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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
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PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 248th meeting held on 13 November 2010, was briefed by the Commissioner for Peace and Security on the processes aimed at ending the crises in the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Guinea and Niger, including the recently held elections in these different countries. The Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the AU, as representative of the Facilitator of the Direct Inter-Ivorian Dialogue and Mediator in the Guinean crisis, and a representative of the ECOWAS Commission, also made presentations on their respective efforts.

Furthermore, Council was briefed by the Commissioner for Peace and Security on the visit to the Sudan (Khartoum and Juba), from 23 to 26 October 2010, of a ministerial delegation of the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction Committee on the Sudan led by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, as well as on the AMANI Africa Command Post Exercise, which took place in Addis Ababa, from 13 to 29 October 2010.

A) With regard to the Comoros, Council commended the Comorian parties for the good conditions in which the primary elections for the presidency of the Union, which took place in the Autonomous Island of Moheli, and the first round of the elections for the Governors of the Autonomous Islands which took place on 7 November 2010. In this regard, Council took note of the statement issued, on 10 November 2010, by the International Election Observation Mission, which included the AU, the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) and the League of Arab States.

Council appealed to all the Comorian parties to consolidate this important step in the implementation process of the Agreement on the Management of the Interim Period signed on 16 June 2010, under the auspices of the AU, particularly through the implementation, to the advantage of the Island of Moheli, of the principle of rotating presidency enshrined in the Constitution of the Union of the Comoros. In this regard, Council stressed the need to spare no efforts towards the smooth holding, on 26 December 2010, of the second round of the presidential election, which will oppose, at national level, the three candidates from Moheli who obtained the largest vote at the primaries, as well as that of the Governors of the Autonomous Islands, subject to the confirmation of the provisional results by the Constitutional Court.

Council expressed its gratitude to the international partners, namely the European Union, the League of Arab States, France, the OIF, Qatar and UNDP, for their financial contribution to the electoral process.

B) Regarding Côte d'Ivoire, Council welcomed the successful holding of the first round of the presidential election, on 31 October 2010.

Council commended the Ivorian people for their massive participation in the polls, thereby demonstrating their commitment to democracy and their determination to see to it

that the process for a way out of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire is successfully completed. Council also commended the parties and the Ivorian authorities and other stakeholders for their determination and commitment, as well as for the spirit of dialogue and consultation that has made possible this crucial step in the implementation process of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and its Supplementary Agreements.

Council strongly appealed to the different actors concerned to do their utmost for the successful completion of the process, by increasing their efforts and by creating all the conditions required for the proper conduct of the second round of the presidential election scheduled on 28 November 2010.

Council reiterated its appreciation to President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, Facilitator of the Direct Inter-Ivorian Dialogue, for the perseverance and patience that he has demonstrated in accompanying the Ivorian parties, and urged him to continue his efforts. Council also expressed the AU's gratitude to ECOWAS, the United Nations, including UNOCI and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as to other bilateral and multilateral partners for their invaluable contribution to the process for a way out of the crisis, and urged them to continue supporting the Ivorian parties.

C) Concerning the Republic of Guinea, Council welcomed the conduct, in conditions of peace and serenity, of the second round of the presidential election and commended the Guineans for having massively turned out for the election, thereby manifesting their commitment to democracy and their determination to bring the transition, launched following the Ouagadougou Agreement of 15 February 2010, to a successful conclusion, through return to constitutional order.

Council is following with interest the publication by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) of the provisional results of the election of 7 November 2010, and urged it to continue to do everything to ensure transparency throughout this delicate and decisive exercise for the acceptance of the provisional results by all the parties. In this regard, Council commended General Siaka Sangare, Chairperson of the CENI, for the manner in which this institution carried out the vote counting and the announcement of the results, and assured him of its full support.

