

Joint annual consultative meeting of the PSC and the UNSC

Automatic Heading TextDate | 21 October, 2019

On 21 and 22 October the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will have their 4th informal seminar and 13th joint annual consultation in Addis Ababa. Originally, the meetings were scheduled for 23rd and 24th of October. But this initial schedule had to be adjusted upon the request of South Sudan to enable the UNSC delegation visiting South Sudan ahead of its visit to Addis Ababa engage President Salva Kiir before his scheduled travel to Sochi for the first Russia-Africa Summit starting on 23rd October.

The annual consultative meeting of the members of the two Councils have been held since 2007, alternating between the Addis Ababa and New York. While the consultative meeting in previous years addressed both conflict situations and thematic issues together, in more recent years the two Councils deal with conflict situations and thematic issues separately. Since 2016, the annual consultative meeting focused on specific conflict situations. For example, the last meeting of the two Councils held in New York covered the situations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. The informal joint seminar, which precedes, the annual consultative meeting, has become the framework for discussing issues or themes of interest for the partnership between the PSC and the UNSC.

It has become an established practice that the two Councils will adopt a joint communique at the end of their meetings.

In preparation for the seminar and the consultative meetings,

the two Councils held various informal consultations. Following the successful experience of 2018, the AU Committee of Experts traveled to New York during the week of 30 October to discuss the agenda and negotiate on the communique. The PSC also convened a number of preparatory sessions.

Joint informal seminar of the AUPSC and the UNSC

The annual informal joint seminar, happening for the fourth time, is scheduled to take place on the 21st of October.

Although initially there were three issues on the agenda of the informal seminar, it is now expected to take up only two of these important issues – silencing the Guns in Africa and exchange views on modalities for conducting joint field missions in Africa. The AU has already decided that its theme of the year for 2020 would be “Silencing the guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa’s development”. Under the Equatorial Guinea Presidency earlier this year, the UNSC adopted resolution 2457 (2019) on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security with focus on silencing the guns in Africa. Equatorial Guinea plans to host a ministerial Conference dedicated to this theme with a view to following up implementation. Apart from reviewing the various measures envisaged in resolution 2457, major issues expected to feature during the informal seminar include the status of implementation of the AU’s project on silencing the guns by 2020 and the follow up to this plan after 2020.

Modalities for joint PSC-UNSC field missions is the second agenda of the informal seminar. The two Councils have agreed in principle to have joint field missions. Despite efforts by African members of the UNSC to push for its implementation, the idea of a joint field mission has not so far materialized. During the last joint annual consultation, the two Councils agreed that the modalities of such visits will be discussed and agreed upon on a case-by-case basis by the two Councils. Therefore, the African members of the UNSC have been trying to

develop modalities to help facilitate the discussion on this issue. Within the PSC, in preparation for this agenda, various options have been put forward and the PSC has been reviewing them. One such option is using the troika format involving the past, current and future chairs. Another is to have one representative each for the joint session from the regional groupings on the basis of which election of members is organized. It is expected that the exchange of views on this issue will help facilitate progress.

The issue of financing of AU led peace support operation was on the draft agenda for the joint informal seminar. However, the AUPSC proposed the removal of the item on the financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations from the agenda of the joint informal seminar. At its 881st meeting held on 19 September 2019, the AUPSC had considered the draft resolution proposed by the African members of the UNSC and decided to postpone the submission of the proposed draft resolution. The AUPSC is of the view that the issue should be considered at the next AU Summit in January to have what it called "a better articulated and African owned common position" before a draft resolution is tabled for consideration by the UNSC.

Signaling the wish of the UNSC to keep financing on the agenda, a letter addressed to the Chair of the PSC has been sent from the President of the UNSC. The African three members of the UNSC (A3), particularly current President of the UNSC South Africa, which has been working on this issue as one of its big-ticket issue under its tenure, has strong resolve to build on the momentum build over the years and push ahead with the discussion on this theme. Indeed, acting on the call of the PSC on the A3 to continue spearheading the African common position on predictable and sustainable financing through UN assessed contributions, the A3 has in the past four years been working hard to achieve this objective taking forward the progress achieved through the adoption of resolutions 2320 and 2378. Accordingly, the A3 initiated a draft resolution on

financing to be adopted in December 2018 under the Cote d'Ivoire Presidency of the Security Council. However, the US threatened to Veto the resolution. Following the introduction of a so-called compromise text to accommodate the US, the vote on the A3 draft resolution was postponed (Please refer to the Amani insight on this issue).

