

Annual Informal Seminar and Joint Consultative Meeting Between the PSC and the UN SC

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On 29 and 30 September the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will have their 5th informal seminar and 14th joint annual consultation.

The annual consultative meeting of the two Councils has been held since 2007, alternating between Addis Ababa and New York. In 2019 the session was held in Addis Ababa, however this year members would not be able to have in person meeting in New York given the travel and physical meeting restrictions due to COVID19. Hence both the annual informal seminar and the consultative meeting are expected to take place through VTC.

As previous practices demonstrate the consultative meeting used to address both conflict situations and thematic issues together. However, in recent years particularly from 2016 onwards the annual consultative meeting focused on country/region specific conflict situations. Whereas the informal joint seminar, which precedes, the annual consultative meeting, serves as a platform for discussing issues or themes of interest for the partnership between the PSC and the UNSC. It is to be recalled that in 2019 the informal seminar addressed issues related to Silencing the Guns and on modalities for conducting joint field missions. While the annual consultative meeting deliberated on the situation in Libya, South Sudan, Central African Republic and the Sahel region.

In preparation for this year's meeting, a number of preparatory meetings and consultations have been held. In the

course of this month, the PSC held two meetings. The first meeting was held on 8 September and the preparatory consultation involved the A3 and the Head of the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN. The second meeting was held on 18 September at the 947th session and the PSC agreed on its approach to the thematic and country specific agenda items. It has selected speakers from its members on the respective agenda items. In order to harmonize the views of member states and agree on the contents of the joint communique, the Committee of Experts of the PSC also held a meeting on 28 September.

In terms of outcome document, there were efforts made in adopting a joint communiqué at the end of the meetings and indeed the two Councils were successful in 2018. However this did not materialize in 2019. Hence the two Councils never adopted the draft communiqué from the previous year. Given that the meetings are taking place virtually this might pose an additional challenge in adopting the joint communiqué swiftly this year as well.

5th Informal Joint Seminar

The 5th informal joint annual seminar, taking place on 29 September is expected to address two agenda items: strengthening co-operation between the PSC and UNSC and on Silencing the Guns in Africa.

Djibouti, PSC Chairperson for the month of September and Niger UNSC President of the month are expected to deliver opening remarks. It is also expected that AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui makes introductory remarks.

The first agenda item of the informal seminar is scheduled to take place under the theme 'The UN at 75 and AU at 57: Strengthening cooperation between the UNSC and the AUPSC – focusing on improving working methods'. This segment of the seminar is also expected to include reflection around joint

field missions, which is a follow up to the discussion held in 2019 during the informal seminar.

For this topic on cooperation from the PSC side Kenya is selected to be the lead speaker and Egypt will play the supporting speaking role. From the UNSC side Niger and Russia will have the lead and support speaking role respectively.

A number of issues may feature around working methods. The role of the A3 is particularly essential in enhancing synergy between the two Councils. Strengthening their role in the UNSC particularly on agendas pertaining to Africa is critical to ensure that Africa's position is well reflected in the deliberation and decision-making process of the UNSC.

Beyond the annual seminar and consultative meeting it is also important to ensure that there is a constant flow of information and consistent communication throughout the year between PSC and UNSC on agendas of mutual interest. The Council members may also reflect on joint activities that can further enhance the cooperation including briefing sessions, joint reports and field missions.

Regarding joint field missions, there is agreement between the two Councils on the importance of undertaking such joint visits to get first-hand information and to develop common understanding of the conflict situation as well as to formulate harmonized positions.

Since 2015, the joint communiqué issued following the annual consultative meeting expressed the interest of the two Councils to consider joint visits to conflict situations in Africa.

However, the discussion on the specific modalities is still ongoing. It is to be recalled from last year's annual informal consultative seminar that despite discussions on various options for undertaking joint field missions the two Councils were unable to arrive at an agreed formula. Last year's

exchanges show that the two sides presented their respective proposals. While the lack of progress may be a reflection of doctrinal differences between the two sides, it can also be a result of the lack of a joint approach for developing joint proposals. For this year, an additional factor that may inform the discussion on the modalities for joint field missions is the COVID19 pandemic.

On the agenda item regarding Silencing the Guns in Africa Senegal is selected as the lead speaker and Burundi will assume the support speaking role. From the UNSC side, South Africa as the lead speaker and China as support speaker are also expected to deliver statements.

