

Annual Informal Joint Seminar and Annual Joint Consultative Meeting of the PSC and the UNSC

Automatic Heading TextDate | 16 December, 2021

On 16 and 17 December, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the United Nations (UN) Security Council (UNSC) will convene their 6th annual informal joint seminar and 15th annual joint consultative meeting, respectively. Both meetings are expected to take place virtually.

While the idea of convening an informal joint seminar is relatively new and was first introduced in 2016, the two Councils have been convening a yearly joint consultative meeting since 2007. The informal joint seminar is held ahead of the joint consultative meeting and mainly serves to address issues of partnership between the two Councils. The consultative meeting on the other hand is dedicated to discussing country/region specific peace and security concerns in Africa. As per previous practice, technical experts of the two Councils held informal consultations in New York, during the week of 22 November, ahead of the upcoming informal seminar and consultative meeting. In addition to these consultations, the PSC has also conducted various preparatory meetings.

6th Annual Informal Joint Seminar

The 6th annual informal seminar is expected to start by the opening statement of the PSC Chairperson, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia and UNSC President, Permanent Representative of Niger. It is also expected that Bankole

Adeoye AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and Representative of the UN will deliver introductory remarks.

It is to be recalled that the main agenda items addressed at the 5th annual informal joint seminar included reflection on progress made in the implementation of AU's Master Roadmap for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 and UNSC Resolution 2457 as well as the continued implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in Africa, in line with UNSC Resolution 1325. The focus on WPS was also in light of commemoration of the 20th anniversary of UNSC Resolution 1325.

This year's informal joint seminar will focus on two agenda items. The first one will be predictable and sustainable financing for AU-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs). From the PSC side the lead speaker is expected to be Nigeria. The effectiveness of AU-led PSOs faces serious challenges due to the lack of sustainable and predictable funding. This has been an issue addressed by the PSC at various occasions including a number of its sessions. The AUPSC and UNSC have also deliberated on this topic at previous joint consultative meetings, most recently at the 12th annual joint consultative meeting convened in 2018. At that meeting, the importance of UNSC Resolutions 2320(2016) and 2378(2017) which emphasise the need of enhancing flexibility, predictability and sustainability of AU-led PSOs authorised by the UNSC in line with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter was underscored. Particularly in terms of flexibility of these funds, the need to consider and accommodate fitting responses to the changing nature of security threats in the continent may be highlighted.

The development of a zero draft AU consensus paper on financing of AU-led PSOs using UN assessed contributions may also be welcomed by the two Councils. It is to be recalled that the issue of financing AU-led PSOs was on the draft agenda of the 4th joint informal seminar but removed at the

proposal of the AUPSC which opted for the agenda to be considered after the development of an African common position on financing. In line with this decision the PSC has considered the consensus paper on financing of AU-led peace support operations using UN assessed contributions in October 2021, although no outcome document was adopted after the session.

The second topic to be discussed at the informal joint seminar is enhancing cooperation between the AUPSC and the UNSC, with a focus on working methods of the two Councils. The lead speakers from the PSC side may be Kenya and Egypt. One of the issues that may be noted in this regard is the importance of synchronising the monthly programmes of work of the AUPSC and UNSC on agenda items of common interest. The role of the African members of the UNSC (A3) is particularly important in enhancing coordination between the two Councils and in informing UNSC deliberation on African files.

Another issue that may feature is the need to reach agreement on modalities for joint-field missions of the Councils. This is an issue that has been addressed at previous consultative meetings although agreement is yet to be reached on the formulation of a workable mechanism for the two Councils to conduct joint visits. Doctrinal differences between the two Councils and the inability to agree on a joint approach has affected the conduct of joint field missions. More particularly the difference that seems to be delaying agreement in this regard is the preference of UNSC member States to engage in such visits as members of the UNSC as opposed to engaging as a unit. The PSC on the other hand prefers engagement of both itself and the UNSC in their capacities as Councils.

