

General debate of the PSC and A3+1 on African matters in the UNSC Agenda

Automatic Heading TextDate | 17 January, 2022

Tomorrow (17 January), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its first ministerial session of the year, which will be its 1058th session, to hold a general debate of the PSC and the A3+1 on African matters in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) agenda.

Ghana, which joined this year the UNSC as the non-permanent member representing Africa, will preside over the session as the chair of the PSC for the month. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, is expected to deliver an opening statement. AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye, is scheduled to make a presentation that would facilitate the discussion. All the three elected African members of the UNSC (A3), namely, Gabon, Ghana, and Kenya, are envisaged to participate.

The PSC last convened a session on the role of the A3 at its 983rd meeting that took place on 4 March 2021. In that session, the Council, among others, stressed the importance of providing 'strategic guidance' to the A3 on peace and security issues ahead of the UNSC meetings to enable them effectively discharge their role of articulating, defending and promoting common African positions on issues of interest within the UNSC. Tomorrow's session is aimed at providing the PSC and A3 members a platform to deliberate and exchange views on matters of strategic importance to Africa that are on the agenda of the UNSC. The deliberation is expected to help the A3 better amplify African positions and interests within the UNSC as it

would facilitate common understanding on African matters.

The concept note prepared for the session outlines four agenda items for the discussion. The first agenda item is on the funding of AU-led PSOs. Members of the PSC and the A3 will receive update on the progress made towards the development of the draft Consensus Paper on the Financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations through the UN Assessed Contributions. It is to be recalled that the PSC considered the draft zero consensus paper as well as the strategic priorities for the utilization of the AU Peace Fund during its 1036th session, held on 5 October 2021. This was a follow up session to the 21 July 2021 Bankole's brief to the Council on the steps taken towards the elaboration of the common position on financing of AU-led PSOs. If finalized, the consensus paper is expected to be submitted to the upcoming AU Assembly this February for endorsement.

In 2021, the two counterparts in Addis and New York showed interest to revive discussions around financing AU-led PSOs through UN assessed contributions after efforts to adopt a resolution reached deadlock in 2018 and then in 2019. The issue was high on the agenda of AU-UN Consultative meetings held at different levels in November and December of last year. On 28 October 2021, the UNSC also issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/21) on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security. After recognizing the potential impact of 'ad hoc and unpredictable financing arraignments' for AU-led PSOs on the effectiveness of the PSOs, the presidential statement 'encouraged further dialogue on options for addressing this issue'.

The development of a consensus paper is indeed a critical step in facilitating a clear decision by the AU, which in turn pave the way for the A3 to resuscitate the file in the UNSC. The outcome of the discussion will be shaped by two factors. The first is whether the AU is able to take a clear position on

the sticking points in the negotiation with UNSC, notably 75/25 funding formula, compliance with human right and humanitarian standards, financial accountability and transparency, and command and control over the troops. The second is while there is a favorable dynamic in the UNSC which was also demonstrated in the recently concluded 15th annual consultative meeting, high-level diplomatic engagement with the US remains critical.

In relation to the second agenda item, the discussion is expected to center around ways of ensuring a predictable and sustainable financial and logistical support to the G5 Joint Task Force. Secretary General's report on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) (document S/2021/940) highlights the risk of reversal of gains made by the Joint Task Force as it relies on 'unpredictable donor financing, which cannot entirely meet the Joint Force's needs'. The UN Secretary-General has been advocating for the establishment of UN Support Office to AMISOM-like separate office to avail logistical support to the Task Force through assessed contribution. During MINUSMA's mandate renewal in June 2021, A3+1 members at the time (Niger, Tunisia, Kenya, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), along with France, was even mulling over tabling a resolution to establish the office. However, the UK and US opposed the idea of a separate office and the use of assessed contribution for non-UN missions. The PSC, on its part, urged the UNSC to 'take necessary steps that will guarantee sustainable and predictable funding for the G5 Sahel Force from the UN assessed contribution', at its 939th session convened on 30 July 2021. However, the PSC omitted the same call for UN funding in its last session (1006th) on the G5 Sahel, held on 6 July 2021.

