

Briefing by the Panel of the Wise on its Mission to Chad

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| 11 May 2023

Tomorrow (11 May) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1152nd session and it is expected to receive a briefing by the Panel of the Wise on its mission to Chad.

Following the opening remark of the PSC Chairperson for May, Uganda's Permanent Representative to the AU, Rebecca Otengo, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye is expected to deliver a statement. Domitian Ndayizeye, Chairperson of the 5th Panel of the Wise is expected to present the findings of the report. Gabon as the Chair of Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) may also make a statement. Representative of Chad as a country concerned may also make an intervention.

This will be the second briefing by the Panel of Wise to the PSC in 2023. In March 2023 the Panel delivered a briefing at PSC's ministerial session, on its activities in preventive diplomacy and early warning. Tomorrow's briefing will specifically focus on its findings from the mission it conducted in Chad.

This session is taking place six month after PSC's session dedicated on the situation in Chad. It is to be recalled that on 11 November, the PSC held its 1121st session and one of the agenda items that it deliberated on was the situation in Chad. The session was held a month after Chad's national dialogue forum, which was boycotted by major opposition actors, announced the extension of the transitional period until 2024

and also declared the eligibility of members of the Transitional Military Committee in the country's elections. Despite the breach of the conditions set by the PSC which were clearly articulated during its 1106th session, the PSC was unable to reach consensus on the kind of measure to take in response to the developments in Chad. The meeting held on 11 November was adjourned after a prolonged deliberation. The PSC held another meeting on 30 November in which it released a press statement mandating the Panel 'to gather first-hand information, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders on the ground and brief the Council'.

It is against this background that the Panel has undertaken a mission to Chad between 12-18 March, following PSC's decision in November. The briefing is expected to highlight the Panel's findings with respect to the outcome of Chad's national dialogue, particularly in relation to the duration of the transition period and the participation of members of the Military Council in the election that is expected to take place at the end of the transition phase. The Panel may provide further details on aspects related to the drafting of a new constitution and in relation to election timetable.

One important element that was missing in the press statement of the PSC but one that members may wish to raise is the killing of protestors on 20 October and the repression that followed. The government violent crackdown has led to the mass arrest and trial of about 400 people in Koro Toro prison, a remote location away from the capital. Following the violence and the killings, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has launched an investigation, although rights groups in the country have expressed their reservation on the independence of the inquiry. However, the repression has continued, authorities have also detained military officers and the president of the Chadian Organization of Human Rights over their alleged attempt to destabilize the country.

An emerging issue that did not form part of the Panel's mission, but one that may be of interest to PSC members is the recent development in Sudan and the implication it may have on the security and humanitarian situation in Chad and in the political transition of the country. Both Sudan and Chad are experiencing an extended and fragile political transition and both have experienced recurrent instability in their respective regions. The two countries share border and historical ties. Both are susceptible to the insecurity along their border and with the crisis in Sudan there is rising concern in N'Djamena on the implication it may have on the operations of rebel forces in Chad. The increased presence of the Rapid Support Forces in border areas had heightened the tension between the two countries which prompted the two transition leaders to agree on joint patrols of their armies. However, with a protracted crisis in Sudan there is also a high potential for the instability to spillover to Chad as well and affect the fragile political transition.

It is to be recalled that in 2022 August prior to the launch of the national dialogue, the military government in Chad has signed an agreement with various rebel groups. However, one of the main groups the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) has refused to be part of the agreement. While the transition authority has made efforts in reconciling with the different armed groups, many still remain active and a new group has emerged in areas bordering Central Africa Republic. With these forces in the country and the increased volatility of Sudan may create unease for the transition authorities. Potentially, the security developments in the region may also divert the attention from the transitional process in Chad and may even potentially be used as pretext to further intensify power consolidation and repression of opposition forces.

On the other hand, the humanitarian aspect is also an area which is expected to be affected. Chad is already hosting about 400,000 refugees from Sudan and it is expected to

receive another influx of refugees with the rising insecurity in the neighboring country. This adds further strain to an already dire humanitarian condition in Chad.

The expected outcome is a communique. The PSC may take note of the report of the Panel of the Wise on its mission to Chad. The PSC may also note the various developments in the region and their risks to the transition process in Chad. The PSC may reiterate its zero tolerance to any form of unconstitutional change of government. The PSC may reiterate its previous decisions and conditions it has set for the transition government. Based on the findings of the Panel, the PSC may call on the head of the TMC and the members to honor their commitments not to run for election. The PSC may urge Chadian authorities to ensure inclusivity in the transition process and in the preparation for the electoral process. The PSC may condemn the political repression and heavy crackdown by security forces on civilian population. It may urge the transition authorities to ensure the respect and protection of human rights of citizens. It may call on the AUC in close collaboration with ECCAS to scale up its support to the political transition in Chad.