

13th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting of the AUPSC and EUPSC

13th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting of the AUPSC and EUPSC
Date | 10 June 2022

Tomorrow (10 June), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the European Union (EU) Political and Security Committee (EUPSC) will convene their 13th annual joint consultative meeting, preceded by the 5th joint retreat taking place today. With AU hosting this year's round of meetings, the consultative meeting will be taking place physically, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The AUPSC and EUPSC have been convening joint consultative meetings since 2008 in the context of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. These meetings mainly serve to discuss thematic and conflict related agendas of common interest to the two counterparts. Within that framework, previous joint consultative meetings have addressed thematic issues such as migration and terrorism and violent extremism as well as country/region focused situations including conflicts and crises in Libya, Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and others.

This year's joint consultative meeting is expected to commence with opening remarks by Chairperson of the AUPSC and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Congo to the AU, H.E Ambassador Daniel Owassa and the Permanent Chair of the EUPSC, Ambassador Delphine Pronk. The meeting is expected to address four country/region specific situations. These are situations in the Great Lakes Region (GLR), the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) and Sahel Region, Libya, and Somalia. It is to be recalled that the Sahel Region and Somalia were also on the agenda of the

previous joint consultative meeting convened on 26 October 2020, along with the situation in Sudan.

In relation to the GLR, Burundi is expected to be the lead speaker on behalf of the AUPSC. Insecurity in the GLR continues to be a matter of grave concern despite positive developments having been recorded in the areas of cooperation, integration and dialogue in the region. Dialogue between Burundi and Rwanda paving the way for reconciliation, and the normalisation of relations between Rwanda and Uganda through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2019 as well as the recent reopening of the Gatuna border are some of the examples of encouraging trends in regional cooperation and integration which may be welcomed. On the other hand, the AUPSC and EUPSC may take note of the recent tensions between Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda and call up on all relevant stakeholders including the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) for the DRC to engage both sides within the framework of the Nairobi process before the tensions grow any further. In this respect, AUPSC and EUPSC may also welcome the initiative of the AU Assembly that tasked the President of Angola, as Chairperson of the ICGLR, to engage both countries and the initiatives taken by Angola's President meeting with the leaders of both countries. As a measure of de-escalation, the two bodies may also welcome the report on the release of the two Rwandan soldiers taken from the border with the DRC.

On the security and humanitarian track, the operation of 'negative forces' in eastern DRC continues to destabilise the region creating a cycle of forced displacement. Intensified military activities of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an armed group implicated for affiliation with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and the resumption of military activities by the March 23 (M23) Movement have particularly been major causes for concern in the early months of 2022. In late March, following the resumption of its

activities, M23 expanded its operations over North Kivu at an alarming rate leading to the displacement of thousands of people. By the end of May 2022, the number of displaced persons as a result of the recent fighting in North Kivu had reached over 72,000. Operations by the ADF in North Kivu and Ituri provinces have also resulted in widespread violence against civilians including abductions and destruction and pillage of properties. According to data presented by the UN, the number of civilian deaths between June 2021 and March 2022 increased to at least 1,261 from 559 recorded for the period from June 2020 to March 2021, in North Kivu province. In this regard and as necessary measure for containing the crises involving these armed groups, the AUPSC and the EUPSC may also welcome and urge Kenya, as host of Nairobi process initiated to deal with the threat these negative forces present both through a diplomatic track and a security track, to convene the participants of the process towards supporting Rwanda and DRC in the effort to deescalate the growing tension between them and work on achieving political resolution of their disputes.

On the LCB and Sahel region, it is expected that Nigeria will take the lead speaking in representation of the AUPSC while Cameroon will be a supporting speaker on the agenda. The LCB and Sahel region are experiencing deteriorating security and humanitarian conditions. Despite the death of Abubakar Shekau – leader of Boko Haram's Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihad (JAS) faction – in May 2021, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a splinter Boko Haram faction took the opportunity to expand its operations by taking over former JAS territories and fighters. Taking an approach aimed at establishing itself as a better alternative to State authority, ISWAP's attacks have mainly been targeted against government forces and infrastructures while it extorts funding from civilian communities in its areas of operation, in exchange for essential services. Fighters from JAS have on the other hand continued attacks against civilian populations.

Terrorist insurgency and spread of violent extremism in the Sahel region also continue to frustrate military efforts including operations by the G5 Sahel Joint Force. A recent development worth reflecting on is also the decision of Malian transition authorities to withdraw from the G5 Sahel and its Joint Force and its consequent impact on regional security.

Despite some success attained in degrading insurgencies in the region, emerging trends in the means and methods used by terrorist groups have demonstrated the need for a more enhanced focus on non-military approaches that address, what our [latest report](#) called, the political and socio-economic pathologies that create grievances enabling the emergence and growth of terrorist insurgencies. The need for prioritising a multipronged political, socio-economic and humanitarian strategy towards whose fulfilment the security instruments are geared cannot be overemphasised. The important role of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the need for enhancing support for the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region (RSS) also remains key.

According to the UN, violence and insecurity across countries in the LCB has severely frustrated basic social services and natural resources leaving about 11 million people depending on humanitarian aid. As of April 2022, 4.1 million people in the region are facing food insecurity with 300,000 children severely malnourished. The insecurity induced humanitarian crisis in Sahel also continues to intensify. Burkina Faso in particular is faced with severe humanitarian condition, with the number of internally displaced persons reaching over nearly 2 million in 2022.

