

Africa's peace and security landscape by 2023

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Looking into the future: Africa's Peace and Security Landscape by 2023

Tomorrow (24 April), the PSC is scheduled to hold a second open session of the month. The theme of the session is 'Africa's peace and security landscape by 2023 (end of the ten-year plan of Agenda 2063): A prospective analysis of peace and security challenges'. This session was slated in the original program of work for the month for 3rd April but was postponed to finalize preparations including the concept note for the session. The Peace and Security Department, the Department of Political Affairs and the Agenda 2063 Unit of the AU (SSPERM) are expected to provide briefings. The Institute for Security Studies is also envisaged to make presentation based on the concept note it initiated for the session.

In May 2013 AU member states adopted Agenda 2063, the continent's development, governance and security vision. This session on the prospect of peace in Africa by 2023 comes half way through the first ten years plan of Agenda 2063. In looking into the future, this session draws on the peace and security trends of the continent thus far.

When Agenda 2063 was adopted in 2013, the continent has been witnessing an upsurge of conflicts and crises. Apart from ongoing protracted conflicts, new conflicts and crises erupted as post-conflict transitions unraveled in DRC, Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, Burundi and South Sudan. The continent also witnessed the spread of terrorism in both territorial coverage and intensity of violence. During 2014/15 Boko Haram

became the most deadly terrorist group in the world until its capacity was degraded during the past year.

In West Africa, Mali, experiencing the twin challenges of unconstitutional change of government and that violent seizure by armed groups of its northern territories, saw the internationalization of its conflict with the intervention of the French to stop the southern march of the armed opposition to seize Mali's capital, Bamako. Terrorism and armed insurgency affecting Nigeria and countries of the Sahel was on the rise. In the Central African region, Séléka's overthrow of the government of François Bozizé of the CAR ushered in a new period of violent conflagration involving the collapse of the little that existed of the state and a brutal sectarian violence between the Seleka and the 'anti-balaka' that triggered major humanitarian crisis. DRC was also under the grip of a new war against the March 23 rebel group in its volatile eastern region.

In North Africa, the transitions in all the North African countries affected by the 2011 popular uprisings faltered as each suffered setbacks. All the countries in transition experienced increasing levels political upheavals and violence during the year. Most notably, downward spiral of Libya into the abyss culminated in the following years in the country's fragmentation into violent rival armed militias and criminal networks of weapons traffickers, smugglers and terrorist groups including IS.

Another region that witnessed major deterioration in its peace and security outlook in 2013 was East and Horn of Africa. Despite limited progress in Somalia amid persisting political and security crises, the most significant development was the eruption of South Sudan into violent civil war.

Progress has been registered in arresting the worst manifestations of the newly erupted armed conflicts and the spread of the terrorist menace since 2013, albeit unevenly.

Apart from highlighting the progress made, the briefings and deliberations are expected to underscore the persistence of the conflicts and violent extremist in all the regions that experienced the upsurge of these conditions around 2013. This has implications for prospects for peace and security in 2023, notably with respect to how these situations evolve in terms of resolution, continuation or further deterioration.

There are some key factors that would determine how the current conflict situations shape the peace and security landscape of Africa in 2023. Apart from the role of African and international mediation and peace operations efforts, one such factor concerns the fragility or weakness of the state that makes it vulnerable to conflicts. Another but related factor is the extent to which the underlying political, socio-economic and demographic conditions are effectively addressed.

The prospect of peace and security challenges in 2023 does not depend only on the dynamics of current conflict situations and the changing dynamics of violent extremism in Africa. It also depends on the evolution of vulnerabilities of various countries and regions to conflicts and major insecurities. The concept note anticipates much focus on what it calls the seven structural drivers of conflicts in Africa that will determine the security outlook of Africa by 2023 and beyond. These relate to poverty, democratization, regime type, population age structure, repeat violence, the bad neighborhood effect and poor governance. Other drivers of conflicts highlighted in the AU roadmap on silencing the guns by 2020 include illicit trafficking and use of weapons.

The nature and dynamics of conflicts would also witness change. Due to population pressure, increasing vulnerability of people due to pressure from large scale projects including activities of extractive industries, climate change and weak or bad governance infrastructure, resource-based conflicts notably over water and land are likely to increase and assume prominence. These would be both sub-national and cross border

in nature.

Another source of security challenge for Africa is the increasing militarization of some parts of the continent. This is particularly the case in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa where various old and new powers continue to scramble for establishing military bases.

Governance related crises are also set to witness significant increase. Riots and mass protests are the dominant conflict events in 2017. Changing demographic dynamics involving mostly youthful, increasingly educated and politically conscious public coupled with the spread of information technology have led to expanding the gulf in the expectations of the public and the ability of governments to deliver in terms of political responsiveness, accountability and socio-economic inclusivity. The resulting political upheavals and conflicts taking the form of protests, riots, election induced violence and disputes over revision of presidential term limits are expected to be the most dominant conflict events.

The briefing from PSD is expected to highlight the measures envisaged under the AU Roadmap on silencing the guns by 2020. This session is expected to also highlight the importance of conflict prevention and the need for a strategy on the effective deployment of preventive instruments. In this context, the AU Unit on Agenda 2063 is expected to highlight the areas of intervention planned to address the current peace and security challenges and those expected by 2023.

As rightly pointed out in the concept note for the session, attention would also be drawn to the need for enhanced investment in and effective utilization of the governance frameworks and instruments of the AU that make up the African Governance Architecture (AGA). Other areas of intervention proposed in the concept note include greater focus on security sector reform, a rule of law based approach to counter terrorism, more independent and resourced election monitoring

unit, and partnering with election monitors from other international bodies.

The expected outcome of this session is a press statement. In terms of follow up, issues worth focusing on in the press statement include the need for identifying and sharpening interventions tailored to the different security challenges and the imperative of resolving current conflicts and greater use of prevention tools with full operationalization of the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention framework including through the use of the country structural vulnerability/Resilience assessment.