

Open Session on Living Together in Peace

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Tomorrow (5 November), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to hold an Open Session on Living Together in Peace based on United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 72/130. It was Algeria, as chair of the Month that initiated this item as agenda of tomorrow's session.

During the session, Algeria as the PSC Chair of the month is expected to make a presentation. A representative from the UN may also deliver a statement. The presentations will be followed by interventions from member states and invited participants.

On 8 December 2017, the UNGA adopted Resolution 72/130, which designated 16 May as the 'International Day of Living Together in Peace' and a means of mobilising international efforts "to promote peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding and solidarity". The resolution highlights the need to promote the culture of peace and non-violence and underscores the importance of respect for religious and cultural diversity across the world. It calls on States and world leaders to work in collaboration with religious communities and find ways to promote reconciliation, resolve differences and pave the way for peace and sustainable development.

Tomorrow's open session is expected to provide the forum for participants to suggest practical steps for the realization of Resolution 72/130's goals in the political, economic, social, religious, cultural and educational spheres of public life. Resolution 72/130

recognizes living together in peace as 'accepting differences and having the ability to listen to, recognize, respect and appreciate others, as well as living in a peaceful and united way'. As such, the session is also anticipated to serve as a means for participants to reflect on the value and practical applications of 'living together in peace'.

The UNGA, through adopting Resolution 72/130, called upon UN Member States, agencies and other International and Regional Organizations, as well as Civil Society Organizations including Non-Governmental Organizations and individuals, to devote 16 May to celebrate "International Day of Living Together in Peace" to respecting culture and other local, national and regional customs, and taking educational initiatives and sensitization activities. It particularly tasked the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to facilitate the commemoration of annual International Day of Living Together in Peace.

María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly, in her opening statement at the celebration of 2019 International Day of Living Together in Peace, stressed that all countries across the world should seek to promote dialogue and reconciliation as well as acceptance and respect of diversity and differences.

The increasing trend in Africa of hate speech, identity and religious based conflicts, hatred, exacerbation of ethnic divisions and extremist ideology among religious and ethnic groups has been noted with concern by the PSC in its decision adopted at its 836th meeting on 3 April 2019. Taking account of the multiple armed conflicts, political tensions and instabilities disrupting peace as well as social and economic cohesion in Africa, the PSC may use tomorrow's open session as an

opportunity to call on Member States, political oppositions as well as faith leaders to embrace and promote a culture of tolerance and appreciation of diversity. This also highlights the need for complementing peace-making, mediation and peacebuilding efforts with interventions that leverage and support advocacy for a culture of peace and peaceful coexistence.

The PSC may in particular highlight the need for putting in place policy measures at national level to discourage the manipulation of ethnic, religious, cultural and social identities for fuelling tension, spreading hate and inciting communal violence in pursuit of narrow political objectives. Also, of interest for PSC members is the need for addressing the conditions and factors that make the manipulation of identities for political mobilization, inter-communal acrimony and violence possible. These conditions and factors include inequality in political representation and socio-economic opportunities, corruption and other forms of bad governance, natural resources curse and forms of political competition (winner takes all) that accentuate identity-based mobilization.

The concept note for tomorrow's session also underlines the importance of democracy, good governance and rule of law for the realisation of mutual respect for diversity. This rightly highlights the need to promote, protect respect, and fulfil core human rights principles such as the principle of equality and the principle of non-discrimination based on race, religion, gender, language or any other status, which are fundamental for building up a culture of tolerance of diversity.

Adopting inclusive government policies aimed at equitable distribution of wealth plays a significant role in the realisation of the socio-economic dimension of Resolution 72/130. Similarly, promoting moderate religious discourses helps to eliminate radicalisation and extremist

religious ideologies and considerably contributes to the religious aspect of 'living together in peace'. Utilising education as a means of instilling a culture of peace and tolerance in the minds of the youth and future generations would then ensure achievement of the social, economic, religious and political aspirations envisaged in Resolution 72/130.

It is to be recalled that various African countries have celebrated International Day of Peace on the 21st of September over the past years. Themes such as "Meaningful Youth Inclusion in Peace-Building" and "Together for Peace: Respect, Dignity and Security for All" have marked the celebration of International Day of Peace in African countries. This year it was observed in a high-level forum that was convened in Luanda, Angola in collaboration with UNESCO. Given that the themes of the celebration of 21st September and 16 May are interrelated, tomorrow's session can reflect on how member states, civil society and the media commemorate the two days in a complementary way through public awareness campaigns and education on peace, unity, inclusion, and tolerance with particular focus on the youth.

In her speech at this year's celebration of International Day of Living Together in Peace, María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés also particularly underscored the importance of the theme of the day with due regard to the challenges faced at the UN in adopting collective and multilateral decisions. Given the adverse impacts of unilateralism on peaceful co-existence within and among states, tomorrow's session also helps to reflect on the importance of multilateralism and collective action in the promotion of peace, reconciliation and mutual respect among countries and communities.

The expected outcome of the session is a press statement. The PSC may call on Member States for strengthened

efforts in advancing solidarity and reconciliation. It may task the AU Commission to ensure that on 16 May 'living together in peace' is commemorated annually.