15th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting

The 15th annual consultative meeting is expected to start by the opening statement of the PSC Chairperson, Permanent

Representative of Ethiopia and UNSC President, Permanent Representative of Niger. It is also expected that Bankole Adeoye AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and Representative of the UN will deliver introductory remarks.

Last year's joint consultative meeting focused on two country/region specific security situations in Africa. These were the situations in Somalia and the Sahel region. This year's meeting will also address these two situations in addition to two other agenda items – one being combating terrorism and violent extremism in Africa and the other one focusing on support to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission to Mozambique (SAMIM).

The first agenda item to be discussed is AMISOM post-2021. From the PSC side Kenya is expected to be lead speaker. Egypt and Ethiopia are also expected to speak on this specific agenda item. The two Councils are expected to deliberate on the nature of AMISOM after the expiry of the current mandate. There has been a continuous consultation and negotiation between the two Councils on the outcome of the meeting and one of the points of disagreement is around language related to Somalia and the issue of predictable and sustainable financing of AMISOM.

It is to be recalled that the UN Independent Assessment team recommended a reconfigured AMISOM. On the other hand, the AU Independent Assessment team recommended the establishment of an AU-UN Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Somalia. Although this recommended option was rejected by the Government of Somalia over concerns that it lacked adequate consultation with the government and that it deviates from the terms of the Somalia Transitional Plan (STP), it was however endorsed by the PSC at its 1037th session. Moreover, the PSC, during its 1042nd session has reiterated its previous call for consultation on modalities for transitioning to an AU-UN joint mission and it mandated the AUC to 'elaborate the framework of

the AU understanding of the Concept of the Hybrid Mission and submit to Council'.

During PSC's field visit in November, representatives of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and other international partners have expressed their disagreement to the establishment of an AU-UN Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Somalia. In order to address the stalemate and towards building consensus there was a proposal of holding technical discussions to identify possible alternative options. The field mission report was considered by the PSC at its 1053rd meeting where the PSC while underscoring that Option 1 previously endorsed at its 1037th session remains the best option to ensure predictable and sustainable financing for the mission, it however recognized the preference of FGS, the UN as well as international partners. To this end, it required AUC's continued consultations with the UN on the Joint Report and Concept of Operations for AMISOM post-2021 follow on mission. This decision is expected to inform and guide the consultative meeting.

As these differences persist, the deadline for AMISOM's mandate is fast approaching. In line with that, the PSC has requested at its 1037th for the UNSC to consider a technical roll-over of the mission's mandate, while consultations between the AU, the FGS and other relevant actors to reach mutually agreeable position on the future of AMISOM continue.

In addition to AMISOM's future, the continued deterioration of the country's security with upsurge in Al-Shabaab insurgency and the fragility of the political situation are also expected to feature as points of discussion.

On the Sahel region, from the PSC members Algeria is expected to be the lead speaker and Kenya is also expected to speak. The Councils are expected to deliberate on the concerning continuity of instability in the region. As Chad and Niger continue to deal with Boko Haram threats, the border area

between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger also remains the focal area of terrorist activities. Over the past few months, Burkina Faso has been experiencing the deadliest jihadist attacks in the country's six years long fight against extremist militants. The attacks have so far claimed the lives of civilians and members of the country's security forces. In addition to insecurity brought by terrorism and violent extremism, political instabilities have also had serious implications against the security of particular States in the region as well as the Sahel at large. Mali and Chad, both currently undergoing political transitions, have recently experienced coups which have raised serious condemnation from the international community.

France's announced drawdown of Operation Barkhane from 5,100 troops to about 2,500 troops following Mali's coup – a second one in less than a year after the August 2020 coup – and its potential implication to the security and stability of the region has in particular been cause for concern. Chad has also recalled 600 of the 1,200 forces it contributed to the G5 Sahel Joint Force earlier in the year, intensifying these concerns. Having regard to the dire security situation in the region, the two Councils may call on the international community to redouble its support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force as well as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). They may also draw attention to the insecurity-induced humanitarian situation in the region and urge the international community to strengthen its support to affected communities.

