

# Inaugural Annual PSC and CSO Consultative Meeting

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Tomorrow (14 September) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is scheduled to hold its inaugural annual consultative meeting with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to engage on the implementation of the Accra Declaration and Malabo Decisions.

Following the opening statement of Amma Twum-Amoah, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana to the AU and PSC Chairperson for the month of September 2022, Bankole Adeoye Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security is expected to deliver a presentation. Following his intervention, representatives of the Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), Civil Society Organizations and the United Nations are expected to deliver their statements.

The inaugural session is expected to focus both on strengthening the working relations between PSC and CSOs and to fast-track the operationalization of the outcome documents of the Accra Forum and Malabo Extraordinary Summit that took place in March and May 2022 respectively.

The AU Constitutive Act stipulates that one of the objectives of the Union is 'to build a partnership between governments and all segments of civil society' and to promote the 'participation of the African peoples in the activities of the Union'. The Statutes of the AU ECOSOCC provides a broad description of civil society organizations comprising social, professional groups, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), community-Based Organizations (CBOs), as well as voluntary and cultural organizations. The important role of policy research

and knowledge production by academic and research institutions has been recognized in the 2009 Tripoli Declaration.

Similarly, Article 20 of the PSC Protocol states that: 'the Peace and Security Council shall encourage non-governmental organizations, community-based and other civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, to participate actively in the efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. When required, such organizations may be invited to address the Peace and Security Council.' Article 8 of the Protocol further stipulates for the PSC to hold 'informal consultations with...civil society organizations for the discharge of its responsibilities'. This informal consultation envisaged in Article 8 of the PSC has as yet to be operationalized, CSOs are invited to and engage in the open sessions of the PSC at which they present statements on the agenda of the session.

There were various efforts in terms of operationalizing Article 20 of the PSC. The first retreat of the PSC, the Dakar Retreat called for the establishment of a mechanism to manage the engagement between the PSC and CSOs. Building on the 2007 conclusions of the Dakar Retreat, the PSC elaborated the modalities for engaging with such institutions in the Livingstone Formula and the Maseru Retreat Conclusions. The Livingstone Formula identified a number of areas in which CSOs can contribute towards the promotion of peace and security including in conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction as well as the provision of technical support, popularizing the decisions of the PSC.

While these initiatives are encouraging, the partnership has not been institutionalized. PSC engaged with and drew on the work of various institutions on an ad hoc basis. It is hence fundamental making the engagement with think tanks, civil society organizations and policy research organizations more systematic and it's more beneficial for strengthening the

Council's role in discharging its mandate. This in particular can be achieved by enhancing PSC's understanding of the role of these institutions and the contributions that they made and by engaging more regularly. Tomorrow's session will be an important step in consolidating this understanding and implementing the provision identified in the Livingstone Formula which called for an annual meeting between the PSC and CSOs through the ECOSOCC. It is also important to critically reflect and assess the gaps in the implementation of the provisions of Council's retreat conclusions and its norms.

The agenda and the complexity of issues that the PSC has to address have expanded exponentially. The number of meetings of the PSC has increased by almost five-fold since the PSC was inaugurated in 2004. This growing scope requires additional capacity and resources. More particularly the PSC may benefit from expertise and resources of policy and research institutions to cover the wide range of issues that require immediate and continuous attention. The policy analysis that can be provided by policy and research institutions brings a non-state perspective that adds depth to and enriches policy deliberations of the PSC. The Council can tap into the expertise, knowledge and technical resources of non-state actors particularly African policy research organizations, think tanks and civil society organizations. This would allow for the Council to explore and experiment with the range of policy options that it can choose from in its efforts for taking the most optimal policy action for conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa.

As indicated in the concept note the other central objective of tomorrow's session is to chart a way to deepen the collaboration between the PSC and CSOs in implementing the Accra declaration and Malabo decisions. It is to be recalled that the PSC at its 1061<sup>st</sup> session held in January 2022 decided to organize a reflection forum on unconstitutional changes of government after the spike in military coups in Africa.

Consequently, the Accra forum was convened from 15 to 17 March. The PSC decided to submit the Accra Declaration to the Malabo Extraordinary Session of the AU Heads of State and Government, for consideration and adoption, which among other considered the developments related to unconstitutional changes of government.

The consultative meeting will present an opportunity for the PSC and CSOs to enhance their engagement in 'promoting good governance, democracy, rule of law, constitutionalism and dealing with the emerging menace of unconstitutional changes of government.' The aim is to enhance synergy on timely governance, peace and security issues which the PSC is seized with while strengthening the broader cooperation as enshrined in the various instruments of the PSC.

The outcome of the session remains unknown. Yet, it is expected that the PSC would recall the commitments enshrined in its Protocol, the Livingstone Formula and Maseru Conclusions. It may recognize the role of CSOs in providing independent analysis, technical support for the PSC in discharging its mandate and the importance of tapping into their expertise. Beyond CSOs participation in PSC sessions, the Council may call for a more enhanced engagement and proactive engagement in the context of field missions, mediation as well as peace support operations. The Council may identify concrete steps in advancing the role of CSOs in the decision and policy making process. The PSC may decide to institutionalize the annual consultation with CSOs to have a more systematic engagement. The Council may underline the critical role of CSOs in advancing inclusive governance, peace and security and in order to reverse the current trend of unconstitutional changes of government that threatens the gains made so far in the continent. PSC may call on CSOs to deepen their engagement with the Council to also further popularize its decision and work at national and local levels.