The year 2020 under the AU theme 'Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development' has been considered as critical year in advancing and consolidating support for the peace and security agenda in the continent. However, after the advent of COVID19, much of the attention has focused on mitigating the spread of the virus and monitoring its impact in the Continent. Yet, the agenda of Silencing the Guns remains more pressing and important. It is expected that the two Councils will take stock of measures taken within the framework of the AU Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns and Resolution 2475 and explore how to implement targeted measures in pursuit of Silencing the Guns including in the areas of ridding the continent of illicit arms and weapons.

14th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting

The 14th annual joint consultative meeting will take place on 30 September. The meeting is expected to start with opening remarks by Under-Secretary General, Rosemary DiCarlo and AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui. Unlike the previous years where four country specific agenda items were tabled, for this year the consultative meeting will be addressing two issues: the situation in Mali/Sahel and

Somalia. These offer specific conflict situations for pursuing the agenda of Silencing the Guns with targeted measures.

On the situation in Mali/Sahel, Algeria will be the lead speaker whereas Ghana and Egypt will be supporting speakers. Some of the issues expected to be highlighted include the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement of Mali and the need to ensure stable and inclusive process during the transition. France, as the lead speaker and Tunisia and Dominican Republic as support speakers are expected to deliver their statements from the UNSC side.

The evolving political situation in Mali and its impact in the broader security context in the Sahel and in the fight against terrorist groups in the region are some of the key issues expected to feature prominently. On 25 September former defence minister Bah Ndaw and coup leader Assimi Goita have been sworn in as interim president and vice-president respectively for the transitional period that is expected to extend for maximum of 18 months. Ndaw seems to enjoy acceptance from the opposition and domestic political forces. ECOWAS's Special Envoy Goodluck Jonathan after meeting with Ndaw has also stated of the possibilities for ECOWAS's sanctions to be lifted with appointment of a civilian prime minister which is expected to be announced by the President of Ghana Nana Akufo-Addo Chairperson of ECOWAS.

However addressing the existential threats related to the deep-rooted socio-economic vulnerabilities as well as security and governance challenges remain a critical task. There is still uncertainty whether the current transitional administration is in fact capable of responding to such urgent and complex matters that have pushed the people to protest President Keita's leadership.

The overall security situation in the Sahel remains volatile. In this regard the two Councils are also expected to discuss about the operation of G5 Sahel force and the deployment of

the additional 3000 AU troops in the region, which is pending upon the approval of the CONOPS by the PSC.

On the second agenda item relating to the situation in Somalia, Ethiopia is selected as a lead speaker and Lesotho and Mozambique will be support speakers. From the side of the UNSC, the United Kingdom, which is the pen-holder on Somalia, is expected to be the lead speaker whereas St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Belgium are scheduled to be the support speakers.

The newly agreed upon election modalities as well as the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan leading to 2021 are expected to feature prominently under the agenda item on Somalia. The independent comprehensive assessment of the security environment that will be developed by the AU, UN and the Government of Somalia to guide the two Councils on partners' engagement in the post-2021 period may also be addressed. Most notably, the discussion is also expected to address the critical role of AMISOM and the need for its support as well as the modalities of AMISOM's handover of responsibilities to Somalia Security Forces and its drawdown.

It is expected that a draft joint communiqué will be adopted at the end of the annual consultation. On the 2020 AU theme on Silencing the Guns the Councils may highlight on the need to keep the momentum beyond 2020. The Councils may also underline the importance of multilateral cooperation in defeating the spread of COVID19 and mitigating its impact on conflict hotspots. On the cooperation between the PSC and UNSC the communiqué may underline the need for a more systematic cooperation, which goes beyond the annual consultative meeting. On joint field missions, the Councils may agree on a mechanism for developing joint proposals on the modality for undertaking joint missions. On Mali/Sahel the two Councils may commend ECOWAS's leadership in managing the situation in Mali. They may take note of the developments in Mali and underline the necessity for the transitional authorities to respect the

transitional charter to ensure the restoration of constitutional order in the country and uphold the Mali peace process and existing security partnerships. They may also urge that the developments in Mali should not undermine the fight against terrorism in the region. The Councils may also agree that the fight against terrorism should also address the root causes of conflict. On Somalia, Council members may welcome the agreement between Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States on election modalities. They may call for the rapid completion of the revision of the Somalia Transitional Plan to allow proper planning for the post 2021 period. They may also call for the conduct of the independent comprehensive assessment of the security environment giving due attention to broader and comprehensive stabilization and security requirements, with a view to presenting options for consideration to the PSC and UN Security Council on the role of the AU, UN and international partners in Somalia post-2021.