The third agenda item will be focusing on combatting terrorism and violent extremism. From PSC members Egypt is expected to be the lead speaker. Algeria and Cameroon are also expected to speak. The thematic agenda on terrorism has received increased attention of the PSC over recent years. So far, the theme has been addressed at the summit level three times (at PSC's 455th, 571st, and 749th meetings), making it a theme most addressed at summit level. In 2021, the PSC has convened two

sessions on the topic, both of which were convened at the ministerial level. As the findings of the AU Commission Chairperson's report on 'Continental Efforts in Preventing and Combating of Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa' presented at PSC's 1040th session demonstrate, there is a concerning spread in terrorism as well as extremist ideologies in the continent, warranting the increased attention by the PSC. The two Councils will thus likely emphasise the importance of addressing underlying root-causes of extremism which is conducive for terrorism. They may also address factors facilitating terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, including terrorism financing and the link between terrorism and transnational organised crimes, as well as the spill over effect of terrorism in the middle-east and its contribution to the prevalence of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in Africa, particularly Libya. As the deadline for withdrawal of foreign fighters from Libya in line with the October 2020 Ceasefire Agreement approached, the impact of such withdrawal on the rest of the continent, mainly the Sahel region imposed a serious concern leading to discussions both by the PSC and UNSC.

While the PSC committed its 1035th ministerial session to address this concern, the UNSC also convened an Arria-formula meeting on 18 June on the same topic. In that regard, the Councils may welcome the signing of a Plan of Action on 08 October 2021 to ensure a "gradual, balanced, and sequenced" withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya and urge all relevant actors to ensure its timely and proper implementation. With regards to terrorism financing in Africa, the two Councils may discuss ways of stemming financial sources of terrorists, including transnational criminal organisations, through coordination and collaboration among organs such as AFRIPOL and INTERPOL. Measures highlighted in the Communiqué of PSC's 1040th session including the expedited development of African list of persons and entities associated with terrorism and the development of an African Arrest

warrant are also crucial measures that will require the collaboration of the international community, including the UNSC.

The last agenda item will focus on SAMIM and Lesotho is expected to be the lead speaker from the PSC members. The Councils are likely to focus on identifying areas of support and engagement with the mission. Since its mandating and deployment by SADC in mid-July 2021, SAMIM has been able to register important milestones in its fight against terrorists in the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique, including the recapture of key villages and dislodging of terrorist bases. Nonetheless, studies indicate that the force faces various complex challenges ranging from limited understanding of the landscape, to major intelligence deficits.

The most pressing challenge however relates to limitations in funding. The mission's deployment was financed through SADC contingency funds and member States' contributions for the initial three months period of its mandate. Following SADC's renewal of the mission's mandate for another three months as of early October, there have been concerns that external funding will be required for its continued operation provided that the funds availed for the initial three months were already insufficient. In light of that, the Councils may explore ways of collaborating with SADC in providing technical and financial support to SAMIM and also call on the international community and SADC partners to provide assistance in this regard, particularly in the area of SAMIM's mandate to collaborate with humanitarian organisations in the provision of humanitarian relief to populations affected by terrorist activities.

Based on previous practice, it is expected that the Councils will issue a joint-communiqué highlighting the main points of their deliberation. The draft communiqué has been under negotiation and it is expected to be adopted at the end of the annual consultative meeting. It is however worth noting that

last year's joint-communicé has been rather brief as compared to those issued in previous years, which provided more details of issues discussed. Negotiations regarding the contents of the joint-communicés have also at times been challenging, resulting in considerable delays including the ones for the annual consultation in 2016 and 2017. In other instances, the two Councils were not able to adopt the communiqué in 2019.