

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 23 April 2020 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I would like to request that the present letter and the communiqué adopted by the African Union Peace and Security Council, at its 918th meeting, on 14 April 2020, on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak on peace and security in Africa (see annex), be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jerry Matthews **Matjila**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa



Annex to the letter dated 23 April 2020 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Communiqué

Adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 918th meeting held on 14 April 2020, on the impact of the Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak on peace and security in Africa,

The Peace and Security Council,

Acknowledging that COVID-19 constitutes an existential serious threat to international peace and security, as it is affecting virtually all countries of the world; ***Also acknowledging*** the very serious and unprecedented threats to human security and national economies posed by COVID-19, which is diverting resources from existing capacities and initiatives to address and resolve conflicts, as well as from socio-economic development in the Continent, to the efforts against the COVID-19 pandemic;

Noting with deep concern the negative impact of COVID-19 on AU peace and security activities, within the context of ongoing efforts to silence the guns in the Continent, including diversion of funding meant for sustaining peace support operations, as well as post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding programmes, particularly in areas ravaged by armed, terrorist and extremist groups, among others; ***also noting with deep concern***, the impact of COVID-19 on the lives and livelihoods of the people in the Continent, including refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as other vulnerable sections of society, including the elderly;

Recalling Communique [PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXV)] adopted at its 915th meeting held on 9 March 2020 on the outbreak of COVID-19;

Welcoming the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on “Global Solidarity to fight the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)”, adopted on 2 April 2020, which recognized the unprecedented negative effects of COVID-19 and called for intensified international cooperation to contain, mitigate and defeat the deadly pandemic;

Also recalling the communique adopted by the emergency meeting of African Ministers of Health on COVID-19, held on 22 February 2020, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as well as the Declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) issued on 30 January 2020, on COVID-19 outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC);

Further recalling Articles 6 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council, which provides, as one of the core functions of Council, humanitarian action and disaster management; Article 13, paragraphs 3f and 3g, which provides, as part of the mandate of the African Standby Force (ASF), the provision of humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of civilian population in conflict areas and supporting efforts to address major natural disasters; and any other functions as may be mandated by the Peace and Security Council or the Assembly; and ***also recalling*** the provisions of Article 15 (1) of its Protocol, which stipulate that the PSC shall take active part in coordinating and conducting humanitarian action in order to restore life to normalcy in the event of conflicts or natural disasters, including outbreaks of epidemics/pandemics;

Recalling the statement issued on 8 April 2020, by the current Chair of the AU, H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, reaffirming his unwavering support to WHO and appreciation for the exceptional leadership of its Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus;

Noting the opening statements by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya, H.E. Ambassador Catherine Muigai Mwangi, in her capacity as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of April 2020, and the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui. Also noting the statement made by the WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Dr. Vera Songwe, as well as the briefing made by the Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Dr. John Nkengasong, on the impact and implications of COVID-19 on peace and security in Africa; and

Mindful of the fact that COVID-19 does not discriminate on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, ideology, or creed, and the urgent need to mobilize and deploy all necessary efforts, within the spirit of international solidarity, in order to effectively mitigate, contain the spread and defeat the COVID-19.

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

1. **Commends** the Africa CDC, under the umbrella of the Department of Social Affairs of the Commission, for the relentless efforts being deployed, working in collaboration with the WHO, in response to the outbreak of COVID-19, including providing guidelines on the various activities of the Union and its Organs and **emphasizes** the importance of constant adjustments/adaptation of these guidelines to the evolution of the COVID-19 situation in the Continent;

2. **Also commends** all Member States for having taken swift measures to prevent and to contain the spread of COVID-19, including enhancing the capacity of their national health infrastructure, as well as restrictions on public movement and assembly, with a view to curbing the spread of the virus; and **encourages** Member States, while robustly and comprehensively implementing measures to defeat COVID-19, to also ensure continued and adequate flow of essential supplies to populations especially food;

3. **Further commends** all private sector entities, partner countries, international institutions and philanthropist organizations that have mobilized resources, both, from within and outside the Continent towards the efforts being deployed by the governments of Member States, in particular, the Chinese Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation for the donation of COVID-19 medical supplies to Member States and **calls** for the continuation of this humanitarian gesture; **pays special tribute**, in this regard, to Prime Minister, Dr. Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia and Mr. Jack Ma, for their personal efforts and commitment in mobilizing material support for the fight against COVID-19 within the Continent. In the same context, Council **commends** the Ethiopian Airlines and the World Food Programme (WFP), for delivering, the donated medical equipment to all Member States;

4. **Salutes** the establishment of the African Union COVID-19 Response Fund, in order to mobilize the required financial resources for Africa's fight against the pandemic, and **expresses its gratitude** to Members of the Bureau of the African Union, which have already contributed to the Fund, and **encourages** all other Member States which have not yet done so to also make their contributions, within the spirit of pan-African solidarity. Council **further encourages** the African private sector, international financial institutions and bilateral partners to also contribute to the Fund;

5. **Affirms its** unflinching support to the relentless efforts being deployed by WHO, particularly its Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in

providing timely information, technical guidance and material assistance towards efforts to contain the spread and mitigate the impact of COVID-19; **encourages** the Director-General and his entire WHO team to remain focused on the fight against COVID-19 pandemic; and in this regard **appeals** to the rest of the international community to continue to extend full support and cooperation to the efforts of WHO;

