

Briefing on the nexus between maritime security, safety and development of the blue economy in Africa

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Tomorrow (21 March) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is scheduled to receive a briefing on the nexus between maritime security, safety and development of the blue economy in Africa.

Deputy foreign minister of Kenya is expected to brief the Council. AU Commission Peace and Security Department will also make a statement. Additionally, statements are also expected from invited participants including Seychelles as the Champion for the Development of the Blue Economy in Africa, representatives of Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs), Norway, Canada, the European Union and United Nations.

The briefing will take place in two parts. The first part is open to both PSC members and the representatives of invited countries and organizations. The second part involves only PSC members.

As indicated in the concept note Kenya circulated for the session, the main objective of the session will be to examine trends, progress and challenges of maritime security and safety in Africa. It also seeks to formulate steps in addressing the security threats and risks and to collectively work towards realizing the commitments of developing the blue economy.

The intervention by Kenya is anticipated to provide an

overview and update on the major outcomes of the Global Sustainable Blue Economy Conference held in Nairobi from 26-28 November 2018. The first ever such global event on the blue economy, the conference highlighted the necessity of multilateral cooperation as a pre-requisite for the realization of the development potentials of the blue economy. Such multilateral cooperation, among others, provides the platform for the creation of a secure maritime domain as the foundation for value addition to the sustainable development of the blue economy in terms of trade, tourism, fishing industry and transport. Accordingly, the issues raised at the conference in these respects include maritime security and safety and regulatory enforcement. The outcome report underlined the importance of regional cooperation and the role of multi-stakeholder approach to effectively respond to maritime issues. The report explicitly discusses the need for strengthened implementation of and compliance with regional and international regulatory frameworks.

This session seeks to build on and takes forward these various themes highlighted in the Blue Economy Conference. In terms of regional cooperation on the Blue Economy, it is worth noting that the blue economy is recognized as the next frontier for the economic transformation of the continent in Agenda 2063. If one considers the fact that 38 of the 55 African countries are coastal states covering vast ocean territories of an estimated 13 million km² and having a maritime industry worth over USD \$ 1 trillion per year (as pointed out in the concept note for this session), the potential for growth in an atmosphere of effective international and regional cooperation and regulation and secure maritime domain is very high. As this continental framework put it 'Africa's Blue economy, which is three times the size of its landmass, shall be a major contributor to continental transformation and growth'.

While this is not an area on which the AU been engaged in for a long time, it has established key legal and policy

instruments in recent. The first continental instrument is the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIMS) adopted in 2014. The strategy provides further guidance on the nexus between security and development within the maritime domain. The framework is also developed to complement the PSC protocol article 3 in developing a common defense policy and to address the maritime security challenges. With its focus on addressing threats to maritime security, the strategy is more defensive in its orientation than developmental.

In a development that underscored the heightened policy interest with increased attention to the development of the maritime domain for socio-economic benefits, the AU in October 2016 convened an Extraordinary Summit on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa in October 2016 in Togo. The Summit sought to strategize on mechanisms for strengthened protection of seas and oceans and to utilize maritime space for the development and transformation of the continent. As its major outcome, the Summit adopted the Charter on Maritime Safety and Security and Development in Africa (Lomé Charter).

Going beyond these normative instruments, provisions are made in AU plans for putting in place a dedicated structure within the AU institutional setup. The 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 envisages the establishment of African Centre for Blue Economy by 2025. Under the reformed structure of the AU Commission, from 2021 for the first time, there will be a dedicated maritime component in the agriculture, rural development, blue economy and sustainable development department of the AU Commission.

This session is also an opportunity for a follow up on the PSC's first session on maritime security. The PSC at its 682nd meeting, held in 2017 at a ministerial level underscored the important role of RECs/RMs, the need to put in place appropriate follow up mechanism, the finalization of the draft annexes to the Lomé Charter.

The consideration of maritime security together with or in relation to the blue economy has the advantage not only of shifting the focus from security threats and defensive policy approaches to immense economic growth potentials of the marine resources. The interest in the exploitation of the potential of the blue economy will help mobilize the necessary investment and development of capacities for maritime security and safety.

There are however a number of issues that would be of interest to the PSC session's deliberations. One of the issues is the mapping of the major threats to maritime security and safety and their manifestations for designing responses tailored to the specific nature and form of the threats in the various maritime zones of Africa. The threats in the maritime domain that the PSC identified at its 682nd include piracy, illegal, unreported and unregulated activities including fishing, drug and human trafficking, and terrorism. Maritime governance and environmental protection also constitute important issues for the development of the blue economy.

Additionally, security challenges that are encountered are mainly supranational, requiring regional efforts and responses. The Lomé Charter remains a critical instrument of such strategic efforts. The PSC refers to it as an 'instrument to promote peace and address the safety and security threats in Africa's maritime domain'. However, to date only Togo has ratified the Charter. Indeed, Togo as Champion of maritime security has interest as a PSC member on this issue of ratification of the Lomé Charter and finalization of the annexes to the Charter.

As noted above, sustained development of the blue economy necessitates a secure maritime domain. However, the report of the Nairobi conference pointed out that the 'inadequate collaboration among stakeholders in maritime security sector compounded by overlapping or uncoordinated institutional mandates and lack of or weak law enforcement capacities' are

critical challenges to ocean governance.

Other issues for the PSC to address during this session include the articulation of the approach that best suits the mandate of the PSC in continuing its engagement on this theme and the norm-to-implementation gap. In these respects, the implementation of the 2050 strategy may in particular be one of the key areas of discussion during the briefing. As it was indicated in the outcome of the Nairobi conference, partnership and regulatory measures as well as implementation frameworks are among the top ten commitment priorities identified by the participants.

The form that the outcome of the session was unknown when this 'Insight' was finalized, but is expected to be a communiqué. The Council may underline the importance of addressing existing and imminent threats in the maritime domain to ensure the realization of Africa's blue economy development. To this end the PSC may call on the implementation of international and regional instruments including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the 2016 Lome Charter and 2050 AIMS in order to address maritime threats and crimes and to enhance regulatory enforcement. It may provide concrete steps in securing maritime areas for economic development by strengthening monitoring and control systems through regional and international cooperation. The PSC could also articulate the approach that best suits its mandate for it to carve out meaningful role in pursuing this theme further.