

# Briefing on the Implementation of the Stabilization Strategy for the Lake Chad Basin

Automatic Heading TextDate | 19 July, 2021

Tomorrow (19 July) African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1010th session to receive briefing on the implementation of the Stabilization Strategy for the Lake Chad Basin.

Following the opening remarks of the Chairperson of the PSC, Victor Adenkunle Adeleke, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye is expected to brief the council on the strategy, focusing on the contributions of the AU. The Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Head of the MNJTF, Mamman Nuhu is also expected to make a presentation. The Representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the four states of the LCBC plus Benin may also deliver statements.

While the PSC considered the last time the situation in the Lake Chad Basin in the context of its consideration of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) at its 973rd meeting, it was during the 816th session that the PSC endorsed the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region (RSS).

Coming not long after the second meeting of the Steering Committee of the RSS convened virtually on 29 June 2021 in which the AU Commissioner for PAPS, Executive Secretary of the LCBC, Force Commander of the MNJTF, and representatives from

the Governor's Offices took part and reviewed the 2020 progress report by the RSS Secretariat and Regional Task Force, tomorrow's session is also expected to evaluate the state of implementation of the strategy since its inception in 2019.

The strategy, endorsed by the PSC, is the culmination of collaborative work that brought together the LCBC, affected countries and the AU based on the recognition of the need for a comprehensive approach that goes beyond military action and encompass development efforts for addressing the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism. The strategy is articulated around nine pillars and 40 strategic objectives designed to address the short, medium and long-term needs of the region towards stabilization, resilience and recovery of the affected areas. It has a five years duration divided into two phases: the first- year inception phase (2019) and the implementation phase.

The PSC expects to receive update on the institutionalization of the RSS that set the stage for stabilization efforts to take place at territorial level, which remains the main priority of the medium and long-term implementation phase of the RSS. This includes the establishment and/or strengthening of the RSS Secretariat, the Steering Committee, the Regional Task Force, the Governors' Forum, Civil Society platform, and the LCBC-MNJTF's Civil- Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Cell.

The RSS Secretariat has become fully operational with the recruitment of the required staff. The development of the Regional Action Plan for the years 2020-2021, which provides strategic direction for regional actions, is now in place after its validation by the LCBC and the AU Commission last year.

The Steering Committee—a key platform for review, decision-making, and strategic direction for the RSS—held its 2nd meeting virtually on 29 June involving the participation of

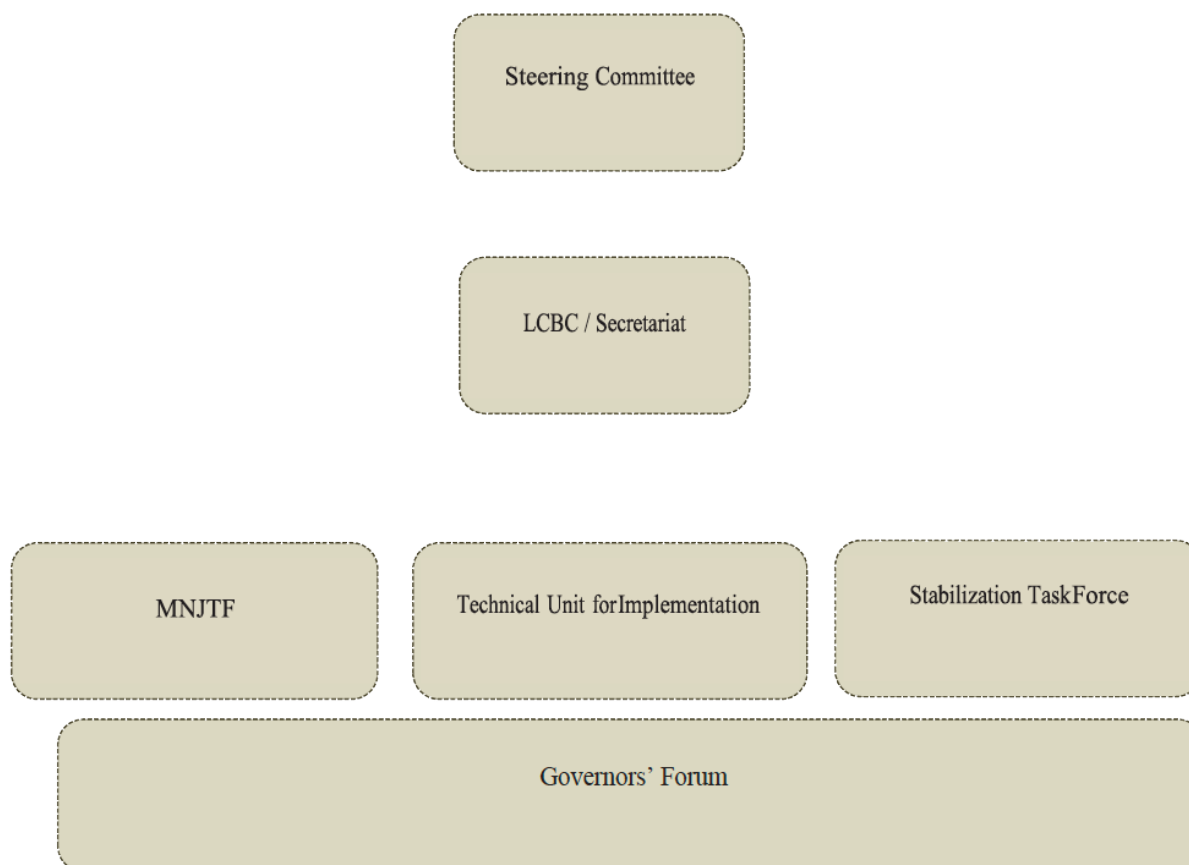
key stakeholders including AU Commissioner for PAPS. One of the positive outcomes of that meeting has been its decision to expand the composition of the steering committee to include relevant national authorities and entities responsible for stabilization, recovery and resilience initiatives. Relevant ministries of the four countries and the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel (UNISS), the African Development Bank and the Civil Society Platform are now made part of the committee. It is worth noting that the Committee is co-chaired by the LCBC and AU Commission.

