

Open session on the commemoration of the 19th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Automatic Heading TextDate | October 17, 2019

Tomorrow (October 17) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is scheduled to hold an open session commemorating the 19th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The session is expected to take place under the theme 'the Role of Women in Social Changes and Peace Building: Time for Recognition – Commemoration of the UNSC Resolution 1325'.

Apart from the remark of Liberia as Chair of the PSC, the Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail Chergui is expected to deliver the opening remarks. The AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security Bineta Diop is expected to make a presentation. Women representatives from Sudan are also expected to address the PSC. The United Nations Office to the AU (UNOAU) is also expected to participate.

Over the years, the Council has held annual commemorative sessions focusing on a number of issues in line with UNSC resolution 1325. The October 2018 session has paid particular attention to the role of women in conflict prevention and peace building at community level. During this year's commemoration, the Office of the Special Envoy is expected to submit its first report on the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. The report is expected to provide an overall assessment on the level of progress made based on

the reports received from member states by utilizing the Continental Results Framework adopted in May 2018.

Resolution 1325 remains a critical instrument to advance the women's participation and their protection in conflict situation. Despite receiving wide recognition, the implementation of what the resolution envisions remains uneven on the continent. To date, in Africa, twenty-five countries have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) and five Regional Economic Communities/Mechanisms (REC/REMs) namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC), East African Community, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) have also adopted regional action plans (RAPs). The AU through its Special Envoy office has launched a 10 years Continental Results Framework (CRF) for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa. The Framework aims at ensuring that Members deliver on commitments made through the various instruments that have been adopted.

While these are important milestones in the implementation process, there remain major gaps. Some member states that have adopted national action plans are yet to follow up with sufficient budgetary allocation and dedicated institutional bodies to ensure adequate monitoring structures. Diop is expected to point out that out of the '25 Member States that have adopted NAPs on the implementation of Women, Peace and Security Agenda, only eight have achieved the 30% women representation in parliaments.' Also to be highlighted in the Special Envoy's presentation to the PSC is the inadequate progress in the representation of women in African peace processes, illustrated by the fact that 'the proportion of women in AMISOM remains at 3%.'

Following the launch of the of the CRF and in preparation towards the upcoming 20th anniversary of the UNSC resolution

1325 a consultative meeting aimed at enhancing women leadership in peace processes and advancing the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda was organized by the office of the Special Envoy 29 May 2019. The consultation called for the increased number of NAPs possibly to 2/3 of the AU membership by October 2020. It would be of interest to member states of the PSC to know further on the proposed strategy for achieving such target and update on other aspects of the outcome of the meeting.

The presentation by the Special Envoy may also highlight the various engagements held during the course of the year and may brief the Council and participants on the High-Level Solidarity Mission of African Women Leaders to support the Women of Sudan, who played leadership role in the civilian protest process that precipitated the transition in Sudan. Tomorrow's session is expected to extensively deliberate on the case of Sudan and the role of women's participation in the transition process and in the long-term political trajectory of the country. The intervention by women representatives from Sudan is expected to provide an in-depth discussion on the role that women played, the gains made and the challenges in their effective participation and role in the political transition and in the wider public life of Sudan.

Women's participation in consolidating peace processes would be of interest to the PSC particularly in relation to recently brokered and on-going peace processes in South Sudan, CAR and Sudan. In this respect, issues of particular significance include whether and the gender lens is used in conflict analysis, in the planning and implementation of peace processes and in monitoring and reviewing AU's interventions.

The PSC has held regular sessions on the women, peace and security agenda. In addition to the commemoration of the anniversary of resolution 1325, the PSC has institutionalized women, peace and security as a standing thematic agenda of the PSC since March 2010. Moreover, in addition to the two

standing sessions in the course of the year, the PSC in its 862nd meeting in July 2019 held a dedicated session mainly focusing on sexual violence in armed conflicts. The Council 'agreed to dedicate an annual open session to conflict-related sexual violence, which will serve as an annual forum for taking stock of progress made and challenges faced in the efforts aimed at ending sexual violence in armed conflicts in Africa'.

In assessing progress in respect of Resolution 1325 and the AU women and peace and security agenda, it is of particular importance for the PSC to consider what benchmarks, tools and mechanisms are put in place to systematically integrate gender in its engagements and in AU's role across the conflict cycle. In terms of the gender architecture of the AU, it would also be of interest for the PSC to know whether and how the various gender related entities and projects within the AU system coordinate, such as in reporting under the Maputo Protocol and the annual report under the CRF of the Special Envoy.

During this month, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its annual open debate on women, peace and security under South Africa's presidency. The UN Secretary-General is also expected to present his annual report on women, peace and security for 2019.

The 2018 report of the Secretary-General highlighted the underrepresentation of women in peaceful resolution of conflicts, it points out that between 1990 and 2017, women constituted only 2 per cent of mediators and 8 per cent of negotiators. Women also remain underrepresented in disarmament efforts although they are primary victims by violence resulting from illicit possession and circulation of arms. The report addressed issues related to women's access to basic services, justice and security, which are most of the time disrupted in conflict situations. Challenges around discriminatory laws that prevent women from enjoying their rights and access to justice may also be of interest to PSC

members and participants.

The expected outcome is a press statement. The Council may call on member states to adopt NAPs and make the necessary budgetary allocation and put in place robust monitoring mechanisms. Leading up to the milestone marking the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325 in 2020, the PSC could request that the women and peace and security agenda receives particular attention in the AU's theme of the year for 2020 'Silencing the Guns'. Also, of importance is the need for enhanced synergy and coordination with the UN system and for giving particular attention to the needs of young women. The PSC could also commend the AU Special Envoy for the consolidated report and may call on all member states for continued reporting on the implementation of 1325 by utilizing the CRF. The PSC could also encourage Sudan to continue its efforts in bringing women to position of leadership throughout the transition period and beyond and may urge other countries to follow the examples of countries that achieved high level of progress by showing high level political will.