. I would like to mention that, this reflection Forum is a product of the outcomes of the PSC decision aimed at finding ways to address the issue of unconstitutional changes of government.

If we will fail to take into account the will and legitimate expectations of our citizen or continue to manipulate our constitutions, we will continue to create recipes for more popular uprisings, military take overs and other forms of unconstitutional changes of government. All these will be as a result of the frustrations of citizens, who are failing to find appropriate channels to address their concerns. Though, under no circumstance the Continent should embrace situations of unconstitutional changes of government, it is our responsibility to ensure that, as leaders we adhere to values of democracy and good governance and address the legitimate concerns of our citizens, as a preventive measure.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by emphasizing that, in this Forum we need to be as candid as possible to allow the AU to gather genuine first-hand information which will form the base for the report to be submitted to the Extra-Ordinary Summit in May 2022, in which the issue of unconstitutional changes of government will be part of the discussion.

Once again, I thank the AU Commission for the organization of this event of critical importance and appreciate the efforts of Ghana for hosting this important event. As Chair of ECOWAS, this is an exemplary action which need to be emulated by all other regions of Africa.

I thank you for your attention.