In addition to security challenges, 2021 and early 2022 have seen the Sahel region's political situation characterised by the upsurge in unconstitutional changes of government (UCG) and prolonged transitions. Coups in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea

and Mali have occupied much of the AUPSC's deliberations while relevant regional bodies – mainly the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) – have also been actively engaged in efforts aimed at returning constitutional order in these countries.

With regards to Libya, Morocco will be the lead speaker from AUPSC's side. The challenging political context, the fragile security situation and the dire condition of migrants are the main areas of concern the AUPSC and EUPSC may reflect on in relation to the situation in Libya. On the political front, the lack of agreement on the necessary legal framework for the conduct of the general elections which were scheduled to take place on 24 December 2021 have resulted in the postponement of the elections indefinitely. This has led to the challenge against the legitimacy of the interim Prime Minister based in the capital by the east-based House of Representatives which appointed a new Prime Minister, leading to the country's slide back to having parallel governments. While the rivalry between the two executives has not yet turned into full armed conflict, it has already rekindled economic, political and military disputes. The halt of the unification process of parallel security forces which was already facing significant challenges entails serious concerns to the sustainability of the October 2020 ceasefire agreement. Moreover, Russia has officially recognised the east-based government, reigniting divided foreign support for the two executives and taking the country back to the pre-October 2020 situation.

The challenge for AU and EU is to achieve a shared concern and perception of threat about the continuation of the crisis in Libya. Africa, particularly countries in the Sahel, have born and continue to bear the brunt of the fall out from the military campaign that precipitated the collapse of Libya in 2011. The marginalization of the AU from active role in the effort for resolving the crisis in Libya remains a source of disaffection in Addis Ababa. For the EU, the deterioration of

the political situation in Libya creates complications in the context of the confrontation with Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. First, it hampers Europe's plans to reduce dependence on Russian oil and gas by resorting to Libya as one of the main hydrocarbon suppliers. Second, the impasse between Libya's executives and the resulting insecurity will further fuel the migration crisis in the region. According to the International Organisation on Migration (IOM), the number of displaced persons in various parts of Libya had reached 635,051 by the end of January 2022. Given that no one actor can on its own address the complex political and security crisis in Libya, it is of particular significance that the AUPSC and EUPSC affirm the interest of each for the resolution of the crisis and the need for full involvement of the AU in the multilateral effort for achieving political resolution and national reconciliation in Libya.

Regarding Somalia, Djibouti will be lead speaker while Uganda will assume the role of supporting speaker from the side of the AUPSC. In Somalia, the completion of the much delayed parliamentary and presidential elections, with the appointment of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, has been a welcome progress. The final reconfiguration of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) is another milestone met in 2022 although the funding requirements for the new mission remain unmet. While the EU was a principal funder of AMISOM and has already committed to continue financing AU's peace support efforts in the spirit of the Joint AU-EU vision for 2030, EU's proposed funds for financing ATMIS are said to fall short of the required amount. Despite the progress noted in the political situation and AMISOM's transition, the security situation in Somalia remains volatile with Al-Shabaab sustaining its activities and carrying out intensified attacks throughout the country. The use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in its various areas of operation has particularly been a notable trend in Al-Shabaab's more recent attacks. In addition to civilian causality and humanitarian

toll due to insecurity, Somalia is also experiencing an escalating severe drought. According to the latest UN data, 4.8 million people are currently facing severe food insecurity while 4.2 million people are experiencing life-threatening water shortages.

The expected outcome of the meeting is a joint-communicé. With regards to the GLR, the AUPSC and EUPSC may urge the international community to strengthen support for the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). They may further highlight the importance of exploring parallel non-military approaches aimed at addressing underlying root-causes of conflict and instability in the region and commend countries of the GLR for the formation of the Contact and Coordination Group which is aimed at overseeing non-military measures to assist in the neutralisation of armed groups in eastern DRC. Regarding the LCB, in addition to reaffirming their commitment to support the Multi-National Joint Task Force against Boko Haram (MNJTF) and LCBC, the AUPSC and EUPSC may emphasise the importance of sustained support for the implementation of the Stabilization Strategy for the Lake Chad Basin in order to address the security and humanitarian crisis in the region in a comprehensive manner. Regarding Libya, they may stress the need for sustained efforts between the AU, EU and UN, with active and full participation of the AU, for the adoption of a comprehensive plan providing concrete steps towards resolving the dispute between the two parallel governments and providing the framework for the conduct of elections. They may also call on all relevant stakeholders including the UN Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to sustain the momentum on the implementation of the action plan adopted in October 2021 for the gradual and sequenced withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from the country. With respect to the political situation in the Sahel region, the two Councils may emphasise the importance of addressing the common underlying root causes of coups in the region such as democratic and governance deficits,

manipulation of constitutional term limits, damaged state-society relationships and grave violations of human rights and freedoms. They may further stress the instrumentality of addressing root causes for resolving the security challenges in the region including the high rate of terrorist insurgency. On Somalia, the two may welcome the completion of the national elections and congratulate the newly elected President. They may reflect on how sustainable, predictable and sufficient funding for ATMIS can be secured including through contributions through joint mobilisation of resources, including by leveraging the EU Peace Facility, which provides the lions share of financial support for ATMIS.