

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICA GROUP BY MR. ABDALLAH BACHAR BONG, COUNSELOR AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHAD TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE AGENDA ITEM 134- PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR BIENNIUM 2016-2017: ESTIMATES IN RESPECT OF SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS, GOOD OFFICES AND OTHER POLITICAL INITIATIVES AUTHORIZED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND/OR THE SECURITY COUNCIL, THEMATIC CLUSTERS I: SPECIAL AND PERSONAL ENVOYS AND SPECIAL ADVISERS
(New York 14 December, 2016)**

Madam Chairperson,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item 134 programme budget for biennium 2016-2017 in particular estimates in respect of the Special Political Missions thematic cluster I: Special and personal envoys and Advisers of the Secretary General for Burundi and Conflict Prevention.

2. At the outset the African Group would like to thank Ms. Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas, the Assistant Secretary General, the Controller as well as Mr. Carloz Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee for introducing the respective reports on the agenda item.

Madam Chairperson,

3. The African Group welcomes the progress made so far by the African Union and the East African Community led Inter-Burundian Dialogue which aims at finding durable solutions for the political challenges facing the country in line with General Assembly recognition on the role of regional and sub-regional actors on conflict prevention and mediation in partnership, co-operation and co-ordination with international community.

4. The group seizes this opportunity to commend the effort of the Special Advisor in working with various Burundian stakeholders in addressing current political challenges that Burundi encounters.

5. The Group notes that at the seventeenth extraordinary session held on 8th of September 2016 in Dar es Salaam, the East African Community Summit of Heads of State, among others, received and considered the progress report on the Inter-Burundian Dialogue and adopted the recommendations of the Facilitator on the way forward and re-emphasized the need for ownership and leadership of the process by the region in all aspects.

6. The Group also notes, the agreed road map provides for a series of engagements between December 2016 and June 2017 that will culminate into an Agreement. We have taken note with encouragement that, the ongoing consultations including one conducted in 8 December, 2016 have confirmed the positive progress on the ongoing process.

Madam Chairperson,

7. The African Group has taken note that for year 2017, the Secretary-General proposes resource request in the amount of US\$ 11.9 million representing an increase of 53 per cent from the approved appropriation for 2016. The Group notes that the increase is attributed to mainly increase in the staffing levels, official travel, facilities and infrastructure and information technology. The Group notes that the Secretary-General proposed additional 20 positions from the approved appropriation.

8. Taking into consideration that the Office of the Special Advisor is mandated to coordinate and work closely with the EAC Mediation and provide it with all necessary technical and substantive support. The African Group will be interested to examine how the resources requested by the office can enable it to carry out its mandate in particular with regard to achieving that objective. Moreover, certain areas of the Office's mandate such as rule of law and confidence building are crucial to fostering a conducive environment to the ongoing political dialogue.

9. The Group notes that the Secretary-General indicate that, political situation in Burundi remain precarious. The Group also notes that, the East African Community Heads of States and Government as well as recent press release by the Facilitator on 9th December, 2016 indicate that political and security situation has improved and there is a sense of a notable convergence on the fact that there is a tremendous improvement in the security situation, which all stakeholders should use to ensure that this process is concluded.

10. The Group notes that the proposal of the Secretary-General for 2017 does not reflect the notable positive development in Burundi nor does it reflect the current updates from the East African Community process which expect to finalize the dialogue and signing of political agreement by June 2017.

11. It is the African Group's strong view that, the development on the process in Burundi should have been factored in the proposal before us. The Group looks forward to presenting staff and non-staffing adjustments that takes into account reality on the ground and ensure scarce available resource are allocated in most efficient and effective manner and only when and where needed. The Group is also supporting the Advisory Committee that positions

should be proposed only when the functions of the positions can be realistically carried out and operationally supported.

Madam Chairperson,

12. The Group recalls that by its resolution, the General Assembly noted that there are multiple United Nations entities involved in addressing conflict prevention and mediation in the region, and requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to bring about synergies and efficiencies. The Group will be interested to learn the measures taken so far including the existing arrangement and division of labor with regional actors in particular the African Union and East African Community.

13. With regard to the operational cost, the African Group is concerned with the continued unjustified increase of official travel, consultants and information technology costs. We will be interested to learn the details of each of the travel, composition of the team, role of each member of the team as well as cost elements during our informal consultations. The Group will also examine the details of each of the element under operational costs.

14. The Group would further like to stress the need for international community to continue to support ownership to the East African Community led process and focus more effort to the allocation of the resources to support the development programmes to enable Burundians achieve their development aspiration. We will also be interested to learn the arrangement to transfer residual activities to the country team beyond June 2017.

Madam Chairperson,

15. The African Group would like to stress the need for United Nations and its staff to implement the given mandate by strictly adhering to the principles of impartiality and observe the highest level of professionalism. We would also like to stress that any United Nations engagement in the country is conducted in full consent by the host government. We will appreciate to learn as what extent the proposal before us received consent from the key stakeholders in particular the host government and the sub-regional actors.

16. In conclusion, allow me to assure you of the African Group readiness to engage constructively in consideration of this important agenda item with a view to ensuring that the resources are allocated only where they are needed and are used in most efficient and effective manner.

I thank you,