6. **Pays particular tribute** to the healthcare workers, especially those working in particularly challenging security environments in parts of the Continent, for their commitment to duty and for sacrificing their precious lives, in order to save lives in the face of COVID-19 and **encourages** them to persevere until the deadly pandemic is defeated. In this context, Council **emphasizes the need** for Member States to ensure full protection, safety and security of healthcare workers, as well as providing them with adequate and appropriate personal protection equipment and necessary tools to enable them to better perform their work;

7. **Expresses** condolences to all Member States for lives lost due to COVID-19 and **wishes** a rapid recovery to all those people throughout the Continent, who have been hospitalized as a result of contracting the COVID-19 pandemic;

8. **Underscores the importance** of the implementation of Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 outbreak as a robust and comprehensive continental collective response to COVID-19 and to emulate the lessons learnt from the recent successful fight against the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in parts of the Continent, particularly cooperation and solidarity among AU Member States and substantial support mobilized to combat that epidemic;

9. **Emphasizes the imperative** for the AU, in consultation with the troop and police contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs) for the ongoing AU Peace Support Operations, to further enhance measures for ensuring protection, safety and security of the personnel, including mobilizing the required resources, as relevant for early detection, testing, contact tracing, rapid treatment and evacuation where necessary, as well as containing the spread of COVID-19;

10. **Notes with deep concern** the profound socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 within Africa, including the fall in commodity prices and the attendant loss of national revenues; **also notes** the negative impact of the pandemic, as more pronounced in the informal sector, which is the source of livelihoods for the majority of the population in both, rural and urban areas.

11. While Member States have taken bold measures, including lockdowns, to contain the spread of, and mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19, Council **highlights the need** for Member States to also put in place programmes, in the form of safety nets, to support the entire population, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable sections; and **underscores the imperative** of all stakeholders involved in the fight against COVID-19 to also pay particular attention to refugees and internally displaced persons in the camps wherever in the Continent, including ensuring early detection, testing and contact tracing, as well as provision of basic needs such as food and water;

12. **Also notes with deep concern**, the impact of COVID-19 on fragile economies and post-conflict countries, and **appeals** to the bilateral and international development partners, to consider debt cancellation and relief to those African countries with fragile economies, including provision of economic support packages, to enable these countries to regain resilience and commit the required resources to the fight against COVID-19. In the same vein, Council **reiterates its call** for those members of the international community who have imposed sanctions and other punitive measures on some African countries to immediately and unconditionally lift them, to allow these countries to devote their efforts and resources to fighting COVID-19 pandemic and regenerate economic vibrancy;

13. **Encourages** the media to continue to play the critical role of raising public awareness through dissemination of factual information and educating the population on the reality of the deadly COVID-19 and on the various measures that need to be taken by individuals in order to avoid contracting the virus and those being deployed by governments of Member States in combating the pandemic;

14. **Also encourages** community leaders and those of various religious organizations, civil society organizations and other forms of social networks, as well as the population in general, to fully support and complement all efforts being deployed by their governments in fighting against COVID-19;

15. **Appeals** to all Member States with strategic airlift capabilities, which are in a position to do so, to avail these capabilities, at own cost, to the AU Commission when so requested, within the framework of the humanitarian functions of the ASF as outlined in the PSC Protocol, and also in the spirit of Africa helping Africa, as well as Pan-African solidarity, in order to enable the Africa CDC to more effectively and expeditiously dispatch medical supplies and other related needs that maybe required by Member States in their efforts to combat COVID-19; and in this context, **underlines** the urgent need, within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), for Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) to avail their ASF regional capabilities to further enhance African efforts in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic;

16. **Emphasizes** that, among other modalities, medical supplies and related material for the fight against COVID-19, being sourced with the guidance of Africa CDC, in cooperation with WHO, from outside the Continent could be delivered directly to the respective RECs/RMs Headquarters from which distribution to Member States would be coordinated; and in in this regard, encourages Member States to (i) facilitate airspace/humanitarian corridors for emergency response support movements, particularly technical experts, supplies and commodities across Member States; and (ii) facilitate airlifting capacity and capabilities for deployment of responders and supplies in contexts where commercial flights are grounded;

17. **Reiterates the call** by the Chairperson of the Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat and the United Nations Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres, for all belligerents to fully embrace and uphold the Global Ceasefire in order to facilitate efforts being deployed against the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, Council **demands** the warring factions in Libya to immediately stop fighting, in order to allow the country to devote all efforts and resources to the fight against COVID-19. Council **also demands** all armed groups, wherever they are operating in the Continent, to immediately put an end to their activities, in order to give a chance to the efforts by governments to fight COVID-19;

18. **Highlights** the risk of terrorist and armed groups, as well as criminal networks and traffickers taking advantage of, and exploiting the current COVID-19 situation to perpetuate their activities, thereby undermining efforts being deployed by governments in fighting the pandemic and providing essential public services to the affected populations, and **encourages** Member States to further enhance their cross-border cooperation in fighting these groups and networks;

19. **Requests** the Africa CDC to continue to provide regular briefings to Council on the COVID-19 situation and the efforts being deployed in fighting this deadly pandemic; and

20. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.