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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

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REPORT OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL (PSC) FIELD MISSION TO LIBREVILLE, GABON,
12 TO 14 SEPTEMBER 2024

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (PSC) undertook a Field Mission to Libreville, Gabon, from 12 to 14 September 2024, to gather information on the ground on the progress made by the Transitional government and other relevant stakeholders on the transition process in the country since the military power takeover of 30 August 2023.

II. PARTICIPATION

2. The Field Mission to Gabon was led by H.E Ambassador Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cameroon to the African Union and Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council for September 2024 and composed of the fifteen (15) members of the Peace and Security Council (PSC): Angola; Botswana; Cameroon; Cote d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of Congo; Djibouti; The Gambia; Equatorial Guinea; Egypt; Morocco; Namibia; Nigeria; Sierra Leone; Tanzania; and Uganda. The African Union Commission was represented by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Amb Bankole Adeoye the African Union Special Representative to Gabon, H.E. Dr Hortense Nguema Okome and staff of the AU Commission.

III. OBJECTIVES

3. The main objectives of the Field Mission to Libreville, Gabon were to:
- a. Obtain first-hand information to engage with the Gabonese Transition Authorities and other key stakeholders in order to exchange views on the status of the transition process towards the restoration of constitutional order in the country;
 - b. Express the AU's solidarity with the people and the Government of the Republic of Gabon that they would not be left behind and that as a founding member, the country still remains a member of the AU despite its suspension; and
 - c. Reiterate the PSC's support for the ECCAS Facilitation led by the President of the Central Africa Republic, H.E. President Faustin Archange Touadera

IV. METHODOLOGY

4. Prior to their mission to Libreville, the PSC was briefed on the situation in Gabon by the President of the Central Africa Republic and ECCAS Facilitator, H.E. Professor Faustin Archange Touadera in Bangui on 11 September 2024.

5. To achieve the objectives of the mission, the PSC Delegation consulted with over 250 stakeholders from all sectors of the Gabonese society beginning with H.E. General Brice Oligui Nguema, President of the Committee for the Transition and Restoration of Institutions (CTRI) assisted by his entire Committee and the Secretary-General at the Presidency, H.E Professor Guy Rossatanga-Rignault.

6. The PSC delegation also engaged with members of the Transitional Government including the Prime Minister, H.E. Raymond Ndong Simo; the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Charge of Sub-Regional Integration and Gabonese Abroad, H.E. Régis Onanga Ndiaye; the Minister of Justice, H.E. Paul-Marie

GONDJOUT; the Minister of the Economy, H.E. Mays MOUISSI; the Minister of Public Accounts, H.E. Charles MBA; the Minister of Defence. General Brigitte ONGANOA; the Minister of Interior and Security, H.E. Hermann IMMONGAULT; and the Minister for New Information and Communication Technologies, CTRI Spokesperson, Lt-Colonel Ulrich MANFOUMBI.

7. It further engaged with members of the Legislative authorities of the Transition namely the Economic, Social. and Environmental Council led by M. Seraphin Moundounga; the Transitional Constitutional Court led by Dieudonne Aba'a; the Senate, led by its Speaker Mrs. Paulette Missambo; and the National Assembly led by its Speaker, Hon. Francois Ndougou.

8. The PSC also engaged with the diplomatic community, notably the Group of African Ambassadors in Libreville, led by the Ambassador of Senegal, and the International Community, represented by the SRSG for Central Africa, H.E Abdou Abarry, the Representative of the UNDP and an ECCAS Commissioner, representing the President of the Commission.

9. The PSC engaged with members of the Civil Society, including the Vicar General of Libreville on behalf of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Libreville, H.E Jean Patrick Ibaba; members of the Press, represented by the Higher Authority for the Media, youth and women associations as well those focused on the transition such as the *Coalition Pour La Defense de la Constitution*, the *Challenge Democratie au Feminin*, the *Reseau National des Femmes Mediatrices de Paix du Gabon* (RENAFEMGA); the national chapter of the APRM as well as with independent personalities such as H.E. Jean Ping, a Former Chairperson of the AU Commission, between 2008 and 2012.

10. Finally, with the permission of H.E. General Brice Oligui Nguema, the PSC paid a courtesy call on the former President of the Republic of Gabon, H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba, at his residence in Libreville, Gabon.

V. POLITICAL SITUATION

11. During the consultations between the PSC delegation and various stakeholders, it was reported that, since the 30 August 2023 coup d'état, which ousted President Ali Bongo Ondimba after the announcement of his re-election for a third term as head of state, and the swearing in of H.E. General Brice Oligui Nguema as Transitional President on 4 September 2023, the political situation in Gabon has remained stable. Under the leadership of the Transitional President, the Committee for the Transition and Restoration of Institutions (CTRI) has been overseeing a transition process with a timeframe of two years, from August 2023 to August 2025. The Transitional Authority approved a Roadmap to end the transition period in August 2024 and they mentioned that they are planning to organized general election in August 2025, even before that date if the preparation for the election is fast tracked. They emphasized that the AU and other international organizations will be invited to observe the elections. With the progress they have made, they also requested the PSC to lift suspension to allow Gabon to participate in the AU activities.

