



Seminar Report

The reform of the Peace and Security Council

Seminar on the Reform of the Peace and Security Council

On 7 June 2018 Amani Africa Media and Research Services (Amani Africa) held its inaugural seminar with a focus on the reform of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU). Convened at Marriot Executive Apartments, the seminar brought together members of the Peace and Security Council, representatives of the UN Office to the AU, the European Union, members of the UN Security Council, AU member states and various embassies in Addis Ababa and civil society organizations.

Speakers at the Seminar, Dr Solomon Ayele Dersso, Founding Executive Director of Amani Africa and Elissa Jobson, International Crisis Group's Advisor on African Union Relations, delivered two presentations that provided the framework for the discussions at the seminar. Apart from contextualizing the ongoing discussions on the reform of the PSC within the ongoing AU reform that AU's current Chairperson, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, spearheads, the two representations identified the areas of work of the PSC requiring reform. These areas of reform, touching on the set up of the PSC, the politics and organization of its work and its working methods, if successful, are sure to elevate the ability and effectiveness of the PSC for living up to the ambitions that the PSC Protocol sets for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa.

The seminar offered an opportunity to have a close analysis and review of both the challenges affecting the effective functioning of the PSC and the possibilities for its effective reform. Both presentations affirmed that the norm to implementation gap is the central crisis facing the PSC. The PSC has been unable (and/or failed) to implement key provisions of the PSC Protocol. Its practice has also come to deviate from what the PSC Protocol provided for in various respects, thereby creating an increasing credibility and legitimacy gap. Thus, as Jobson rightly noted 'The AU doesn't need to completely reinvent the wheel – the 2002 Protocol on the PSC is a comprehensive and well-articulated document.' Hence, irrespective of its limitations, the full implementation of the Protocol is central for addressing the current inadequacies afflicting the PSC in the delivery of its mandate.

As both speakers observed, the starting point for the reform of the PSC should be addressing the lack of compliance with the criteria for membership provided for in Article 5(1) & (2) of the PSC Protocol. Dersso established from the data on the PSC that in practice the elections of members of the PSC is based almost solely on Article 5(1) on regional representation and rotation, thereby disregarding the rest of the criteria in Article 5(2). According to Jobson, of these Article 5(2) criteria, two of them ‘the **capacity and commitment** to shoulder the responsibilities entailed in membership and having **sufficiently staffed and equipped Permanent Missions** in Addis and New York for the United Nations – are essential for the PSC to do its job effectively.’

Where these are not complied with, Dersso explained, members of the PSC more often than not could not be able to effectively prepare, formulate and meaningfully deliberate on most relevant policy options for the PSC to take well considered decisions that they fully own and able to defend and implement. In the discussion that ensued, participants questioned the level of PSC members’ appreciation of the gravity and continental and global significance of the mandate of the PSC. They noted in particular the poor coordination with the UN Security Council and inadequate preparation for and weak engagement of PSC members on the policy issues on the agenda of the PSC. Participants also highlighted the imperative for full implementation of Article 5(2) criteria and the operationalization of the Conclusions of the Djibouti Retreat of the PSC calling for reviewing compliance with these criteria in the election of PSC members.

Another area highlighted for reform concerns the vertical and horizontal interface between the PSC and bodies with mandate that converges with that of the PSC. On the vertical axis, attention has been drawn on the various inadequacies of the existing framework(s) for the relationship between the AU and the regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution (regional economic communities/regional mechanisms (RECs/RMs)). The importance of allowing representatives of RECs/RMs (as provided for in the Conclusions of the Abuja Retreat of the PSC) and the African 3 members of the UNSC (A3) to be present in PSC deliberations has been underscored. Other proposals include the convening of the periodic meeting with the executive secretaries of RECs/RMs and joint consultative meetings with PSC counterparts in RECs/RMs. On

the horizontal axis, the lack of full implementation of the provisions of the PSC, including most notably Article 19 of the PSC Protocol, was noted.

The issue of agenda setting also received attention. It was observed in this regard that it remains unclear on what account the PSC gets seized with a particular situation but not another conflict situation or why the PSC has a much more regular engagement on some issues but not others. The importance of including in the working methods of the PSC clear requirement that the agenda of the PSC has to be drawn based on the assessment of ongoing or emerging conflict situations and must correspond to the prevailing peace and security situation on the continent. In relation to the early warning and conflict prevention role, which the PSC has been failing to deliver on, it was pointed out that situations that merit being on the council's agenda are not often on its agenda. One such ongoing case cited was the crisis in Cameroon. The discussion highlighted the need for defining in the conclusions of the next retreats of the PSC on its working methods of clear and transparent benchmarks and threshold criteria that trigger the placement of a situation on the agenda of the PSC.

Other areas discussed in the seminar include the lack of accountability and ownership (resulting from the consensus based approach to PSC decision-making and the inadequate participation of members in the drafting of the outcome of PSC sessions), the lack of framework for sanctions in the PSC conflict management toolbox for conflict situations other than those involving unconstitutional changes of government and the lack of operationalization of many of the PSC sub-committees.

While there has been consensus on the various areas identified for the reform of the PSC, concerns have been expressed on whether the PSC would reform. A participant observed if it would actually be good for the PSC to have permanent members. Others wondered if member states are interested in having a strong reformed PSC. Noting that the reform would not succeed in the absence of active role of member states, the seminar highlighted the critical importance of member states support for and buy in of the reform of the PSC.



The seminar ended with the founding director of Amani Africa thanking participants for their presence and the Embassies of Switzerland and Germany for their support.



Amani Africa is an independent Africa based policy research, training and consulting think tank that operates as the first and only institution with a specialization and primary focus on African multilateral policy processes relating to the African Union.

We support the pan-African dream of peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa through research, training, strategic communications, technical advisory services, convening and facilitation.

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