

Annual Informal Joint Seminar and Annual Joint Consultative Meeting between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council

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Members of the AUPSC will be travelling to New York this week to take part in the 16th joint annual consultative meeting between the Security Council and the AUPSC which will be held on 14 October 2022. The annual meeting rotates between Addis Ababa and New York, and this year New York will be hosting the meeting in-person. Because of the COVID situation, the meeting was held via video teleconference for the last two years.

7th Informal Seminar

The annual consultative meeting between the two Councils will be preceded by the seventh informal joint seminar which will be held on 13 October 2022. The joint seminar will allow the two Councils to reflect on how they can enhance cooperation in peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Africa. One of the items for discussion during the informal session is the perennial issue of working methods. The issue of the modalities for implementing their decision to undertake joint field missions, follow up on the conclusions of the consultative meeting and the status of the joint communique are among the various working methods issues. The informal seminar will also discuss on developing an African common agenda between the two Councils. Other issues of common interest expected to receive

attention include strengthening AU and UN peace support operations and promotion of peacebuilding in Africa.

Ahead of the annual meeting, the Security Council is also expected to hold its annual debate on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations, focusing on the partnership with the African Union on 11 October 2022. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on "Strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa, including on the work of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU)", which was published on 25 August, will be the basis for discussion at the debate. In addition, the Gabon Security Council Presidency wants to highlight the 20th anniversary of the African Union during the meeting and facilitate a discussion on how to strengthen the partnership between the UN and the AU in support of 'a constructive multilateral world'. Lately, there has been renewed momentum in the discussion on UN Security Council reform in New York. Therefore, Gabon intends to capitalize on this and foster discussion on this issue with a view to advancing Africa's longstanding position as encapsulated in the Ezilwini consensus.

16th Annual Consultative Meeting

The consultative meeting will be held the following day on 14 October. After consultations through exchange of letters, the two Councils have agreed on the agenda items for their annual consultative meeting. Accordingly, they are expected to discuss the situations in West Africa and the Sahel and in the Great Lakes region, the application of sanctions in conflict situations in Africa and the strengthening of AU and UN peace support operations in Africa.

On West Africa and the Sahel, the growing threat of terrorism and violent extremism as well as unconstitutional changes of government will likely attract the attention of the two

Councils. It is to be recalled that the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) have jointly launched an Independent High-Level Panel on Security, Governance and Development in the Sahel in September to provide recommendations on how to effectively respond to the challenges facing the region. The High-Level Panel is chaired by the former President of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou and its report, due to come out early next year, will likely inform future discussions and how coordinated action by these organizations to address the multiple and complex challenges facing west Africa and the Sahel can be mobilized.

In terms of the situation in the Great Lakes region, the two Councils will have focused discussion on developments in DRC and the Central African Republic. The resurgence of the M23 Movement in eastern DRC and the subsequent tension between DRC and Rwanda has been a major preoccupation in recent months. The PSC held a session on the situation in August. The two Councils may discuss the ongoing regional initiatives through the Nairobi process under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC) and the Luanda mediation initiative under the leadership of the Angolan President João Lourenço. Angolan President João Lourenço, current Chair of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). In the context of the Nairobi process, the EAC Heads of State have been trying to address the security challenge in eastern DRC in two tracks through the facilitation of political dialogue between the DRC and armed groups and the deployment of a regional force to fight armed groups which refuse to engage in the dialogue process. The EAC regional force is expected to be deployed for an initial period of six months. Burundi has already deployed a battalion in eastern DRC as part of the regional force and Kenya is expected to follow in the near future. On 6 July, President Lourenço hosted Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame in Luanda for talks which culminated with the adoption of a

roadmap outlining steps to be taken by the two countries and the region to address the security situation in eastern DRC.

In Central African Republic, the implementation of the 2019 political agreement and the Luanda roadmap adopted by the ICGLR remains critical. The republican dialogue promised by President Faustin Touadera following his reelection took place in March 2022 but it was boycotted by several opposition parties and civil society groups. One of the controversial issues during the republican dialogue was a proposal for revising the constitution which was rejected by opposition parties and civil society representatives. However, the government has been organizing public demonstrations in support of amending the constitution through a referendum. This led to the formation of a committee to draft a new constitution but opposition parties and civil society groups continue to oppose this move. Subsequently, the initiative was also challenged before the Constitutional Court, which rejected proposals seeking to extend term limits as unconstitutional. Local elections are expected to take place early next year for the first time in several decades but funding has been a major constraint. The security situation in the country also remains very fragile and reports about gross violations of human rights and conflict related sexual violence are a major concern. These issues are likely to elicit discussion at the annual consultative meeting.

Regarding the application of sanctions, the AUPSC and the African regional mechanisms have been calling on the Security Council to lift the sanctions imposed on some African countries. Examples in this respect include the Central African Republic and South Sudan. Accordingly, the three African members of the Security Council (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya) have been raising this issue. This has impacted recent negotiations on extending sanctions regimes resulting in the abstention of African members on votes renewing the sanctions on some African countries. For example, last May, Gabon and

Kenya abstained the resolution renewing the arms embargo and travel and financial sanctions on targeted individuals. This is expected to be a controversial topic during the annual meeting. While some Council members support the African members on this issue, several others do not necessarily share the same view.

Recently, there has been renewed interest regarding the financing of AU led peace support operations in both Councils. It is to be recalled that African members of the Security Council had proposed a draft resolution in December 2018 to advance the issue but the US threatened to block it using its veto power. In 2019, South Africa tried to facilitate progress but the AUPSC called for suspension of this effort until it comes up with a common position on the matter. Since then, a draft common position paper has been in the works but there seems to be an urgent need to finalize it in light of the 31 August Security Council presidential statement. This is going to be critical as efforts continue to push for a concrete outcome following the upcoming report of the Secretary-General in April. Unlike 2018, there appears to be an interest on the part of the Biden administration to make progress on this issue.

Barring major disagreement, it is expected that the two Councils will adopt a joint communique building on last year's annual consultative meeting that succeeded in issuing the joint communique promptly. The AUPSC Committee of Experts, who already travelled to New York in preparation for the annual meeting, are expected to hold consultations with their Security Council counterparts on 11 October 2022 to finalize the draft which covers the above-mentioned topics.