

# Briefing on the activities of the AFCONE and CTBTO

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Tomorrow (16 December), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to convene its 1127<sup>th</sup> session to receive briefing on the activities of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

Following opening remarks of the Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month, Victor Adekunle Adeleke, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye is expected to deliver a statement. Representatives of AFCONE and CTBTO are expected to brief the PSC. Representatives of the United Nations (UN) Office to the AU (UNOAU) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) may also make statement in the opening segment of the session.

The last time PSC convened to discuss updates regarding the activities of AFCONE and implementation of the African Nuclear-Weapon Free-Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty) was in March 2022, at its 1071<sup>st</sup> session. As expressed in the [Communiqué](#) of the session, recent developments geopolitical developments indicative of possible use of nuclear weapons have triggered the PSC's concern over the impact of such developments on peace, security and humanitarian efforts, globally and in Africa in particular. One of the important outcomes of the session was the PSC's call for joint action between relevant international and regional actors including AFCONE, IAEA, UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and CTBTO in undertaking implementation efforts for nuclear

disarmament and non-proliferation. Tomorrow's session is expected to follow up on-going efforts including collaborations among relevant actors towards ensuring nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

One area of update the PSC may be briefed on at tomorrow's session is the discussions of the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) which took place from 1 to 26 August 2022, in New York. Although the conference came to an end without the adoption of any concrete outcome document due to Russia's opposition to the draft tabled by the presidency, the occasion did serve to renew commitments made in the treaty to 'prevent the spread of nuclear weapons' and to 'promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy'. Representing the AU Commission and AU States Parties to NPT, AFCONE submitted a statement to the Tenth Review Conference of NPT which among other points, emphasised the importance of Nuclear Weapons Free Zones (NWFZ) and encouraged the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) to 'prioritize efforts towards ratification of all the applicable protocols of all the NWFZ Treaties.'

Regarding implementation of Pelindaba Treaty – one of the five global NWFZ Treaties – AFCONE may update the PSC about ongoing efforts to ensure ratification of the treaty by all AU member States in order to boost its implementation. As indicated in Amani Africa's [previous insight](#) on PSC's 1071<sup>st</sup> session, 11 AU member States are yet to ratify the Pelindaba Treaty. Further to contributing towards global non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and creating conditions for sustaining peace and security, the full implementation of the Pelindaba Treaty would also significantly advance socio-economic development in Africa, through promoting cooperation on the use and application of nuclear energy in critical fields such as power generation, agriculture and various industrial endeavours. The treaty could serve as an essential step for member States to forge a common goal and establish

the necessary mechanisms for advancing nuclear science and technology. As noted by the AFCONE in its reflections on the Tenth Review Conference of the NPT, the peaceful application of nuclear power and technology could 'meaningfully contribute to the achievement of a country's socio-economic development goals, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the African Union's Agenda 2063'.

Regarding the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the CTBTO may update the PSC on the significant increase achieved in the signature and ratification of the treaty in Africa. Currently, 51 African States have signed the CTBT while 50 of these have ratified it. Within the framework of international nuclear arms control and disarmament and having regard to the fact that nuclear testing is a key step in the development of nuclear weapons, the CTBT bans the testing and explosion of nuclear weapons globally, be it above ground, under water and/or underground. The treaty is however yet to enter into force as ratification by eight States is still pending (these are China, North Korea, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States). The CTBT's entry into force would be critical both for enhancing implementation of the NPT and to contain threats and use of nuclear weapons that have currently become causes for serious concern.

In its efforts to detect nuclear explosions around the world, the CTBTO has also mobilised 38 monitoring facilities in 24 African countries within the framework of its International Monitoring System. While these have been commendable steps, it is important to ensure that better collaboration and coordination exists between the CTBTO and AFCONE in order to have a coherent approach for nuclear weapons non-proliferation and disarmament in Africa.

In addition, while the CTBT would considerably contribute towards the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons both in Africa and the world, it is important to ensure clarity on the difference between efforts aimed at peaceful use of nuclear

energy on the one hand and nuclear testing for the purposes of developing nuclear weapons on the other. As emphasised in AFCONE's reflections on the Tenth Review Conference of NTP, it is essential to 'guard against attempts to deny technology, especially to developing countries, under the guise of non-proliferation or nuclear security measures' and that States Parties should 'guard against any reinterpretation of, or restrictions on, the inalienable right of States to pursue the peaceful uses of nuclear technology'.

Another critical aspect the PSC may wish to reflect on is the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons. The destructive impact of nuclear weapons on human life and livelihood – including aspects related to environment, health and development – is an already well-established factor. However, recalling past experiences such as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings as well as the Chernobyl nuclear incident and the devastating humanitarian impacts they entailed is critical in order to keep relevant global actors from engaging in a destructive nuclear discourse.

The expected outcome of tomorrow's session is a Communiqué. The PSC is expected to commend AFCONE and the CTBTO for their continued efforts to ensure non-proliferation of nuclear weapons both in Africa and globally. It may welcome the conclusion of the Tenth Review Conference of NPT and commend AFCONE for contributing to the review on behalf of the AU Commission and African States Parties. It may express regret however, over the lack of consensus faced in adopting an outcome document at the Tenth Review Conference, which makes it second time in a row, following the Ninth Review Conference of 2015 which also unfortunately came to an end without agreement on a substantive final declaration. The PSC may also call on AFCONE, CTBTO and IAEA to better coordinate their efforts. It may also reiterate its call to AFCONE, working in collaboration with the AU Commission and other relevant stakeholders including the IAEA, to mobilise resources and

technical expertise to member States to advance and promote use of nuclear science and technology for peaceful and developmental purposes.