

Open Session on Youth, Peace and Security

Automatic Heading TextDate | 12 November, 2020

Tomorrow (12 November) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene an open Session on 'Youth Peace and Security: Advancing Youth Roles and Capacities for Silencing the Guns in Africa'. This 963rd session of the PSC is expected to take place through VTC.

The Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Cessouma Minata Samate, and Commissioner for Human Resource, Science and Technology, Sarah Anyang Agbor, are expected to make statements. The AU Youth Envoy, Aya Chebbi and the five AU Youth for Peace Ambassadors (AYAPs) are scheduled to make presentations.

This session is organized as part of the African Youth Month and the annual thematic session of the PSC on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). As envisaged in the concept note, the objectives of the session include, among others, discussing the contribution of youth to the AU agenda on Silencing the Guns and the provision of technical and financial support to the conflict prevention projects to be undertaken by AYAPs in the five regions of the continent.

It is to be recalled that the PSC convened its first session dedicated to YPS in November 2018, which amongst others requested for undertaking a study on the role of the youth in promoting peace and security, the appointment of the five AYAPs and decided to 'institutionalize and regularize an annual open session dedicated to the theme of YPS'. During its second session on YPS in November 2019, the PSC appointed the five AYAPs to promote, in collaboration with the youth envoy, the inclusion and participation of the youth across the entire peace and security cycle. The appointment was subsequently

endorsed by the Assembly at the 33rd Ordinary Session in February 2020. This is in line with the African Youth Charter, which calls on states parties to strengthen the capacity of young people and youth organizations in peace-building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution through, among others, dialogue.

At its 933rd PSC session, the PSC considered and adopted the two PSC mandated documents, the 'Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security' along with the 10-year implementation plan (2020-2029), and the 'Study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth towards Peace and Security in Africa'. The framework was developed in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to provide policy guidance for member states and RECs/RMs for the promotion of effective and meaningful participation of the youth in all spectrums of peace, security and development in Africa.

Tomorrow's PSC session focuses on YPS in relation to the theme of the year 2020: 'Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Environment for Africa's Development'. The youth are major actors whose role significantly shapes the agenda of Silencing the Guns in Africa. This is due to, among others, the demographic size of the youth in Africa (comprising over 60 %), the governance and socio-economic challenges affecting majority of youth and the impact of conflicts on youth (one in four young people), particularly on young women and girls. Apart from mobilization of the youth by conflict parties, youth are often caught in the crossfires of conflicts or are deliberately targeted as the recent brutal attack of a school in Cameroon highlighted. A youth-centered approach is thus a peace and security imperative both to understand the challenges for achieving the AU agenda of Silencing the Guns and to gauge the degree of public awareness and engagement on this theme.

As the AU prepares to convene an extraordinary summit on

silencing the guns on 5 December 2020, tomorrow's session serves to enhance ways for mobilizing substantive inputs of youth to the summit including through the planned youth tweet chat.

This session presents an opportunity for the AYAPs to share their experiences and perspectives in relation to their contribution and how best their capacities can be enhanced in the implementation of the STG agenda in the continent. During the intervention of Chebbi, the Council could also identify achievements and positive roles played by young Africans, which can be supported further.

Of particular interest to the Council could be the recent launch of the Youth Silencing the Guns Campaign by the AU's Peace and Security Department (PSD) and the AU Office of Youth Envoy (OYE) in collaboration with other relevant departments on 24th of July 2020. The main aim of the campaign is to 'mobilize the development and support of key actions that can be undertaken by youth to fast-track the implementation of the STG agenda in Africa'. The OYE, for instance, rolled out series of regional consultations, dubbed as intergenerational dialogue (IGD). This open session, as part of the campaign, is expected to further strengthen the intergenerational dialogue between the PSC, AU member states, RECs/RMs, international organizations, partners and the youth with the view to ramp up the immense role and positive engagement of African youth towards the actualization of the STG agenda. Also, of interest is the 'Youth Silencing the Guns Award', which was established by OYE to recognize and promote young peacebuilders behind innovative and impactful STG initiative.

As indicated in the concept note, one of the objectives of the session is to provide policy guidance to facilitate financial and technical support for the implementation of projects conflict prevention and peacebuilding to be undertaken by the AYAPs. In this regard the PSC may request the AUC to prepare and present options to support the projects.

Another issue that may be of interest to PSC members is update on the outcome of recent events and milestones and planned activities. The UN Resolutions on YPS including notably 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) offer further support and elaborate meaningful ways of advancing the YPS agenda which are relevant to the AU YPS agenda including notably inclusion and participation and creating the space for youth role through prevention and protection.

The expected outcome is a press statement. The PSC may underscore the critical importance of the contribution of the youth towards the actualization of the STG agenda despite the wide range of challenges. In this respect, the Council may further call for the promotion and creation of awareness regarding the role of African youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding and the need for recognizing and harnessing the leadership of the youth by the AU, RECs/RMs and States. The PSC may request that AU peace processes pay particular attention to and highlight the youth dimension of conflicts and peace processes in their analysis and work, with a particular focus on young women. In terms of support for the role of the AYAPs, the PSC may call on the AU Commission working in collaboration with RECs and the UN to mobilize technical and financial support. The Council may commend the AUPSD, OYE and other relevant bodies of the AU for the launch of the Youth Silencing the Guns Campaign. The council may further call the Commission, RECs/RMs, member states, and other stakeholders to scale up their efforts for the active and meaningful engagement of the youth geared towards the pursuit of STG and the broader peace and security agenda at continental, regional and national levels.