12. The interlocutors mentioned that the *coup d'état* of 30 August 2024, which they described as a "*Liberation Coup*" was peaceful coup with no bloodshed. The coup was justified as a liberation action to prevent post-election violence and avoid what happened in the country in 2016 after the announcement of election results. They briefed the PSC that there were clear indications that the 2023 electoral results would have triggered tensions in the country, as it was not being handled in a transparent manner.

13. The PSC delegation was informed that the Transition Authority in Gabon launched, from 2 October to 30 November 2023, a campaign to gather Gabonese opinions and contributions on the general situation of the country and the reforms needed that would be reflected in the new draft

constitution.. A total of 38,000 contributions were collected from within the country and from the Diaspora. These contributions were factored into the Inclusive National Dialogue (DNI), held from 2 to 30 April 2024, which brought together about 680 representatives from the various components of the Gabonese society and resulted in close to 1,000 conclusions and recommendations.

14. After the analysis of the 1,000 recommendations, the Transition Authority estimated that their implementation would require close to 2,100 administrative or legal acts, starting with their inclusion in the country's new constitution. A first Draft Constitution, prepared by the National Constitutional Committee, is to be reviewed jointly by the National Constituent Assembly (Transitional National Assembly) and the Senate from 12 September 2024 to 22 September 2024. It will thereafter be transmitted to the Transitional President for approval and submission to a popular referendum set to take place in November-December 2024. The Transition Authority expressed its commitment to respect the transitional timeframe and to conclude the transition with the organisation of presidential elections by August 2025, and possibly before.

15. The Transitional Authority also expressed its commitment to honour all the country's national and international obligations, including the payment of internal and external debts, and the maintenance of diplomatic relations with other nations and International Organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB).

16. Another issue observed by the PSC Mission was the suspension of the activities of political parties. The Transition Authority argues that with a population of 2.5 million people, Gabon had 104 political parties, a number considered as excessive. The CTRI has, therefore, engaged in a process of regulation of the creation of political parties. Under the CTRI, new legislation will be enacted that will require of a minimum number of 18,000 members for any political party to be registered (against 9,000 members at the present time).

17. Despite the predominantly positive feedback received from the Gabonese authorities concerning progress of the transition, some reservations and concerns were also expressed by civil society representatives regarding the actual inclusivity of the transition notably during the Inclusive National Dialogue (DNI) and the constitution-making process. There were other concerns related to and the contents of the draft constitution, notably as regards the form of the political regime; the separation of powers the length of the presidential term; the eligibility conditions for president and; the representation of women in state institutions. They also highlighted potential risks of undemocratic drifts in the forthcoming elections, which may not be genuinely free and competitive but rather consecrate the Transitional President as the new 'strong man' of the country.

18. The former President, H.E. Ali Bongo, informed the PSC delegation that he is still under house arrest with no access to information from the outside world. Apart from his eyes and routine physiotherapy, he had no other major health concerns. He is attended to and consulted by local Gabonese doctors, although he has been expecting other doctors from Britain, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. He intimated that he had refused to go abroad for medical treatment until his wife and son were released. He informed the PSC Delegation that he has access to some of his family members but has been refused access to meet with his wife and son, who were both charged with treason and financial crimes. He prayed that they be given fair trial and access to their lawyers in France and Gabon. He intimated that he has tried to meet with the President of the Transition five times to no avail, but also remained hopeful of the ECCAS and AU Facilitation. He, however, agreed that the permission granted by the President of the Transition to the PSC Mission to visit and listen to him was a positive sign. He attributed the coup d' état and arrest of his family members to personal misunderstanding with the President of the Transition Authority, arguing that were it about bad governance or corruption, many members of his government now serving in the CRTI would have been arrested or prosecuted.

VI. SECURITY SITUATION

19. During the mission, the PSC delegation was informed that the Republic of Gabon is peaceful and is working hard to emerge from a government that was dominated by one family, which destroyed state institutions. They insisted that the peaceful nature of the Gabonese People was manifested on 30 August 2023 when they undertook a bloodless coup that resulted in no death or injury, but it was rather joyfully received by the population.

