

Briefing on Peace Support Operations in Africa

Automatic Heading TextDate | 13 April, 2018

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Today (13 April) at 3:30pm the Peace and Security Council (PSC) will hold a briefing session on peace support operations in Africa. The Council will receive a briefing from the Smaïl Chergui, African Union (AU) Commissioner for Peace and Security and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

It is expected that the briefing would have two dimensions. The first of this and the main focus of the briefing is the recent joint field visits that Chergui and Lacroix undertook including to Darfur where UN-AU have their joint mission UNAMID and the Central African Republic. As a practical manifestation of the implementation of the AU-UN partnership, it is also anticipated that the briefing session would highlight efforts at implementing enhanced partnership between the two organizations.

Chergui and Lacroix have been on a joint field visit to Sudan with a focus on the joint UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and in the Central African Republic (CAR) where the UN runs a mission, MINUSCA and the AU leads the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR. In their joint briefing, Chergui and Lacroix are expected to explain to the PSC the current state of the peace and security situation in Sudan, Darfur and CAR, and on challenges and the next steps.

With respect to Sudan, particular attention would focus on not only the process of the withdrawal of UNAMID but also the effort for political solution to the situation. They are expected to indicate how the AU and the UN jointly support the

stabilization and restoration of peace in Darfur. In terms of the visit to the CAR, the two are expected to brief the PSC on the security situation in the CAR including the recent incident of fighting that ensued when CAR and MINUSCA undertook an operation. The two arrive in Bangui while the situation on the ground was tense. On 11 April, they issued a joint statement on the situation expressing concern about persistent tensions in the PK5 neighborhood of Bangui and explaining that 'the operations conducted by the Government and MINUSCA on 8 April were aimed at putting an end to the activities of criminal elements that endanger the lives of peaceful citizens, in a neighborhood that is also the economic hub of Bangui.'

Both the AU and the UN have each got a new leadership in the past year. Both Antonio Guterres, UN's Secretary-General and Moussa Faki Mahamat, AU Commission Chairperson, have expressed commitment for enhancing the partnership of the two organizations on peace and security in Africa. Exactly a year ago, the two leaders signed a landmark framework agreement for enhanced partnership in peace and security envisaging coordinated engagement and joint processes throughout the cycle of conflict.

Today's briefing session marks one year since the signing of the agreement and offers an opportunity for reviewing the progress made thus far. At the time of the signing of the agreement in April 2017, Secretary-General Guterres observed that 'we are witnessing, in Africa, as around the world, changes ...that force us to have a strategic review of the way peace support operations take place'. Both Chergui and Lacroix would inform the PSC that the joint field visit constitutes a practical manifestation of the efforts to translate the vision of elevating the partnership between the AU and the UN to a strategic level through joint strategic engagement on the ground.

In today's session, Lacroix is expected to highlight UN's

expectation to move away from peace support operations seeking to implement wide range of tasks (with an extended presence on the ground and limited effectiveness) to operations with limited set of tasks aimed at enabling the building of national institutions and transfer responsibility to national authorities within shortest time possible.

The briefing would also highlight the importance of the search for political solutions and the value of joint strategic level engagement through joint field visits. It is to be recalled that 2320 also envisaged UN-AU partnership 'based on respective comparative advantage, burden sharing, consultative decision making, joint analysis and planning missions and assessment visits by the UN and AU, monitoring and evaluation, transparency and accountability.'

In translating joint approaches envisaged in this resolution and in the framework, this joint field visit is an experiment that can be developed into one tool for implementing joint approaches. It helps in achieving joint understanding of the situation on the ground. Additionally, it serves as leverage for supporting the search for political solution in the conflict-affected countries by sending a message of unity of views. Indeed, Chergui and Lacroix sought to achieve that in the CAR, thereby contributing to calming down the tense situation arising from recent incidents relating to the CAR and MINUSCA operation. In their joint statement, they underscored the 'complete unity and common resolve of the African Union and the United Nations'.

In terms of AU-UN partnership, today's PSC session will be informed by the long list of recommendations made by the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), which highlighted, among others, the need for a more responsive collaborative arrangement and partnership between UN and regional organizations, particularly the UN. Additionally, in its Resolution 2320 of 18 November 2016, the UN Security Council welcomed the AU Assembly decision in July 2016 to finance 25 per cent of the cost of AU-led peace

support operations by 2020 with the understanding that the UN would cover the remaining from assessed contributions. From the side of AU PSC members, they may also recall PSC's its communiqué of 30 May 2016 that underscored the importance of securing a substantive Security Council resolution establishing that UN assessed contributions should, on a case by case basis, finance Security Council-mandated AU peace support missions and seek update in this respect.

Next week on 18 April, Chergui and Lacroix are also expected to brief the UNSC jointly, Chergui via VCT from Addis Ababa and Lacroix in person in New York. With the field visit leading to joint briefing of both the UNSC and the PSC, it can also evolve into useful vehicle for coordinating the agenda and monthly program of work of the two Councils as well.

It is anticipated that after an analysis and review of this joint field visit, the two may explore modalities for effective institutionalization of such visit. The follow up to the visits would also explore in what ways such tools would best be implemented for leveraging the role of peace support operations and the search for the political resolution of conflicts.

While no particular outcome is expected, depending on the joint briefing and the ensuing deliberations, the PSC may both express support for such joint high-level field visit and call for its institutionalization.