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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

702nd MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

19 JULY 2017

PSC/PR/BR. (DCCII)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 702nd meeting held on 19 July 2017, was briefed by the AU Commission and by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) on the Operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram (BH) terrorist group. Council also took note of the statements made by the representatives of Cameroun, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, member countries of the LCBC, as well as Ethiopia and Egypt, in their respective capacity as African Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3), Gabon, as Chair of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Togo as Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the United Nations.

Council recalled its earlier decisions and pronouncements on the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group and efforts aimed at neutralizing it, in particular the press statement PSC/PR/BR. (DCLXXX) of its 680th meeting held on 18 April 2017, Communiqué [PSC/PR/2. (DCXXXIX)] adopted at its 639th meeting held on 29 November 2016 and Communiqué [PSC/AHG/COMM. 2(CDLXXXIV)] adopted at its 484th meeting held on 29 January 2015, at the level of Heads of State and Government, by which Council authorized the deployment of the MNJTF.

Council welcomed the significant progress made by the MNJTF and the Member States of LCBC plus Benin in the fight against Boko Haram terrorist group, which has considerably weakened the capability of the Sect and continued to successfully dislodge it from its strongholds. Council noted that, despite MNJTF successes, Boko Haram remains a threat for the countries of the region and maintains capacities to conduct asymmetric attacks on isolated locations, strike at soft targets like markets and public gatherings, in the form of guerilla warfare and suicide bombings. Council further noted that Boko Haram is also notorious for recruitment of child soldiers and other forms of forced recruitment. Council strongly condemned the continued attacks by the group against innocent civilians and the recruitment of vulnerable youth and other recorded human rights abuses, as well as sexual violence against women and girls, and strongly warned the perpetrators of such abuses and violence that they shall be held accountable for their actions.

Council paid tribute to countries of the LCBC, namely Cameroun, Chad, Niger and Nigeria plus Benin for their strong commitment and cooperation towards defeating the Boko Haram terrorist group, despite the logistic and financial constraints encountered by the MNJTF in the conduct of ongoing operations. Council also paid glowing tribute to the gallant soldiers that paid the ultimate price and expressed once again its heartfelt condolences to their families and respective countries of origin. Council encouraged the serving MNJTF Forces not to rest on their oars until Boko Haram is completely neutralized. Council recognized the MNJTF as a reference model of multinational cooperation that could serve positively other regions in Africa and beyond to address similar security challenges.

Council acknowledged the critical resource challenges currently being faced by MNJTF in its operations against Boko Haram, including funding and lack of organic air capability especially for offensive operations. In this context, Council welcomed the contributions made by the AU and the partners to enhance MNJTF capabilities, in line with the Memorandum of Understanding and Support Implementation Agreement between the AU, the Lake Chad Basin countries and MNJTF Troop Contributing Countries. Council also took note of the progress made in the implementation of Renewed Support Implementation Agreement (SIA) and the Memorandum of Understanding

between the AU Commission and the MNJTF TCCs for streamlining the AU additional support to MNJTF and the renewed Concept of Operations (CONOPs). In this respect, Council reaffirmed the need for continued consultation and coordination between the AU, the partners and MNJTF, with regard to procurement and delivery of the logistical support to the mission that need to meet the requirements of the troops and the conditions on the ground. Council renewed its call to Member States, the United Nations and partners to pursue and intensify their support to LCBC Member States efforts in their fight against the terrorist as terrorism is a crime against humanity. In this respect, Council expressed its gratitude to the Arab Republic of Egypt for its pledge to offer a thousand scholarship for Officers and NCO's from the sahel-saharan region, and welcomed its decision to establish a counter terrorism center in Cairo, Egypt.

Council expressed its concern about the humanitarian situation in the region, in particular in the North East of Nigeria, Refugee Camps littered over portions of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, resulting from the activities of the Sect and the worsening security situations of the region. It calls on the international community to provide the necessary assistance, commensurate to the needs of the affected people in the area, including the rehabilitation of the numerous Boko haram fighters that have surrendered. Council underlined the need for a rapid disbursement of pledges made at the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region held on 24 February 2017, with a view to alleviating the current humanitarian crisis in the region.

Council reaffirmed the imperative for a comprehensive approach in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group as provided for in its Communiqué [PSC/AHG/COMM. 2(CDLXXXIV)] adopted at its 484th meeting. In this respect, Council underlined the importance of addressing the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency and, in the longer term, of supplementing military action with development projects, to focus, among other, on socio-economic development of the communities liberated from the Boko Haram terrorist group, with a view to depriving the terrorist group of support and recruitment grounds. In the same context, Council also underlined the need for adequate resources to facilitate the socio-economic rehabilitation of Boko Haram combatants who are defecting from the terrorist group.

Council looked forward to collecting more information on the ground, both from the people and the authorities of the LCBC Member States, during the field visit it intends to undertake to the countries of the region, from 27 July to 1 August 2017.

Council requested the Commission, with the support of the LCBC Secretariat, to regularly update the Council, in line with the reporting requirements, as stipulated in the Communiqué PSC/AHG/COM.2 (CDLXXXIV) of 29 January 2015.

Council agreed to remain actively seized of the matter.