

Annual Interaction Between the Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Peace building Commission

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Tomorrow (11 November) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to hold its annual interaction with the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (UNPBC). The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, UNPBC Chair and Vice Chair and the representative of UN office to the AU (UNOAU) are expected to address the Council. The Department of Peace and Security is also expected to deliver a statement.

The 633rd PSC session held on 18 October 2016 decided to institutionalize its partnership with UNPBC through annual interactive sessions alternating between Addis Ababa and New York, joint missions to conflict affected countries and joint retreats. Consequently, the Chairs of UNPBC have held consultations in Addis in 2017 and in New York on the margins of the 12th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting between the AUPSC and the UN Security Council in 2018. The UNSC in its resolution 2282 (2016) and 2457 (2019) has similarly urged the UNPBC to hold regular exchanges of information with relevant regional and sub regional organizations in particular with AU Commission.

Drawing on these decisions and the practice of the previous years, UNPBC is expected to provide update on its activities in the continent including recent field visits undertaken in

conflict affected countries. The interactive session may also focus on particular regions and countries namely Central African Republic (CAR), Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Mano River Union and the Sahel. The two bodies are also expected to assess the progress made in the implementation of the previous deliberations and commitments.

The Chair of the thirteenth session of the UNPBC Guillermo Fernández de Soto Valderrama when outlining the 2019 work plan in January, highlighted the UNPBC's partnership with the PSC should particularly 'continue to focus on conflict prevention, good governance, human rights and national reconciliation'. These priority thematic areas are also anchored in the 2017 MoU signed between AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui, and Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Oscar Fernandez-Taranco. The Sahel region and Liberia are also key priority areas in 2019 as indicated in the statement of the Chair.

In line with the work plan of the UNPBC, the respective country configuration Chairs may brief the Council on their activities. The Sahel region, which has also been a key area of focus at the recently concluded 13th joint consultative session of the PSC and UNSC, is expected to feature prominently in tomorrow's session. PSC and UNPBC may discuss the deteriorating security situation in the region and the increasing attacks against civilians and security forces witnessed in Mali and Burkina Faso. In a high-level meeting on Burkina Faso convened by UNPBC in September 2019 participants underscored the worrying trend of the spike in terrorist attacks and spill over effects in other countries of the region.

The latest deadly attacks in the region are also an indication of the increased strength, capacity and territorial presence of terrorist groups and networks operating in the Sahel region. Hence, it is critical to assess mechanisms in which security operations can also be accompanied by political

discussions and negotiations.

The Mano River region is another area on which tomorrow's session is expected to deliberate. It would be of interest for the PSC to get UNPBC's assessment of the situation in Mano River region and its support in Liberia after the completion of United Nations Mission in Liberia's (UNMIL) mandate on 30 March 2018. In terms of the support for Liberia, the UNPBC is expected to highlight the work undertaken over the past 18 months in facilitating a smooth transition, in sustaining the peacebuilding plan and averting any gap that might be created after the withdrawal of the mission. The two bodies may particularly emphasize on the need for joint efforts in sustaining the peacebuilding process in the country.

Similarly, in the case of Sierra Leone the UNPBC may discuss the efforts in supporting the establishment of national institutions mandated to promote peace and national cohesion. Also, worth noting is the important role of ECOWAS in the region and the need to harmonize efforts at various levels in order to provide coordinated support in the countries.

The CAR, another priority country during the recent PSC-UNSC annual consultative meeting, is also expected to be on the agenda in tomorrow's interactive session. It is to be recalled that there was a UNPBC visit to CAR jointly undertaken with the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support and the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in February 2019. The visit, which took place in the aftermath of the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic aimed at supporting National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and exploring the role of the UNPBC in the preparation of the 2020-21 planned elections. The Chair of CAR configuration, permanent representative of Morocco has then briefed the UNSC on the key findings of the field visit.

At a high-level event on the situation in CAR held in June 2019 the Chair of CAR configuration, described the situation

in the country as 'layers of unresolved conflict, weak state presence throughout the country, persistence of armed groups, and more than half the population in need'.

Most recently, alarming developments that may jeopardize the signed peace agreement have surfaced. The leaders of two rebel group who joined the government as military advisers after the signing of the agreement have recently resigned from their positions. Other groups continue to violate provisions of the agreement and have resumed competition for more territorial control. Opposition leaders have also voiced their strong disapproval of rebel leaders joining the government apparatus. The proliferation of armed groups continues to be a critical obstacle of the peace processes. A new armed group which is not part of the February agreement has emerged in northern CAR.

In addition to the country configuration Chairs the Vice Chairs may also use the opportunity to engage the PSC. Particularly Egypt as one of the Vice-Chairs of UNPBC may brief the PSC on the establishment and activities of AU Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD). Egypt as the 2019 Chair of the AU has been championing the PCRD work of the Union by supporting the establishment of the Centre.

The expected outcome of the session is unknown during the production of this 'Insight'. However the PSC may adopt a communiqué. It is expected that the PSC would welcome the work of the UNPBC and commend it for the briefing it has provided on the activities in specific countries. It may call on the UNPBC to continue its support to countries emerging from conflict. The PSC could also express concern over the relapse some countries and regions back to conflict, which undermines the gains that were made so far. It may underline that sustainable peace requires addressing root causes of conflict hence the importance of the security and development nexus. The PSC may further call on the need to foster the strategic partnership to ensure the provision of a comprehensive and

multi-sector peacebuilding support to countries and regions.