Beat: Miscellaneous

African Union suspends Egypt after military coup

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USPA News - The African Union (AU) on Friday suspended Egypt from the continental body after President Mohamed Morsi`s government was overthrown by its army this week, violating the union`s rules against unconstitutional changes of government. The decision was made during a meeting of the union`s Peace and Security Council in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.

It comes days after massive anti-Morsi protests sparked a political crisis before the country`s army issued an ultimatum and eventually arrested Morsi, suspended the constitution and installed an interim government. The African Union has a number of instruments, including the 2000 Lome Declaration and the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, which provide for the automatic implementation of specific measures whenever an unconstitutional change of government occurs among one of its member states. "The overthrow of the democratically elected President does not confirm to the relevant provisions of the Egyptian Constitution and, therefore, falls under the definition of an unconstitutional change of Government," the communique said. "Accordingly ... Council decides to suspend the participation of Egypt in the AU`s activities until the restoration of constitutional order." The continental body, which has also suspended the Central African Republic, Madagascar and Guinea-Bissau, called on all Egyptian stakeholders to "embrace the spirit" of dialogue and mutual accommodation and to refrain from any acts of violence and retribution. It stressed all parties should work towards the fulfillment of the "legitimate aspirations" of the Egyptian people. "[The Council] encourages the Egyptian political actors to persevere on the path of national reconciliation that will contribute to a smooth preparation for elections leading to a return to constitutional order," the communique added. "In this regard, Council urges the new Egyptian authorities to engage, without delay, in inclusive consultations towards the adoption of a consensual timeframe for the organization of free, fair and transparent elections." On Thursday, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed once again to the people of Egypt to exercise restraint and pursue inclusive dialogue after the military coup. "At this moment of continued high tension and uncertainty in the country, I reiterate my appeals for calm, non-violence, dialogue and restraint," Ban said. The UN chief said that in their protests, many Egyptians voiced deep frustrations and legitimate concerns. "At the same time, military interference in the affairs of any State is of serious concern and is not consistent with fundamental democratic principles," he said, adding: "Therefore, it will be crucial to quickly reinforce civilian rule in accordance with principles of democracy." "We are following closely, and with continuing concern, the fast-moving developments in Egypt," Ban added, stressing that an inclusive approach is essential to addressing the needs and concerns of all Egyptians. "I think one key to a successful resolution of this crisis is inclusivity and any discussions, dialogue or governing bodies should include representatives from the wide spectrum of Egyptian politics." Prior to the military coup this week, the army had issued a 48-hour ultimatum to resolve the crisis and warned it would else be forced to step in to restore order. The threat came after Egypt had been rocked by escalating civil unrest for several days, resulting in huge rallies and deadly clashes between supporters and opponents of Morsi.

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