

Peace and Security Council Session on Peace, Security and Development

Automatic Heading TextDate | 27 January, 2021

Tomorrow (27 January) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will have its 975th session on the theme 'Peace, Security and Development: Taking Security Challenges into Account in Development Financing'.

The PSC Chair of the month, Baye Moutar Diop, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal will be delivering opening remarks. Presentations on the theme are also expected to be delivered by Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security; Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa and Hanna Tetteh, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the AU and Head of the UN Office to the AU. Representatives of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and International Crisis Group are also expected to address the Council.

The last time the PSC had a session on this topic was in 2019, at its 883rd meeting, where it reflected on the interdependence between peace, security and development. It is to be recalled that at that meeting, Council stressed the importance of adopting an integrated and all-inclusive approach regarding peace and security and development. In addition, the contribution of socio-economic development for fully addressing underlying causes of conflicts in Africa was stressed. The PSC has requested the Chair of the Commission to submit annual reports on the coordination between the Commission and AU specialized agencies to support the PSC within the context of peace, security and development. Tomorrow's meeting will present the PSC an opportunity to follow up on its previous decisions.

As the Chairperson of the PSC for this month, this session

represents Senegal's effort in campaigning for the restructuring of the debt burden particularly of conflict affected countries. It is to be recalled that Senegal has held an international conference in 2019 and it has advocated for the special considerations in debt relief and cancellation for countries in conflict situations including the ones affected by terrorism and violent extremism. The issue of addressing the economic and financial challenges of conflict affected countries has become even more pressing in the context of the COVID19 pandemic. Hence, the session will deliberate on mechanisms for addressing the issue of debt burden of these countries, as part of the comprehensive financing of peace, security and development.

The background to this session is thus the financing challenges that countries on the continent have experienced for meeting the demands of recovery efforts as they come out of conflicts, epidemics, and climate change induced natural disasters. The COVID19 pandemic has compounded the existing financial and economic challenges facing these and many other African countries including those with a higher than 100 % external debt-to-GDP ratio. It is expected that the presentation by Songwe will address the impact of these on the continent. Millions of people have lost their jobs and livelihoods. Millions risk falling into extreme poverty. According to UNECA, Africa needs at least \$100 billion to resource the health and social safety net responses, and another \$100 billion for economic stimulus, including debt restructuring. Now, African countries face the additional challenge of financing access to the COVID19 vaccine. Given the social and security ramifications of the socio-economic fallout of the pandemic, addressing these economic needs is clearly both a development and peace and security imperative. The focus of tomorrow's session also has its foundation in the mandate of the PSC both in conflict prevention and in post-conflict reconstruction and development. It is worth noting that the AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) envisages under the resource mobilization

pillar 'support PCRD through investment, improved resource flows including official development assistance, debt relief'. Significant number of conflicts in Africa are either mainly caused by or related to the unequal use of natural resources. Development projects and initiatives which tend to benefit one section of society while failing to meet the needs of other sections not only impose risk to peace and stability, but are also counterproductive to the achievement of sustainable development. The PSC may therefore call on Member States and concerned actors to ensure that all development efforts are designed to equally address the needs of all members of society.

Another issue expected to be addressed during the session is the pressure that security challenges are putting on resources meant to be for development purposes. Due to the increasing rate of terrorism and violent extremism in parts of the continent, governments have progressively channelled resources towards national security, which has consequently diverted focus from financing for development projects. As outlined in the concept note for the session, the PSC is expected to discuss this phenomenon and the best possible approaches for financing peace, security and development, mainly through engaging financing partners and creditors to consider not only debt restructuring but also consider how security challenges and the enhancement of the security capacity of states in development financing.

To this end the session is expected to provide a platform to exchange ideas on foreign debts and development financing in the context of insecurity and to identify ways to boost countries' capacity in their fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Among others, this will also be directed at mobilizing support for the implementation of the various regional stabilization and development strategies.

It is to be recalled that in order to combat terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin regions, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have adopted 2020-2024 Plan of Action at their

Extraordinary Summit held on 14 September 2019. The Action Plan aims to mobilise USD 1 billion to fund the training of special units to be deployed in the fight against terrorism, violent extremism, and transnational organised crime including trafficking in humans, arms, and drugs. The PSC is expected to reiterate its support to this Action Plan and call on Africa's bilateral and multilateral partners and African financial institutions such as the AfDB to mobilize support for the implementation of the Plan.

Having regard to the fundamental nature of the interdependence between the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA), it is important to determine how to better connect the two frameworks throughout their implementation. Development initiatives, particularly PCRD related efforts offer the best opportunity for a well synchronised implementation of these frameworks. Council may emphasise the need for Member States to enhance their socio-economic development through improving accountable and transparent system of governance.

Council may also take tomorrow's session as an opportunity to urge Member States to make efforts towards fully realising the commitments emphasised under Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. It is noteworthy that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the aspirations of Agenda 2063 is by far noticed at a lower rate in countries affected by conflicts. Council may therefore stress its call to those Member States experiencing conflicts, to consider peaceful settlements and political dialogue and ensure that they spare no efforts from pursuing implementation of the development objectives of Agenda 2063 and SDGs.

It is also to be recalled that the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has become operational in August 2020, a major step towards the full implementation of the free trade agreement. In a landmark development in the operationalization of the AfCFTA, the start of the trading of the AfCFTA was launched early this month. Having regard to the enormous potential of the AfCFTA in facilitating interstate

trade to boost continental development, which contributes to peace and security efforts, Council may welcome the milestones achieved.

Another area that may be considered by the PSC is the close collaboration between the AU Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the Peace and Security Department (PSD) which is also essential to ensure that development efforts in Africa are funded in a manner, which takes account of security challenges. Also of significance is the importance of close coordination with the AfDB. Thus, the PSC may call for better coordination between the specialized agency and the relevant departments in the Commission. In light of their important role in both development and peace and security efforts, Council may also call upon the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to strengthen their support to Member States and enhance their capacities in holistically addressing security and development challenges.

The expected outcome is a communiqué. The PSC, within the framework of the provisions of the AU PCRDP policy, is expected to reiterate its appeals from its 918 session to the bilateral and international development partners, including notably the IMF and World Bank, 'to consider debt cancelation and relief to those African countries with fragile economies, including provision of economic support packages, to enable these countries to regain resilience and commit the required resources to the fight against COVID-19.' In the context of the critical importance of access to COVID19 vaccine, the PSC may call on international partners to support Africa's efforts to access the COVID19 vaccine. The PSC may also urge the UNECA, the AfDB and Africa's bilateral and multilateral international partners to provide dedicated funding for supporting the enhancement of the security capacity of affected countries along with the provision of development support as critical measure for the effectiveness of development efforts. Underscoring the importance of the AGA and the AfCFTA for enhancing peace and stability, PSC is also expected to call for enhanced implementation of the AGA

through implementing reform measures that enhance transparent, inclusive and accountable governance and for the adoption by states of the necessary institutional, legislative and financial regulatory measures for the full implementation of the AfCFTA. The PSC may also call on the full implementation of the AU PCRD policy and the AU PCRD Centre to work in collaboration with RECs and specific Member States to address economic and developmental concerns of those countries emerging from conflict situations. The PSC may also reiterate its support to various stabilization and regional security plans including the 2020-2024 ECOWAS Plan of Action for combating terrorism and radicalization in the Lake Chad Basin and call for mobilization of support to implementation of such plans. The PSC may also underscore the key role that various institutions including the AUDA-NEPAD and RECs play in ensuring that funding of development efforts in countries affected by conflict, terrorism and violent extremism adequately integrates the security capacity challenges of those countries.