Council stressed the responsibility upon the Guinean political actors, who should rise to the challenge and place the interest of their country and its people above partisan and other considerations. Council recalled the imperative of the acceptance of the results of the election and the recourse, should the need arise, only to the mechanisms and procedures provided for by the law to resolve possible election disputes. In this respect, Council noted with satisfaction the adoption and signing, on 7 November 2010, in Conakry, by the two candidates to the second round of the presidential election, of a joint Declaration in which they committed themselves to the smooth conduct of the election and to the promotion of calm in Guinea.

Council reiterated its appreciation to the President of the transition, General Sekouba Konate, for his determination in conducting the transition process to its conclusion and for his commitment to organize free, fair and transparent elections with a view to restoring constitutional order.

More generally, Council recalled the obligation of the authorities of the transition to show total neutrality and abstain from any action that may undermine the independence of the CENI and the integrity of the outcome of the election. In this regard, Council renewed its warning against any political actor, or any authority, that will seek to block or delay the process of return to constitutional order, and against any actions that undermine the integrity of the poll results. Council expressed its determination, should it become necessary, to take appropriate measures against the authors of such actions, and endorsed the Communiqué issued by the 17th meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea (ICG-G) held in Conakry on 5 November 2010.

Council expressed, once again, its gratitude to President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, Mediator in the Guinean crisis, for his relentless efforts. Council noted with satisfaction the role played by the ICG-G, which is co-chaired by the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission for Guinea, Professor Ibrahim Fall, and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr Victor Gbeho, as well as by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for West Africa, Ambassador Said Djinnit. In this regard, Council commended the partnership that exists between the United Nations, ECOWAS and the AU, which facilitated the harmonization of the actions of the international community and a more effective support to the process for a way out of the crisis and the restoration of constitutional order in Guinea.

D) On Niger, Council reaffirmed its commitment to accompany the Transition in Niger as per the Press Statement issued at its 232nd meeting held on 17 June 2010.

Council noted with satisfaction the smooth and successful conduct of the constitutional Referendum of 31 October 2010, and expressed its deep appreciation to the people of Niger in that regard. Council equally appreciated the commitment of General Salou Djibo, as well as his repeated pronouncement and assurances, to abide by the agreed schedule for a return to constitutional order.

Council urged the political parties and all actors involved in the Transition process to put the supreme interest of Niger above partisan and other considerations, in order to facilitate the timely conclusion of the process of the return to constitutional order.

E) On the visit to the Sudan of a ministerial delegation of the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction Committee on the Sudan, Council welcomed this initiative, and stressed the importance of renewed efforts in support of post-conflict reconstruction and development in Sudan, especially at this critical juncture of the history of the country, regardless of the outcome of the self-determination referendum for South Sudan scheduled on 9 January 2011.

In this regard, Council appealed to AU Member States and partners to provide the requisite assistance and support for post-conflict reconstruction and peace consolidation in the Sudan. Council stressed the need to urgently lift the unilateral sanctions imposed on the Sudan and to take the required steps for debt cancellation and other forms of assistance, to facilitate the efforts being made by the Sudanese parties towards the implementation of the outstanding provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the resolution of the post-referendum arrangements and the promotion of sustainable peace in their country.

Council welcomed the steps envisaged by the Ministerial Committee as a follow-up to its visit, in particular the dispatching of a team of experts to further assess the needs of the Sudan in terms of post-conflict reconstruction and the convening of an African solidarity conference to mobilize, from within the continent, support commensurate with the responsibility of Africa towards the Sudan and its people.

F) On the AMANI Africa Command Post Exercise, Council welcomed the successful conclusion of this Exercise and commended the Commission for this significant step taken towards the operationalization of the African Standby Force. Council also expressed its appreciation to the European Union for its support, as part of its partnership with the AU, as well as to the United Nations and other international partners for their contributions.

Council encouraged the Commission to build on the lessons learnt from this Exercise to further its efforts in making the ASF fully operational and enhancing AU's capacity to undertake peace support operations.