

Briefing on the Continental Early Warning and Security Outlook in the Continent

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Tomorrow (6 April), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1073rd session to receive a briefing on the Continental Early Warning and Security Outlook in the Continent.

Following an opening remark by Willy Nyamitwe, Permanent Representative of Burundi and the Chairperson of the PSC for April, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye is expected to make statement and provide a horizon scanning on the threats to peace and security in the continent. The Committee of Intelligence and Security Service of Africa (CISSA) is also scheduled to deliver presentation on the emerging and existing security threats. The AU Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL) and the Africa Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) are also expected to be in attendance.

This session is convened within the framework of the Council's decision, at its 360th meeting held in March 2013, to review the state of peace and security on the continent, at least biannually, through horizon scanning briefing from the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). Council has dedicated some sessions on the theme since then including the last one, 1014th meeting of the Council that took place on 26 July 2021. It is also to be recalled that at its 1014th session, Council requested CISSA, ACSRT and AFRIPOL to provide quarterly briefings on emerging threats to peace and security on the continent.

From past experience, the horizon scanning briefing focuses on thematic issues such as emerging security threats and root causes of conflicts, but rarely discusses emerging country specific situations. In tomorrow's session as well, the briefing is expected to shed lights on trends in the threats to peace and security on the continent. As highlighted in Amani Africa's [most recent special research report](#) on major peace and security issues in Africa on the 20th anniversary of the AU, as well as the latest report of the PSC on its activities and the state of peace and security in Africa, the 'rise and rise of terrorism related violence in Africa'; resurgence of military coups d'états and unconstitutional changes of governments (UCG); and 'complex political transitions' have dominated the peace and security landscape of the continent.

Africa is becoming the epicenter of terrorism and violent extremism. The intensity and violence of terrorist attacks have significantly increased in the continent. Moreover, the geographic spread of terrorism has been a concerning trend as regions and countries previously considered immune to terrorism have been now targeted. According to a recent report, 'militant Islamist group violence in Africa climbed 10 percent in 2021 setting a record of over 5,500 reported events linked to these groups'. And, the spike and geographic expansion of terrorism has been nowhere more evident than in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. This is accompanied by the influx of foreign terrorist fighters and increased activities of private military contractors and mercenaries, as well as growing convergence of terrorism and transnational organized crime, further compounding the peace and security challenges of the continent. The upsurge of terrorist attacks and the expansion of terrorists' theatre of operation highlights the limits of AU's peace and security architecture—particularly its securitized approach towards terrorism and violent extremism—despite the strides made in terms of degrading the capability of terrorists over the years.

Regarding the resurgence of military coups, the year 2021 marked the largest number of military coups in Africa since the turn of the century where there were eight coup attempts and five successful coups (Chad, Guinea, Mali, Sudan, and Burkina Faso) in less than a year between April 2021 and February 2022. While complex governance and security challenges are factors behind uptick of UCGs, it also clearly highlights the gaps in the efficacy of AU's current norms and approaches to coups. In this respect, as Amani Africa's [special report](#) on UCGs pointed out, the response of AU and regional mechanisms to UCGs principally focusing on a templated application of sanction is 'utterly inadequate', indicating the need for developing both effective preventive and response measures that go beyond sanction.

The other concern likely to receive attention in tomorrow's session is complex transitions. Large number of African countries are undergoing a difficult transition including Libya, Somalia, CAR, Sudan and South Sudan. In some countries, the transition may necessitate the implementation of peace agreements or holding elections. In others (Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan) major aspect of the transition may relate to restoring constitutional order that requires peaceful transfer of power from military authorities to civilians. Still in others, it involves building a consensus through inclusive dialogue among major political and social forces towards an agreed upon transitional process. Despite the support provided by the AU, the task of steering such countries towards democracy and durable peace has remained a challenge.

In addition to the above, the horizon-scanning may highlight various forms of violent conflict including inter-communal conflicts, armed rebellions, natural disasters, climate induced insecurities, piracy, cyber-crimes, election related violence, and foreign military presence in the continent as trends that would continue to shape the peace and security

dynamics of the continent.

The second aspect of the discussion is expected to focus on the implementation of AU early warning tools and progress made towards operationalization of the CEWS. One notable development likely to be mentioned by Bankole in this connection is the development of an Inter-Regional Knowledge Exchange Platform (I-RECKE) to facilitate 'experience sharing and lessons learned on best practices and opportunities for early warning and conflict prevention'. As Bankole pointed out in his statement on the occasion of the AU reflection forum on UCG held in March, this platform would bring together the 'departments of Political Affairs, Peace & Security of Regional Organizations, sister AU institutions, non-State Actor think tanks and individual experts, to periodically reflect on effective early warning, early response, conflict prevention and synergy building between stakeholders, vertically and horizontally'.

The other development expected to receive attention is the conduct of the inaugural joint retreat of the PSC and the African Peer Review mechanism (APRM) in Durban, South Africa, from 19 to 21 December 2021. Such retreat will go a long way in reenergizing the early warning system and strengthen efforts to position APRM as an early warning tool for conflict prevention. It is worth noting that the mechanism plays an important role in bridging the gap between early warning and early response particularly by identifying areas of vulnerabilities and proposal for addressing them. The appointment of the fifth Panel of the Wise at the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly and the subsequent inaugural meeting in late March (though nomination from the Southern Africa region is still pending) is another development that would give impetus to AU's early warning system.

The Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework (CSCPF) and its tools of the Country Structural Vulnerability

and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) and Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies (CSVMS) and the steps taken to advance their implementation may also be highlighted in tomorrow's discussion. This framework aims to strengthen the capacity of Member States to identify and address structural vulnerabilities at an early stage and design mitigation measures.

As highlighted in Amani Africa's [previous](#) 'insights on the PSC' on the theme, ensuring effective flow of information between the early warning mechanism and the PSC such as through regular early warning briefings to PSC members; institutionalizing and regularizing different means and modalities available to enhance rapport and close working relationship between the Commission and the Council; as well as strengthening cooperation and collaboration between AU and RECs/RMs and horizontal cooperation between CISSA, ACSRT and AFRIPOL are areas that require further work. There is also a need for reflecting on challenges for effective implementation of the PSC's mandate for conflict prevention under Article 9 of the PSC Protocol, including the proper implementation of the relevant provisions of the PSC Protocol.

The expected outcome of the session is a communique. The Council is expected to express its concern over the persistent and emerging threats to the peace and security of the continent, most notably the spike of terrorism and violent extremism and resurgence of military coups. The Council may stress the importance of fully implementing the existing AU instruments and tools including the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA) including Article 8(7) of the PSC Protocol which requires that no country may oppose inclusion of any item in the provisional agenda of the PSC. The Council may encourage Member States to increase their efforts in the utilization of the existing tools and instruments that are available to address the structural causes of violent conflicts such as the

APRM and CSVRA/CSVMS. In this respect, the Council may reiterate the decision of the Assembly at its 35th Ordinary Session that requested the Commission to establish a 'Monitoring and Oversight Committee comprising the AUC, RECs/RMs, APRM and Member states to facilitate effective coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation'. The Council may also welcome the inaugural meeting of the fifth Panel of Wise, as well as the inaugural joint retreat of the PSC and the APRM that was held in December 2021. Furthermore, the Council may endorse the Inter-Regional Knowledge Exchange Platform (I-RECKE) given its role in enhancing early warning and conflict prevention.