

Briefing on the Security Sector Reform in the Gambia

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Tomorrow (April 24) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council is scheduled to have a briefing on the Security Sector Reform in The Gambia. The Council is expected to receive a briefing from the Acting Director of the Peace and Security Department Admore Kambudzi on the status and progress of implementation of the SSR in the Gambia.

This meeting will mark the first time where the PSC will have a session dedicated to the SSR reform of the Gambia following the 694th PSC meeting in 2017. The PSC is expected to receive a status update on the developments of the reform undertaken since September 2017, the launch of the SSR process by the Gambian government in partnership with the UN, AU, ECOWAS and partner organizations. The SSR is a key priority for the efforts in stabilizing the country in order to sustain peace. Security institutions in The Gambia include the armed forces, police, immigration service, customs, correction service, and intelligence service and drug and law enforcement.

Following the request of support by the Gambian government to the PSC on 29 March 2017, an AU led Technical and Multi-Disciplinary Needs Assessment Mission to The Gambia was undertaken, from 13 to 19 May 2017. The mission led by Pierre Buyoya, AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel was composed of the UN, ECOWAS and EU delegations to Banjul. The team was received by Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of The Gambia. The President requested for financial and technical support in the areas of training

Insights on the Peace and Security Council and professionalization of the justice, defense and security sectors. He also underlined the significant role of the ECOWAS

mission in the Gambia (ECOMIG) troops in stabilizing the country and the importance of providing adequate support to facilitate the fulfillment of their mandate. The main purpose of the Joint ECOWAS, EU and UN mission was to coordinate efforts for a coherent approach in supporting the security sector reform process in The Gambia.

Subsequent to these developments, at its 694th session the PSC has considered the report of the assessment mission and called on the 'AU, in coordination with ECOWAS, to provide policy guidance support to the Gambian authorities on the identified priority areas of national dialogue and reconciliation, security sector reform, and socio-economic transformation'. The Council further called on the Commission to provide all necessary support for SSR process in The Gambia, including the immediate secondment, by AU member states through their own expenses, of five staff officers to support the reorganization of The Gambian Armed Forces. Following this decision in September 2018 the AU had deployed the staff to facilitate the SSR process.

It is also critical to note that SSR reform should be undertaken in coordination with other sectors. This was also noted during the launch of the SSR reform where the SRSG stated that the SSR reform should be complemented and further enhanced by constitutional and institutional reform and with the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms, in order to promote social cohesion, stability, peace and security. In deed the SSR program places the reform of security institutions within the broader framework of restoring the rule of law and deepening democracy. The priority areas of Gambia's reform program which are captured in its 2018–2021 National Development Plan (NDP) adopted in January 2018 indentifies key sectors including restoring the rule of law, deepening democracy, advancing transitional justice, and transforming the security sector. The PSC session is expected to shed light on the SSR and its interaction with

complementary areas.

According to the UN Secretary General report the Government of the Gambia has made progress in a number of reform processes in the country including in SSR, however the 'process was affected by challenges related to strategic direction and national coordination'. The report also noted the security sector assessment that was undertaken by the national working group on SSR, with the support of the UN, and was endorsed by the Government in February 2018. Subsequently, the first meeting of the SSR steering committee took place in April 2018. The meeting was chaired by the Vice-President of the Gambia and consulted on the next steps in the reform process. In July 2018, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for West Africa and the Sahel, and head of UNOWAS undertook a joint mission to the Gambia with the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Jean-Claude Brou. The discussions focused among other issues on the SSR process.

Similarly the AUC Chairperson has conducted a visit in The Gambia in October 2018. The visit was both strategic and symbolic given that it was the first ever visit by sitting chair of the

Organization of African Unity (OAU)/AU to The Gambia, since its independence. But it also addressed the priority areas for partnership between the AU and the government on the reform process. The deployment of the AU

Technical Support Team comprising military, human rights and rule of law experts was welcomed by the government authorities. It was also agreed that the 'AU and the Gambian authorities will work together to mobilize further support to The Gambia in strengthening its institutions, pursuing security sector reform, drawing on the capacity of its Diaspora, enhancing the capacity of the civil service'.

The Gambia, although has not emerged from a conflict it is framed within a Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) context given that it is a post-crisis situation

whereby SSR reforms are applicable. Hence the reform in the Gambia should be viewed in relation to a post-crisis context rather than a post-conflict one. Tomorrow's PSC session on the Gambia offers an opportunity to provide an update on AU's role particularly through the seconded technical staff in the implementations of the SSR reform. The briefing is expected to provide an overview of the activities undertaken so far since the deployment of the staff in September, the challenges that are encountered in the reform process and the way forward.

SSR remains as a critical political process that requires a strong leadership and will of the highest state authorities. The institutional reform is expected to secure the independence of the security sector institutions in discharging their mandate. The government has also made strides by validating the National reform process. The deployment of the AU Technical Support Team comprising military, human rights and rule of law experts was welcomed by the government authorities. It was also agreed that the 'AU and the Gambian authorities will work together to mobilize further support to The Gambia in strengthening its institutions, pursuing security sector reform, drawing on the capacity of its Diaspora, enhancing the capacity of the civil service'. Security Policy in October 2018 to articulate a defined approach and a response system towards peace first ever visit by a sitting Chair of the and security. Organization of African Unity (OAU)/AU to The The expected outcome of the session is a press statement. The session is anticipated to garner political support from the PSC towards the ongoing SSR efforts. This is also expected to support the mobilization of sustainable funding for the reform.