VII. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION AND HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

20. Since the coup of 30 August 2023, the Transition Authority has taken measures to improve the Gabonese's living conditions, through economic empowerment, job creation and improvement of social services. The PSC delegation was informed that the Transition Authority inherited a difficult socio-economic situation in the country from the previous regime. The country had high unemployment (34%) and poverty (33%) rates, despite the fact that Gabon is among the top ten (10) African countries in terms of GDP per capita and enjoys abundant oil resources. Over the last year, the Transition Authorities created 19,000 jobs in the public sector, and increased the salary of public servants to 100,000 CFA; they have brought down inflation to 3% and improved infrastructure including roads and communication networks; and engaged on a fight against corruption in the country.

21. The Government officials informed the PSC that the international financial organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) lifted sanctions on Gabon, after the Transition Authority succeeded in convincing them of the 'exceptional circumstances' that led to the coup of 30 August 2023.

22. In terms of human rights, the Transition Authority has engaged in a reform of the country's Judicial System and has worked jointly with the United Nations on legislation related to the establishment of a new Human Rights Commission that will be in line with the Paris Agreement. It has also taken steps to improve the conditions of detainees, notably at the Libreville's Prison, while building new prisons for women and children that will comply with international standards.

VIII. OBSERVATIONS

23. Pursuant to the PSC delegation's consultations with Government officials and various stakeholders on the situation in Gabon, the PSC made observations

- i. Majority of the interlocutors expressed appreciation for the PSC visit through belated and overdue.
- ii. There is commitment by the Gabonese Transition Authority and the Gabonese people to the African Union.
- iii. There was a visible positive progress made by the Transition Authority in the implementation of the Transition Roadmap.
- iv. Some civil society organizations held the view that the transition process was not inclusive and that some of the recommendations that were made during the Inclusive National Dialogue had not yet been considered by the transition authority.

- v. The permission by H.E. General Olingui Nguema, President of the CRTI for the PSC Mission to hear the views of the former Chairperson, Jean Ping as well as of the ousted president Ali Bongo Odimba were positive signs which herald a thaw in the political situation of the country.
- vi. The PSC also observed that although Gabon was under suspension, the Transitional Authority had been working with some institutions of the AU's APSA and AGA Framework, such as the APRM through its national chapter and CISSA, which even held its 19th General Assembly in Libreville in July 2024.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

24. In Light of the broad-based consultations and the above-mentioned observations, the PSC Field Mission recommends that the PSC may :

- i. **Reaffirm** the AU's solidarity with the people and the Government of the Republic of Gabon in their commitment towards the completion of the transition process and the return to constitutional order in line with the adopted Transition Roadmap to be completed by August 2025 in the best interest of the Gabonese;
- ii. **Also reaffirm** the AU's strong respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Gabon, and recalled the importance of the principles of non-interference, good-neighbourliness and regional cooperation;
- iii. **Commend** the Committee for the Transition and Restoration of Institutions (CTRI) for respecting the transition timeframe through the Transition Roadmap, and the progress made in rebuilding national institutions and socio-economic services in the country;
- iv. **Further Commend** the Government of the Republic of Gabon for its purposeful and effective transition that will take the country back to constitutional order; appreciated the Transition Authority's efforts to ensure an inclusive transition process, notably through the involvement of women and youth in its institutions;
- v. **Request** the AU Commission to engage the Transition Authority of Gabon to identify areas of support and provide the needed technical and financial support to Gabon in particular in the drafting of a new constitution, strengthening judicial systems and preparation for the general elections;
- vi. **Appeal** to the international organizations and bilateral partners to support the Transition Authority of Gabon to ensure a successful implementation of the transition roadmap and smoothly return to constitutional order;
- vii. **Appeal** to the transitional authorities to enhance efforts in engaging the women, youth and civil society organisations to ensure an inclusive transition process in particular in the drafting of the new constitution and preparations for the general elections.
- viii. **Request** the Transition Authority to engage into dialogue with the former President of Gabon, H.E. Ali Bongo Ondomba, with a view to ending his house arrest in line with the decision of the PSC;
- ix. **Encourage** the Transition Authority to expedite the judicial process regarding the charges against the family members of the former President Remained actively seized of the matter;

- x. **Request** the Chairperson of the Commission to use his good office to engage with the leader of the Transition Authority to mediate the differences with the former President to ensure a smooth and peaceful transition in the country; and
- xi. **Reaffirm** the commitment and readiness of the AU to enhance its engagement with the Transition Authority of Gabon; and, stress the need for the AU and the PSC in particular, to play a lead role, have more leverage, to support the restoration of a civilian-led government.

X. CONCLUSION

25. The PSC concluded its mission on 14 September 2024 and commended the Transition Authority and people of the Republic of Gabon for the warm welcome and support provided to the PSC delegation during its mission.

2024-10-30

Communiqué of the 1241st Meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 30 October 2024, on the Consideration of the Report of the Field Mission to Libreville, Gabon conducted from 12 to 14 September 2024.

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