

Session on Prevention of Genocide

Automatic Heading TextDate | 05 April, 2018

'Prevention of the ideology of hate, genocide and hate crime'

Tomorrow (5 April), the Peace and Security Council (PSC) will hold a briefing session on a comprehensive approach towards 'the prevention of the ideology of hate, genocide and hate crime.' It is the first session of the Council for April that Ambassador Bankole Adeoye of Nigeria will preside over as the Chair of the PSC for this month. The Council will be briefed by Ambassador Minata Samate Cessouma, African Union (AU) Commissioner for Political Affairs and Adama Dieng the Special Advisor of the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of the Genocide. A representative of the Rwandan National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide is also expected to brief the Council, if not the Executive Secretary of that Commission, Jean-Mamascene Bizimana himself.

In its communiqué of the 678th session, the PSC decided to have the theme on 'hate crime and the fight against genocide ideology' a standing theme on which it holds an open session annually every April. This theme avails the PSC a unique opportunity to reflect on its work in the context of the annual commemoration of the horrors of the 1994 Rwanda genocide against the Tutsi.

The commemoration is more than an act of remembrance and of honoring the victims and survivors of the genocide. On its own the remembrance serves as a vehicle that contributes to the prevention of genocide. It catalyzes dialogue that enhances awareness within the PSC most particularly on the measures that should be taken including, as highlighted in the in

communiqué 678, on steps that states should take in addressing discrimination and the root causes of ideologies of genocide.

The remembrance guards against the risks that arise from all tendencies of social amnesia. It is anticipated that the discussion on the theme of the session would highlight particular issues of concern in relation to the remembrance of the Rwanda genocide against the Tutsi. In this regard, the PSC would reiterate its earlier pronouncement on the importance of the 'use of clear analysis and proper terminology in order to avoid falling into the problem of denials'.

The Commissioner Cessouma will highlight in her briefing the initiatives in this respect at the level of the AU Commission. It is expected that she will mention by way of example, among others, the use of human rights tools including deploying human rights monitors and the efforts currently underway for operationalizing the AU Human Rights Memorial.

Dieng's briefing is a significant development. As the first such briefing since this theme became a standing theme for annual session, it is expected that Dieng's briefing touches on the importance of the theme, including for enhanced coordination between the AU and the UN. Apart from current issues and challenges particularly in Africa, this briefing also avails opportunity for highlighting best practices and lessons learned from the UN in the prevention of genocide, including vis-à-vis the existence of an office dedicated to the prevention of genocide. Specifically in relation to the commemoration of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Dieng may recall the decision the UN General Assembly took on 26 January 2018 designating the 7 April International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda modifying the Assembly's 2003 resolution establishing the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda.

The briefing expected from the Rwandan National Commission for

the Fight Against Genocide is expected to present Rwanda's national experience. Themes this briefing would cover include highlight of the factors leading to the horrors of 1994 and the basis on which it qualified as genocide; the efforts of Rwanda to come to terms with the legacies of the genocide and the measures for national reconciliation and reconstruction. The issue of denial of or revisionist narratives are issues of concern expected to also be highlighted.

For majority of the membership of the PSC, there would be focus on the remembrance aspects of the session. In this regard, they would renew their commitment to the pledge of 'never again' and express solidarity with the people of Rwanda. In terms of addressing specific concerns, various member states may highlight the need to implement relevant AU instruments and decisions as well as dialogue nationally and between member states concerned. Rwanda, which is also a member of the PSC, is a country with specific interests on the theme, including particularly the points contained in paragraph 7 of the communiqué of the 678th meeting of the PSC. While highlighting developments with respect to the points in this communiqué, if any, its intervention would thus reiterate PSC's call for investigation and prosecution or extradition of suspects, 'including leaders of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda' and condemnation of 'denial and distortion of facts relating to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda'.

In more general terms, the focus on this theme allows the PSC to assess its work with respect to the AU's agenda of prevention of genocide and similar atrocities within the framework of Article 4 (h) of the Constitutive Act. Last year, in its 678th session communiqué, the PSC underlined 'the imperative of early and appropriate responses to credible early warning signs of situations that, if not addressed in a timely and effective manner, could lead to potential genocides'. In taking its engagement on this theme forward,

the PSC may consider review of existing mechanisms of the AU vis-à-vis prevention of genocide and how best it pursues the objectives of this thematic agenda. Options in this respect include the designation of focal point in the AUC and the production of annual report on this theme. The PSC may also consider the establishment of a coordinating role for adequately tapping into the expertise and role of various AU bodies, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, whose mandates have direct bearing on prevention of genocide.

When the PSC held its first session on this theme at its 678th meeting on 11 April 2017, it clearly stated this session to be open. Despite this, the session is not envisaged to be open. This limits the participation of wider group of stakeholders in the deliberations, although it may allow the PSC to have a focused discussion.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. This would reiterate the themes from the PSC's communiqué of its 678th meeting and reflect new areas from the briefings of the Commissioner Cessouma and Dieng. The communiqué may also indicate how the PSC may wish to pursue this theme further. It would also welcome the decision of the 26 January 2018 General Assembly designating the 7th of April International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.