The Regional Task Force, established in April 2020 and composed of technical experts appointed by organisations and entities working in the area of stabilisation, resilience, and recovery, is instrumental in enhancing the technical coordination of the pillars of intervention at the regional level. Some 30 institutions and organisations are represented in the taskforce under the leadership of the RSS Secretariat.

The establishment of RSS civil society platform is also a significant step forward. Given the critical importance of this structure for the participation of affected communities and religious and community leaders as well as women and youth and for the implementation of the RSS at the territorial level, the strength and capacity of the platform is critical.

It is also to be recalled that the Governor's Forum was established in 2018. This platform is considered as the 'principal custodian' of the strategy's implementation given its unique position to drive the implementation of the RSS at the territorial level and to coordinate joint actions of the eight affected territories of Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger. The Forum reports to the Steering Committee and advice the latter on progress of implementation of the strategy. It is to be recalled that the first and second forum were held in May 2018 (Nigeria) and July 2019 (Niger). The third edition of the meeting was supposed to take place last year in Cameroon, but rescheduled for this October due to the pandemic.

One of the major outcomes expected from the upcoming meeting of Governor's Forum is the consideration of the Territorial Action Plans (TAPs)—comprising the set of interventions and actions tailored to local needs of the affected areas.



#### Implementation Organogram (Source: RSS)

The development of TAPs is a critical step towards the implementation of the strategy at the territorial level, though it still awaits endorsement by the relevant authorities of the four countries before its consideration in the upcoming Governors' Forum in October. The governors of the respective eight affected territories are responsible for preparing and harmonizing these plans with local and national development plans.

Another major step taken towards the operationalization of the RSS is the establishment of the joint LCBC-MNJTF CIMIC Cell. The CIMIC Cell serves the important role of ensuring that the

planning and conduct of the MNJTF is anchored on the protection of civilians and for coordinating the activities of the MNJTF with humanitarian actors and build trust with affected communities. The Cell has played an important role in reinforcing the capacity of the MNJTF by facilitating trainings and workshops for newly deployed personnel on human rights and humanitarian law.

Of particular interest to the Council is the state of resource mobilization needed for the implementation of the strategy. It is worth noting in this regard that the UNDP supports the implementation of the strategy at national and regional levels through its funding facility, the Regional Stabilisation Facility (RSF).

In relation to specific support to the MNJTF, EU's financial contribution of 60 million Euros (20 million through AU and the rest to be managed by EU) to support the MNJTF for 2021 is a welcome development. This is in addition to the logistical support including Air Mobility Service, Command- Control- Communication and Information System service, as well as covering allowances and salaries to civilian staff of the joint force. While this logistical support will have great importance in addressing some of the capability gaps of the joint force, other capability gaps such as Counter Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) equipment, counter drone equipment, and Surveillance Reconnaissance (ISR) services are yet to be filled.

In terms of challenges, such participative structures as the private sector investment platform and inter parliamentary forum are yet to be realized. Additionally, given the cross-border nature and complex structures and mechanisms of the strategy, another challenge is coordination of the plethora of stakeholders involved in security, humanitarian, stabilization, and development efforts across regional, national and territorial levels. There is also the coordination issue between the LCBC and the G5 Sahel with the

overlapping membership in case of Niger and Chad.

The other challenge is the volatile security situation of the affected areas. For example, in Borno State of Nigeria, one of the eight targeted territories for the implementation of the RSS, 19 percent of the territory remains 'either totally or mainly inaccessible to both state and humanitarian actors because of insecurity'. Security challenge is also one factor hindering cross-border interactions in the sub-region.

There is also the issue of the dominance of the MNJTF and national security troops as the principal instruments of the regional and national strategies in the region. The result is that much of the resources are diverted to security responses. Given that the member states of LCBC are primarily responsible for the implementation of the RSS, the latter's success largely depends on the political will of member states.

The expected outcome is a communique. The Council may underscore the centrality of the implementation of the RSS in addressing the crisis caused by Boko Haram insurgency. Regarding the progress in the implementation of the strategy, the PSC is likely to express its satisfaction over the successful operationalization of the strategy with the establishment of governance and coordination structures, and may call for expediting the establishment of remaining structures. The Council is also likely to welcome the development of the Regional Action plan for 2020-2021 as well as the TAPs, and may encourage stakeholders to align their engagements in accordance with these plans. The Council may stress that the success of the strategy requires a sustained financial, technical and political support and collaboration at all levels, and it may particularly emphasize the imperative of national ownership and political will towards the implementation of the strategy. The PSC may also invite the utilization of AU's Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Centre to support the implementation of the strategy, including through supporting the financing and

implementation of quick impact projects identified by the affected countries and the various structures of the RSS. On the challenges, the Council is expected to urge the multiple actors involved at regional, national and local level to harmonize and coordinate their actions across the development, peace and security spectrum with the view to minimize duplication of efforts and maximize their contribution towards the full realization of the strategy. The Council is also expected to express its grave concern over the continued security threat imposed by Boko Haram and its splinter, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and its implication on the implementation of the RSS despite gains achieved by the MNJTF. In this regard, the Council may call on troop-contributing countries to strengthen their collaboration, and further urge the AU, EU and other partners to step up their financial and logistical support in order to sustain and enhance the capability of the multinational force.