

Discussion on Youth Peace and Security in Africa

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Tomorrow (03 November), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1183rd session focusing on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa.

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month, **Abdi Mahamoud Eybe** will preside over the session followed by statements from AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), **Bankole Adeoye**. The meeting is also expected to be graced by the attendance of, **Chido Cleo Mpemba**, Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Youth as well as **Jayathma Wickramanayake**, United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. The African Union Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAP) representing the five regions of the AU will also present their statements.

This session is convened as part of the African Youth Month and the annual thematic session of the PSC on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). It is to be recalled that the PSC convened its first session dedicated to YPS in November 2018, which, amongst others, requested for undertaking a study on the role of the youth in promoting peace and security, the appointment of the five AYAPs and decided to 'institutionalize and regularize an annual open session dedicated to the theme of YPS'. Apart from the institutionalization of YPS as a standing thematic agenda and the establishment of various structures including the AYAP, the AU also designated Burundi's President **Evariste Ndayishimiye** as the Champion of the YPS agenda.

Both the celebration of Africa Youth Day and Youth Month as

well as the dedication of a session on YPS by the PSC, are reflective of the increasing recognition on the part of the AU and its policymakers on the need for creating policy space for and facilitating the engagement of youth as critical avenue for achieving AU's various priorities including those relating to peace and security.

The last PSC session focusing on youth, peace and security in Africa was held on 3 November 2022 at its 1118th session, under the Chairship of the Republic of Namibia, where a [Press Statement](#) was issued after the meeting. On the Press Statement, the Council reiterated its request to the AU Commission to regularly brief the Council on the status of progress in the implementation of the 10-Year Implementation Plan of the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security and challenges faced, including through periodic reports and annual briefings. It is against this backdrop that the deliberation is expected to discuss the update on the implementation of the progress of the 10-year implementation plan of the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security and the outcome document '[Bujumbura Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa](#)' submitted to the PSC for consideration post the convening of the Continental Dialogue on YPS.

At the level of the AU Commission, a major step in the implementation of the Continental Framework on Youth Peace and Security and its 10-year implementation involved the operationalization of the Youth for Peace Africa (Y4P) Programme. The Y4P programme anchors the follow-up of both the Continental Framework on Youth Peace and Security and its 10-year implementation and plays a pivotal role in the promotion of the YPS agenda and enhancing the engagement of youth and other stakeholders through, among others, capacity-building programmes. Additionally, the programme implements activities led by the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAP) to enhance youth participation in governance, peace, security and

sustainable development initiatives at the national and regional levels.

Apart from reviewing the implementation of the YPS agenda through the Y4P programme, tomorrow's session will also hear from the members of the AYAP about their activities and experience. The 2nd cohort of the AYAP, who assumed their role for a two-year mandate, from February 2022 to February 2024, will be finishing their mandate next February. Apart from the update they may provide on activities undertaken in 2023, it is expected that the AYAP members that will participate in tomorrow's session will present their respective reflections on activities undertaken in their respective regions such as the promotion of the adoption of national action plans and lessons learned from their engagement in the YPS agenda including on areas of improvement for the effective implementation of the YPS agenda and vis-à-vis the role of AYAP. They will also highlight some of the highlights of their collective actions including the collaboration with Burundi for the adoption of the Bujumbura Declaration and their participation in processes leading to COP27.

This year, Africa Youth Month will be commemorated under the theme of '1 million Next Level is Knocking: Youth-led Movement that Transcends Borders'. In relation to this, the Council will be briefed by the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Youth, who may also provide further reflections on the state of youth in peace and security and close working arrangements between the Envoy and the AYAP. During its 1067th session at its annual session on the theme, one of the issues the PSC pointed out was the 'the imperative of close collaboration between the Special Envoy on Youth and the AYAPs, as well as Youth Focal Points in the RECs/RMs and various youth networks for peace'. Apart from the AU Youth Envoy, this year's session is also expected to feature the delivery of a statement by the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, signifying the importance of

leveraging the roles of both the AU and the UN on the agenda of youth in general.

Another important aspect of tomorrow's meeting will be the discussion on the progress of the operationalization of the WiseYouth Network. The Network was established as a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise, through Assembly Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.815(XXXV)] of the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2022, to promote a strategic engagement of youth in conflict prevention, mediation and peace processes across the Continent. The AU Commission organized a technical consultative meeting in Bujumbura, Burundi, from 31 August to 01 September 2023 to review the draft operational modalities for the Network and the Terms of Reference. It was agreed that the WiseYouth Network would consist of 26 members, with equal representation of genders. 2 members would be nominated from each of the RECs/RMs, the LCBC and the G5-Sahel. These members would be selected from regional YPS networks involved with these institutions to ensure ownership and establish direct connections between WiseYouth members and regional and continental-led peace process efforts.

Furthermore, recently the AU Commission requested all RECs/RMs, the LCBC and the G5-Sahel to nominate individuals with specific experience and expertise in mediation, to join the 1st Cohort of the WiseYouth Network. The selection process for the WiseYouth Network is expected to be done jointly with the process for selecting the new cohort of the AYAPs, within the month of November. This will allow for the presentation of both groups to the Council in December 2023. It is against this context that tomorrow's meeting will lay out the progress so far on the ongoing process towards selecting the 3rd Cohort of AYAPs and the 1st Cohort of the WiseYouth, who will start the execution of their mandate in February 2024.

The expected outcome of this deliberation is a communiqué. The Council is expected to welcome the work accomplished by the AU Youth Envoy and the 2nd cohort of the AYAP. Council may also emphasize the need to mainstream the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in Member States and across the AU peace and security processes. In light of the recent challenges facing the Continent including unconstitutional changes of government (UCG), the PSC may underscore the need for the AU Youth Envoy and the AYAP to work together to bring out the perspectives of the youth including from affected countries on the factors precipitating UCG, the apparent support of the public including youth for coups and on how to address these factors. Building on the follow-up to some of the 12 actions identified in the communiqué of the 1067th session particularly the inclusion of AYAP in election observation missions, the PSC may also emphasize the importance of ensuring representation of AYAP and members of the AU WiseYouth network to be represented in AU and RECs/RMs peace initiatives and to this end closer engagement with special envoys, special representatives and other mediation and peacemaking bodies at the AU and RECs/RMs levels. It may also reiterate its call for the domestication of international, continental and regional youth, peace and security policies and legal frameworks. It may also remind states of the need to ensure the meaningful and inclusive representation of young people at different levels of government and decision-making processes as well as resourcing youth-led and youth-focused peace and security initiatives. The PSC may also highlight the need for Member States to increase investment in youth-led initiatives and the importance of providing financial and technical support to these initiatives to ensure their sustainability and impact on the Continent. It is also likely that the Council will emphasize the importance of partnerships and collaboration among governments, the RECs/RMs, regional bodies, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders in addressing youth-related peace and security issues including

displacement, climate change and migration. The PSC may welcome the participation of the UN Youth Envoy in the session and encourage close coordination and development and implementation of joint programmes between the AU and the UN including through the youth envoys on issues affecting youth in general and on peace and security in particular.