

# **Briefing on the Revised Strategic Concept Note Planning Guidance for the Deployment of an Additional 3000 troops to the Sahel**

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Tomorrow (30 July) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to receive a briefing on the draft revised Strategic Concept Note Planning Guidance for the deployment of an additional 3000 troops to the Sahel. It is expected that PSC members will conduct the meeting through video teleconference. The AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui, and Burundi, as the Chair of the PSC Military Staff Committee are expected to brief the Council. Representative of members of the G5 Sahel also expected to deliver statement.

The 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly (decision 792) decided to deploy 3000 AU troops for six months to degrade terrorist groups in the Sahel region. Pursuant to this decision, the PSC held its 920th session, on 21 April 2020, to consider the draft Strategic Concept Guidance on Planning for the deployment of 3000 strong force. The PSC welcomed the draft concept as an initial document to be further enriched by consultations among the concerned member states in the region more particularly the Ministers of Defence of the G5 Sahel countries and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as well as the PSC military staff committee. The Council further requested to receive a comprehensive briefing on the security situation in the Sahel and to consider the revised strategic concept note by 15 June 2020.

In light of this decision, one aspect of tomorrow's briefing is expected to shed light on the security trends in the region and the other part will present the revised draft of the Strategic Concept Note Planning Guidance for Deployment of 3000 troops to the Sahel. The security situation in the Sahel remains highly volatile. The June 2020 report of the Secretary-General of the UN revealed the deterioration of the security situation in the region in the first half of 2020. The recurrent coordinated terrorist attacks on civilians and security forces, as well as forced recruitment and abductions, has continued particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria.

Moreover, the compounded effects of COVID19 in the region have also brought limitation on mediation and diplomatic efforts as well as humanitarian action. Also of concern for the PSC is the political instability facing Mali and the lack of breakthrough in the confrontation between the Government and June 5 protest movement and the impact of this situation on the peace process in Mali and the security situation in Mali and the Sahel. Similarly, the 8 May 2020 Secretary-General report on the G5 Sahel illustrated the dire humanitarian and security situation in the region. According to the report, the number of people that died due to terrorist attacks has increased five fold since 2016. In 2019 alone 4000 people have died compared to 770 in 2016. The humanitarian situation in the region is alarming. In Burkina Faso alone the rate of displacement over the past four years has increased ten fold.

Hence the deployment of the additional force is taking place within the context of deteriorating security situation in the region. To this end the briefing is expected to provide an update on the steps taken and the consultations held since the April 2020 PSC session to inform the development of the strategic concept note. In this regard the briefing may highlight the major consultations held including the 20 May 2020 virtual meeting of the Commissioner for Peace and

Security with Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the G5 Countries namely Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. The Ministers requested for the Chiefs of Defence Forces of the G5 Sahel Countries to provide technical advice.

Following this meeting, the PSC military staff committee has also held various informal and formal consultations during the chairpersonship of Lesotho and Algeria in May and June respectively. Moreover on 24 June 2020, a virtual meeting was held between the Commissioner for Peace and Security and the Chiefs of Defence Forces (CDFs) of the G5 Sahel Countries. The need for the deployment of the additional 3000 troops was also echoed by the CDFs and they were also able to contribute in providing guidance on the technical aspect of the deployment.

The various consultations have informed the revision of the strategic concept note. The document, which will be considered in tomorrow's session is expected to present the overall objective of the force, the terms of reference of the technical committee for planning of the deployment of the force, which was established following the 16 March 2020 the AUC High-Level Consultative meeting with ECOWAS and G5 Sahel representatives in Niamey.

Moreover, the revised strategic concept note is expected to provide further details on force generation, command and control as well as the planning and timeframe of the deployment process. It would be of interest for the PSC to seek clarification on how the new force will relate to and coordinate with existing security mechanisms most notably the G5 Sahel Force. Moreover, the PSC may further inquire on the mechanism of restructure, the changes in command and harmonization of policies and operation between the G5 and the new force.

It would also be of interest for the PSC to follow up on the Assembly decision 792 which requested the Permanent

Representatives Committee (PRC) to explore funding options to cover the expenses of the deployment. Additionally, pursuant to the same decision it may also follow up on the disbursement of ECOWAS's pledge of 100 million USD in support to countries in the region namely Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to support the deployment of the force. With regards to resource mobilization and funding for the force, the PSC may also recall ECOWAS's decision at its 56<sup>th</sup> ordinary session, which adopted the 2020-2024 Action Plan to eradicate terrorism in the Sahel region. The action plan budgeted an estimate of two billion three hundred million USD, among which one billion USD is expected to be generated internally by member states. The PSC may follow up on this decision and seek clarification how this budget can also support the deployment of the new force.

The expected outcome is a communiqué. The PSC may express concern over the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation as well as the intensification of terrorist attacks in the region. It may particularly make reference to the current context of COVID19 pandemic and its impact on the security situation in the region. The PSC may express its concern about the political crisis in Mali and underscore the necessity of urgent resolution of the crisis through inclusive and agreed roadmap to ensure that it does not undermine the peace process and the security situation in the country any further. The PSC is expected to adopt the strategic concept note on the deployment of the 3000 strong AU force and provide guidance on the planning of the deployment of the force in consultation with ECOWAS, G5 and UN under the technical committee framework. It may further request the UN Security Council to consider the authorization of the force. It may request the AUC to provide regular update on the deployment process.