Even though there was expectation that the resolution could have been tabled under the Equatorial Guinea Presidency of the Security Council, it did not materialize. South Africa who initially brought the issue of financing to the Security Council in its previous membership took over from Ethiopia in advancing the agenda and it made the issue one of the priorities of its Presidency this month. Work started in advance in the A3 format to build the necessary momentum for the draft resolution. The A3 Permanent Representatives also went to Washington, D.C. to engage with the United States, including the Congress, White House and the Department of State. The two draft texts that were put in blue in December 2019 were withdrawn and a new and slightly updated text was introduced by the A3. The A3 had sent the draft to Addis Ababa to get input and guidance from the AUPSC before negotiations over the draft commenced. The new draft was circulated to members of the UNSC and expert level negotiation also started to receive preliminary reaction on the draft. When the PSC finally reviewed the matter, it felt that the latest updated draft did not adequately reflect AU interests. The PSC opted for deferring the consideration of the draft text by the UNSC pending the holding of adequate consultation at the level of the African Union. The letter from South Africa has been discussed as part of the preparation for the joint seminar and annual consultation. Indications are that the PSC did not deem it wise to discuss this issue officially before internal AU discussions are finalized, and is hence unable to proceed with South Africa's proposal.

There is recognition that the momentum generated by the draft

A3 text should not be lost and it is vital that the two Councils address the financing issue to unlock the full potential of the UN-AU strategic partnership in the area of peace and security. A clear guidance and unequivocal support from the PSC to A3 will certainly go a long way in moving the discussions forward but there is also need for a clear strategy on how to engage the current US Administration not only at the level of the A3 PRs but also at the level of leadership of the A3 and of the African Union Commission. The unity of the A3 and the wider membership of the Africa Group is vital to ensure progress on the financing issue.

13th annual consultative meeting

During the annual consultative meeting, the two Councils are scheduled to take up four important and pressing peace and security situations on the continent. These are the situations in Libya, South Sudan, Central African Republic and the Sahel region.

On Libya, the two Councils may express concern over the situation in the country and call for a return to the political process based on the Libyan Political Agreement. In this context, they may call for an all-inclusive Libyan national reconciliation conferences to be co-organized by the UN and the AU, within the framework of the plan proposed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ghassan Salame. With the AU seeking increasing role in Libya, one issue expected to be a point of contention is the push from the AU for the appointment of a joint AU-UN special representative for Libya.

On South Sudan, the major issue is a follow up to the face to face meeting between President Salva Kiir Mayardit and Dr. Riekh Machar during the visit of the UNSC to Juba at end of the week. The PSC in the communique of its 886th session of 15 October called on the UNSC to impress on the parties on the need to form a revitalized and inclusive transitional

government of national unity by the end of the pre-transitional period on 12 November 2019. The two Councils are also expected to review the progress made thus far in the implementation of the R-ARCSS and to urge the signatories to expedite implementation of the outstanding issues, including the security arrangements and the number and boundaries of states. They may also call armed movements that have not yet signed the Agreement to join the peace process. For these, they draw on recent outcomes of the respective meetings of the two Councils. The PSC following its 886th session of 15 October issued a communique on the situation in South Sudan envisaging a working visit by the AU High-level ad hoc Committee for South Sudan to press the parties to proceed with the formation of a unity government by 12 November. It is to be recalled that the UNSC also issued a Presidential Statement on 8 October 2019, under the South African Presidency, focusing on the implementation of the R-ARCSS.

On Central African Republic, the two Councils may welcome the ongoing efforts to stabilize the country, particularly the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. The two Councils are thus expected to focus on ensuring that the government and armed groups create the conditions for the implementation of the Agreement and honor their commitments, including the cessation of hostilities and all acts of violence, notably those targeting civilians. They may also call for concrete support by the countries of the region, notably Chad and Sudan, and international partners to ensure the successful implementation of the peace agreement. There is also a need to underscore the importance of the guarantors and facilitators of the Peace Agreement to intensify their efforts to create the conditions conducive to its full implementation.

On the Sahel, the two councils are sure to discuss the continuing fragility of the security situation, including most notably the spread of terrorist networks and attacks

particularly in Burkina Faso, and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the region. Also of interest for the two Councils will be the steps taken by the G5 Sahel States towards the full and effective operationalization of the joint force of the G-5 Sahel (FC-G5S). They may call on the international community to continue to support the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the MNJTF to strengthen capacity to confront terrorism and extremism in the Sahel region. Equally important is the need to support efforts to tackle the underlying drivers of conflict and instability through comprehensive development initiatives, including the establishment of legitimate and representative local government structures and infrastructure for provision of public services.

A joint draft communique has been under negotiation. The hope and expectation is that the Joint Communique will be adopted at the end of the annual consultation. In the past, it used to take a long time for the two councils to agree on their joint communique but last year they were able to adopt it at the conclusion of their annual consultation. Meeting of the experts of the two councils helped in facilitating the adoption of the Joint Communique at the end of last year's consultation held in New York. It remains to be seen if the meetings of the experts of the two Councils held earlier in the month would lead to a repeat of last year's success in adopting the joint communiqué by the end of the consultative meeting.