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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
409TH MEETING
18 DECEMBER 2013
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BR.(CDIX)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 409th meeting held on 18 December 2013, was briefed by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, and by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Sudan to the AU, on the situation South Sudan.

Council noted with deep concern the fighting that broke out in Juba and other locations in South Sudan, arising from disagreements within the leadership of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). Council also expressed deep concern at the serious humanitarian consequences of this unfortunate development on the civilian population, as the fighting has claimed hundreds of lives and displaced thousands others.

Council stressed the need to rapidly and effectively address the current situation, with a view to avoiding serious implications for the long-term security and stability of South Sudan, as well as for the neighboring countries, bearing in mind the prevailing situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) and other peace and security challenges in the region.

Accordingly, Council stressed the need for all concerned South Sudanese stakeholders to place the interest of the people of South Sudan above any other consideration. Council urgently appealed to the leadership of South Sudan and all other stakeholders to exercise utmost restraint, refrain from any action and statement likely to further exacerbate the situation and seek solutions to the current problems through dialogue and reconciliation.

Council, recalling the relevant AU's instruments, emphasized the rejection by the AU of the use of force to settle political differences, as well as the critical importance of respect for human rights, the rule of law and constitutional legality.

Council commended the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and other humanitarian agencies that have given refuge in their premises and other forms of assistance to the civilians caught in the fighting, both in Juba and in other locations in the country. Council welcomed the commitment of UNMISS to continue its efforts to mitigate the situation, in particular with regard to the protection of civilian populations and the staff of international organizations and members of the diplomatic community affected by the fighting.

Council endorsed the statement issued by the Chairperson of the Commission on 17 December 2013 regarding the situation in South Sudan and AU's readiness to assist in finding a peaceful solution to the challenges at hand. Council also noted with appreciation the steps taken by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to assist South Sudan in addressing its governance and democratization challenges, as part of its mandate and the overall efforts to help build a viable state at peace with itself and its neighbors. Council encouraged the AUHIP to pursue and intensify these efforts.

Council further acknowledged the efforts by a number of regional and international stakeholders, including the Chairperson of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the AU, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia, the UN Secretary-General and bilateral partners, aimed at containing the situation and assisting in finding a solution. Council called for continued, sustained and coordinated international engagement with all concerned South Sudanese actors, particularly in view of the gravity of the situation and its far-reaching consequences.

Council welcomed the initiative taken by IGAD to urgently dispatch a ministerial delegation to Juba, with a view to help diffuse the current tension and to support the South Sudanese Parties to find a peaceful political settlement to the crisis. Council encouraged the AUHIP, in consultation with the Chairperson of IGAD, to take all appropriate initiatives to help defuse the current tension and address the underlying problems.

Council requested the Chairperson of the Commission to keep it regularly informed of the evolution of the situation and related efforts by the AUHIP and the Chair of IGAD.

Council remained seized of the matter and would review the situation in due course.