

Annual Informal Consultative Meeting between the AUPSC and the UN Peace Building Commission (UNPBC)

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Tomorrow (23 October) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is scheduled to hold its annual informal consultative meeting with the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). The informal consultation is the second agenda item of the 958th PSC session and is expected to take place virtually.

The annual informal consultative meeting takes place in the form of a panel discussion, which will be co-facilitated by the Chairperson of the AUPSC Osama Abdel-Khalek and the Chairperson of the UNPBC Bob Rae. Following opening remarks by the two chairs, Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Hanna Tetteh, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the AU and Oscar Fernandez-Taranco UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support are expected to deliver a briefing. This will be followed by interventions from the AUPSC and the PBC. A concept note has been circulated to guide the informal consultation.

The Council and the Commission have been holding their consultations over the last couple of years with a view to forging cooperation in support of peacebuilding efforts in Africa. Most of the country specific, regional, and thematic issues under consideration by the PBC are focused on the African continent. Four African countries – Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Guinea-Bissau, and Liberia – will remain on the agenda of the PBC, with the exit of Guinea and eventually

Sierra Leone. These and other African countries have over the years benefited from the financial assistance of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.

There are several instruments, which have been guiding the cooperation between the AUPSC and the PBC. The concurrent resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (70/262) and the Security Council (2282) in 2016 following the review of the United Nations Peacebuilding architecture underscored the importance of partnership between the Commission and the African Union and its regional mechanisms in support of peacebuilding in Africa. The African Union has also the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Peacebuilding Policy Framework adopted in 2006. The AU initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa is also significant and the Security Council through the adoption of resolution 2457 (2019) expressed strong support for this initiative. Furthermore, the United Nations and the African Union signed a Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and MoU on peacebuilding in 2018.

It is within this overall framework that the annual meeting takes place on Friday. What makes the meeting particularly important is that it is happening at a time when Africa is facing serious challenges on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in terms of the various post-conflict countries and regions, particularly in west Africa and the Sahel region, the Lake Chad Basin, Central Africa and the Great Lakes. The situation has also been further compounded by the multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 pandemics. The PBC has been discussing this important issue over the last couple of months and what has come out clearly in these discussions was the need for stronger partnerships, particularly with regional organizations and International Financial Institutions to better respond to the impact of the pandemic.

The annual AUPSC-PBC meeting also takes place at the backdrop of the 2020 review of the United Nations peacebuilding

architecture and intergovernmental consultations have already started in New York under the co-facilitation of New Zealand and St. Vincent and the Grenadines to achieve the broadest possible consensus among member States on the review process. The co-facilitators have circulated a zero-draft resolution for member State's consideration.

The AUPSC has already adopted a Common African Position on the review at its 948th meeting on 22 September 2020, underscoring that the review should consider practical means for enabling the AU to exercise ownership of PCRD efforts and engagements on the Continent; ensuring closer collaboration and information-sharing on operational and programmatic engagements; and enhancing national and continental African capacities for planning and implementation of programmes and projects designed to address context-specific cross border challenges and sub-regional dimensions of peacebuilding. The PSC instructed the Commission to transmit the Report of the Chairperson on the Common African Position on the 2020 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, towards an enhanced global peacebuilding system to the African Group in New York, to guide and advance its engagement in the negotiations on the review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture.

The Common African Position is indeed an important contribution to the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture sharing Africa's views and perspectives on enhancing the global peacebuilding system. It was a result of thorough reflection on the AU's experience over the past two decades in peacebuilding in Africa underscoring the "indispensability of national ownership and leadership of peacebuilding process; the importance of effective partnership in support of peacebuilding; the imperative for institution building and financing, and a strong emphasis on impact, through implementation at the field level". It provided specific recommendations on how to strengthen the global peacebuilding architecture in line with Africa's own

priorities.

The hope and expectation is that these priorities will be taken on board during the review process. The role of the African Group in New York is going to be critical in making sure that they are adequately reflected in the intergovernmental consultations, which are currently underway. The African Caucus on Peacebuilding is said to have already made proposals on Financing and Partnerships for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace and Institution Building and System-Wide Engagement for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, to the informal phase of the review. The AU Commission is also said to have submitted inputs on "Financing and Partnerships for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace". The annual meeting will provide yet another opportunity for members of the AUPSC to advance Africa's views and perspectives on the review based on the common position.

According to the draft concept note prepared for the annual meeting, the Council and the Commission are expected to identify ways of further enhancing synergies between the two bodies in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Africa, building on the ongoing UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review and the Common African Position on Peacebuilding. They are also expected to examine ongoing AU and UN efforts to help address the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts in Africa, including under the framework of Silencing the Guns and particularly in regions under the consideration of the PBC (West Africa and the Sahel; Central Africa; Lake Chad Basin; and the Great Lakes), with a focus on the role of women and youth.

This is indeed a landmark year for Women, among others, because of the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the 20th anniversary of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on the Women, Peace and Security agenda adopted by the United Nations Security Council. Series of activities are being organized to

mark these important events. Both the AUPSC and the PBC had also held meetings over the course of this month focusing on women, peace, and security. The meeting between the AUPSC and PBC provides yet another opportunity to highlight this issue in the context of the country specific, regional, and thematic issues under consideration by the PBC.

The expected outcome may be in a form of a joint press statement. The outcome document may call on the need to enhance the strategic partnership to ensure the provision of a comprehensive peacebuilding support to countries emerging from conflict. It may further call on efforts to address the adverse impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding in Africa and prevent the risks of relapse to conflict. It may underline that sustainable peace requires addressing root causes of conflict through coordinated security and development efforts. The document may reiterate the key components of the Common African Position on peacebuilding and underline the importance of supporting a global peacebuilding architecture that accommodates Africa's priorities. The joint statement may also highlight the need to further clarify the format of the annual informal consultation between the PSC and PBC.