Against this context, tomorrow's deliberation would help both the PSC and the A3 to strategize on how to get buy-in from UNSC members, particularly UK and US. Two issues will remain

to be addressed in this respect. The first issue stems from the very nature of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which is 'a coalition of the willing' that undertake counter terrorism operations within their territories. UN is reluctant to use its assessed contribution for counter terrorism operations as it would not be in line with its peacekeeping doctrine. The second issue is that the Joint Force is not AU-led PSO nor UN-authorized mission, but an AU-mandated force. As this raises the question of compliance and accountability, it would be challenging to get UN backing without making some sort of changes on the modality of the Task Force.

The third agenda item will focus on support for strengthening the security capabilities of African regional institutions. The discussion on this item is likely to happen within the context of a progress made towards the operationalization of the African Standby Force and growing interest of regional blocs to use this framework while addressing security situations/crisis arising in their jurisdiction. A case in point is the deployment of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) in mid-July of 2021 to combat of terrorism and acts of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado. Most recently, ECOWAS, at its 4th extraordinary summit convened on 9 January 2022, decided to 'activate immediately the ECOWAS Standby Force, to enhance its preparedness, should the need arise' in the context of the difficult political transition in Mali.

The ability and will of some of the RECs/RMs for the deployment of PSOs requires more clarity between AU, RECs/RMs and Member States on some of the strategic and political issues such as decision making, mandating deployment and command and control of the forces. In this connection, participants may hear from Bankole about the status of the drafting of the AU-RECs/RMs Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the deployment and employment of the ASF. As highlighted by the PSC at its 1007th session (8 July 2021) on the operationalization of ASF, 'lack of resource including

predictable and sustainable funding' will remain major impediment to the effectiveness as well as sustainability of such deployments. Members of PSC and the A3 may reflect on ways and means of addressing this challenge. Of interest to the participants is also the status of the establishment of a counter-terrorism unit within the ASF as decided by the PSC during its 960th session (28 October 2020).

The last agenda item is on common African position for UN Security Council on climate induced insecurity. As noted in the concept note, 'AU has demonstrated continental leadership in recognizing and acting on the nexus between climate, peace and security'. In 2021 alone, the PSC convened three sessions (984th, 1043rd, and 1051st) on climate change, natural disasters, and peace and security. Two of these sessions were convened at the summit level, showing the political weight attached to the issue. While the UNSC has failed to adopt a resolution on climate change and security, the PSC issued several communiques that clearly recognizes the risk of climate change to the peace and security landscape in Africa. It is to be recalled that the outgoing A3 member (Niger) and Ireland tabled a resolution on climate security in last December. Though the draft resolution was not adopted as Russia vetoed it. Climate security is high on the agenda of Africa as the continent only contributes four percent of carbon emission but bears the brunt of its consequences.

Beyond tabling a resolution, there are other avenues that A3 could navigate to get Africa's voice on climate security across. One notable avenue in this regard is the Informal Expert Group on Climate Security in the UN Security Council in which Kenya co-chairs alongside Norway.

Developing African Common Position on Climate Change will go a long way in clarifying Africa's position and providing strategic guidance to the A3 in their engagement within the UNSC to advance Africa's interest. The idea of having such a common position was first raised during the summit level

meeting of the PSC at its 984th session in March of last year. In its latest session on climate change and security (1051st), the PSC also reaffirmed the importance of 'adhering to the common African position on climate change, in particular on Climate Finance and operationalization of the Global Goal on Adaptation' in the context of the upcoming COP27. As indicated in the concept note, tomorrow's session therefore presents both the PSC and A3 members the opportunity for consultation on the development of the common position, and explore 'main action points and instruments needed for the AU' to advance climate-security nexus.

The expected outcome is a communique. The outcome may stress on the need to regularize and institutionalize interaction between the PSC and A3 to collectively advance African position and interest in the UNSC. They may further emphasize the importance of broadening alliance and constructively engage with UNSC members to get a greater buy-in of African positions on African files and other issues of mutual interest. The participants may specifically highlight the issue of ensuring predictable, sustainable and sufficient financing to peace support operations in Africa as a critical factor for the success of such operations, and in this regard, may urge member states, AU, RECs/RMs, international partners and the UN to avail all the required supports. Given the important role they play in building consensus within the AU, participants may urge the Commission to expedite the development and finalization of African common positions on financing AU-led PSOs as well as climate change and security. On support to counter terrorism operations, the participants may emphasize on the need to have further clarity on UN's peacekeeping engagement and the use of its assessed contribution in light of the changing global security landscape as marked by the rise of terrorism and violent extremism.