

Exchange of views with the High Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson on Silencing the Guns

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Tomorrow (5 February) the PSC is scheduled to have a session for 'Exchange of views between the PSC and the AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns'. The format of the session is assigned to be open but only to African Union (AU) member states. AU's agenda on silencing the guns was developed within the framework of the 50th anniversary of the O/AU in May 2013 and the adoption of Agenda 2063. One of the most ambitious targets that the Heads of State and Government of the AU Assembly set for Africa in the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration was the pledge 'not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans' and 'to end all wars in Africa by 2020'.

Following its open session under the theme "Silencing the Guns: pre-requisites for realizing a conflict-free Africa by the year 2020" at 430th meeting, the PSC in its press statement PSC/PR/BR (CDXXX) requested the AUC to prepare a roadmap to underpin the actions necessary for the attainment of the goal of a conflict free Africa by 2020. Subsequently, the AU within the framework of the PSC developed the Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020 as part of the flagship projects and programmes of Agenda 2063, Africa's blueprint for its long-term socio-economic and integrative transformation.

The 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly, held in Addis Ababa, on 30 and 31 January 2017, adopted through decision

Assembly/AU/Dec/630 (XXVIII) the AU Master Roadmap. As a key step for mobilizing action towards the ambition of silencing the guns, in October 2017, the AU Commission Chairperson appointed Ramtane Lamamra, of Algeria, as his High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa. In this Capacity, Mr Lamamra was assigned the task of assisting the Commission to galvanize support towards ending violence and sustaining peace on the continent. Tomorrow's session presents an opportunity for the High Representative, Ramtane Lamamra, to inform the PSC of the efforts he made since assuming the responsibility and update member states on the progress made and challenges faced in the effort to realize the ambition of silencing the guns by 2020.

In terms of Lamamra's role, it is of interest for PSC members to learn about his program of activities vis-à-vis the AU Master Roadmap and actions undertaken within that framework. In this respect, Lamamra is expected to highlight the High-Level Workshop organized through his office on 11 and 12 October on the steps that should be taken for speeding up the implementation of the AU's Agenda 2063 peace and security flagship project of silencing the guns. Of particular importance would be the insights he would share from the workshop including the emphasis that participants put on the imperative of prioritizing prevention of violent conflicts by addressing root causes and strengthening AU's efforts towards structural prevention of conflicts.

In terms of interventions in current or emerging situations in his role as High-Representative, PSC members would be interested about the opportunity that his office avails to the AU for sustained engagement in the effort to resolve specific conflict situations. In this respect, his briefing is expected to highlight the contribution of his engagement to the peace process in Madagascar and Comoros. Given that the time left for achieving the silencing of the guns is fast approaching, this briefing also serves for assessing the progress made, the

challenges faced and the adjustments required in pursuing the ambition of silencing the guns. The progress being registered would be highlighted in terms of the measures taken for resolving on-going conflicts in various settings: the Central African Republic CAR- (through the AU Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), between Ethiopia and Eritrea, between Djibouti and Eritrea, Darfur (Sudan), The Gambia, Guinea Bissau and the South Sudan peace process, among others.

Other areas that would also be highlighted include the efforts made for mobilizing the role of regional organizations and international actors. Of particular interest in this respect would be the concerted effort for addressing the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and use of small arms and light weapons including the development of the Silencing the Guns Continental Plan of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the development of the Draft AU Policy for the Management of Recovered Arms and Ammunition in PSOs.

With respect to the implementation of the Master Roadmap, it has by now become apparent that the objective of silencing the guns would not be realized by 2020 in the current peace and security context and trends of the continent. In terms of the role of the AU in conflict prevention, as the PSC pointed out in its reports on silencing the guns, one of the major challenges for implementation of the agenda of silencing the guns is the problem of denialism, which significantly undermines AU's role to work out and facilitate early responses. As pointed out, failure to acknowledge and take corrective action upon receipt of early warning information on looming crises or on aggravation of an existing crisis tends to multiply conditions that push some of the political actors to arm themselves and use violence to pursue political objectives.

Another challenge relates to the degree of domestication of and commitment to the priorities set in the Master Roadmap by

member states. As the PSC did during its 430th session, the importance of the responsibility of individual member state in protecting their citizens by addressing the root causes of conflicts should be underscored. In this regard, particular attention should be given to the deepening of the culture of democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, popular participation and inclusivity and addressing the problem of youth unemployment and regional or social inequality that create the conditions for conflicts.

Also of importance for the PSC and indeed AU member states for whom tomorrow's session is open is review of the Master Roadmap and the approach of the AU for silencing the guns. In this respect of particular importance is the imperative of focusing on mobilization of targeted intervention on priority peace and security challenges. It would be good in this regard to examine whether it would be worth to task relevant organs and institutions to initiate and mobilize action in respect to the pervasive and increasing governance challenges on the continent, terrorism and violent extremism etc.

The expected outcome of the session is a press statement, although a communiqué with substantive decisions would also be fitting. While taking note of the measure of progress registered, this could underscore the responsibility of states and the particular importance of national level measures. In terms of regional and continental interventions, it could provide for adjusting the Master Roadmap paying particular attention to the mobilization of discreet targeted policy intervention measures both to prevent the eruption into full-scale conflict of high impact emerging crisis situations and/or to achieve resolution of some of the major existing conflicts. The role of the High Representative (including in terms of providing his office with resources and elevating its work for catalysing the required actions) is also worth emphasizing. The PSC could also stipulate to hold quarterly session to assess progress on the basis of an updated Master

Roadmap and specific plans of action developed within the framework of the Master Roadmap.