

Briefing by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

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Tomorrow (5 March) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to receive a briefing from the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) on the reports of peer reviewed member states. The Chairperson of the African Peer Review Panel of Eminent Persons Ibrahim Gambari is expected to make a presentation.

The APRM has briefed the PSC for the first time on 19 December 2018 at the 819th PSC session. The PSC recognized 'the importance of the APRM as one of the most effective mechanisms for promoting conflict prevention, as it contributes in addressing some of the structural root causes of conflicts'. Hence tomorrow's briefing is expected to look into the role of APRM in early warning and on how in partnership with other African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) components it may contribute to conflict prevention efforts.

The Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and the Panel of the Wise (PoW) are the two key components in the APSA that have the central mandate to avert conflicts and crises, escalation of tensions and relapses to conflict. Both CEWS and PoW report to the PSC and particularly CEWS has the responsibility of providing regular horizon scanning briefings on peace and security trends and imminent threats across the continent. Moreover, Peace and Security Department (Conflict Early Warning and Prevention Division) has developed Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework (CSCPF).

Towards operationalizing this framework, the Department has also developed the country structural vulnerability assessment (CSV A) and structural vulnerability mitigation strategy (SVMS). These existing instruments are also expected to serve

as complementary mechanisms to APRM's work in ensuring that the PSC adopts a more preemptive approach than a reactive conflict response.

In addition to the APSA elements, the PSC briefings by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) on election form another layer of conflict prevention mechanism particularly in relation to mitigating contested electoral processes and post-electoral violence. Hence, in the briefing the APRM may also highlight the extent to which harmonization can be created among the relevant actors both within the AUC and policy organs to provide regular briefing and reporting to the PSC.

Gambari's presentation may also cover the outcome of the recently concluded workshop on 'Positioning the APRM as an early Warning Tool For Conflict Prevention'. The meeting was held within the context of the AU 2020 theme, Silencing the Guns and anchored in the Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec.686(XXX) which welcomed the harmony and synergy between the APRM, the APSA, and the African Governance Architecture (AGA). One of the key outputs of the workshop, which will be presented by the APRM representative, is the APRM Framework on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention.

In addition to the coordination with APSA and AGA, the presentation may also cover the ways in which the APRM coordinates with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs). Given the increasing centrality of RECs/RMs in the AU policy space and more particularly with the PSC, there is a need to also include RECs engagement in the wider conflict prevention roadmap. The PSC may recall its previous session with RECs, which has agreed to develop 'modalities for undertaking early responses to looming crisis and expediting action to resolve/mitigate blown out crises/conflicts'. In this respect the coordination both at the PSC level but also at the decision making organ at the RECs level may provide a comprehensive and multi-layered approach.

The APRM Framework on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention is expected to serve as an overarching instrument to map the relevant actors that will work closely with the APRM and to solidify harmonization among them.

The second issue that may be considered tomorrow is around seeking clarity on the notion of popular uprising and on modalities of responses. In 2019 the PSC at its 871st held a brainstorming session on the concept of popular uprising. The PSC indicated the lack of an agreed upon definition of 'popular uprising' as well as the absence of an AU normative framework that articulates the concept. Nonetheless, popular uprising has increasingly shaped political transition and democratization in many African countries. Hence, recognizing the importance of the phenomenon and in order to address the conceptual and normative gap the Council has tasked the Commission in collaboration with the APRM to prepare and submit a draft AU framework on popular uprising.

When developing a conceptual framework it is important to also address issues related to legitimacy. Previous initiatives such as the AU High-level Panel on Egypt in June 2014 has made recommendations on what kind of conditions make popular uprisings compatible with existing AU norms. Building on such recommendations and through the technical expertise of DPA and the legal counsel the framework can be formulated and presented to the PSC. The APRM on its part may present key elements that need to be included in the draft AU framework. It may identify a number of measures to address structural causes leading to popular uprising as well as actions for effective response when such developments take place.

The presentation is also expected to highlight the various activities undertaken by the mechanism including the reviews of member states. In this regard it may stress the importance of not only increasing number of participating member states in the APRM but also expanding reviews of members and increasing the regularity of reviews.

The outcome of the recently concluded 29th Summit of the African Peer Review Forum of Heads of State and Government, which was held at the margins of the AU Summit, may also feature.

The expected outcome is a communiqué. The PSC may decide to institutionalize its engagement with the APRM through regular briefings. It may welcome the efforts towards strengthening APRM's role as a conflict prevention tool and it may stress the need for harmonization with the relevant APSA and AGA components to ensure a more effective and coordinated conflict prevention approach. It may welcome the presentation on popular uprising and may call for the finalization of the draft framework to be considered and adopted. It may call for member states that have not acceded to the APRM to do so and complete their regular reviews.