

Briefing on the delimitation and demarcation of boundaries in Africa to resolve inter-state conflict in Africa

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Delimitation and demarcation of boundaries

Tomorrow (1 June) the Peace and Security Council (PSC) will have an open session under the theme 'Delimitation and demarcation of boundaries in Africa the way forward to resolve interstate conflict in Africa'. The PSC is expected to receive a briefing and report on the theme from Frederic Gateretse-Ngoga, Acting Head of the Conflict Early Warning and Prevention Division of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Department (PSD).

This session aims at providing members of the PSC update on the work being undertaken by the AU Borders Programme (AUBP), which was established in 2007 on the basis of the Declaration on the African Union Border Programme. It is also a session that is convened to mark the Africa Border Day that is annually marked on 7 June.

The briefing from Gateretse-Ngoga is also expected to highlight not only the increasing importance of African borders for peace and security and regional integration but also the challenges facing the PSD in implementing the mandate of the AUBP. The briefing providing update on the progress in the implementation of the AUBP is organized and will be presented around the five areas of work of the AUBP, with emphasis on the theme of the agenda for the session. The first, which is the main focus of tomorrow's session, is delimitation and demarcation of boundaries.

As an instrument for promotion of peace and structural prevention of conflicts, Gateretse-Ngoga's update is anticipated to highlight the work of the AUBP in supporting increasing numbers of AU

member states in the delimitation and demarcation of their interstate borders. While it is reported

that only a third of Africa's 83,000 km of African interstate land borders are demarcated, it is interesting to note that since 2016, some 1592 km of borders have been delimited and demarcated within the framework of the AUBP. Currently, more than 20 Member States are conducting operations to clarify their common boundaries whether they are lake, river, land or maritime borders. As its work on the border issues between Sudan and South Sudan shows, the AUBP also supports conflict resolution efforts. In support of the AUHIP, the technical team of the AUBP completed in March 2018 the first phase of the process of the marking of the ten crossing points along the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ) between South Sudan and Sudan with the marking of three crossing points.

Various factors including the presence of mineral and hydrocarbon resources, the rising demand for land and other resources due to population increase and climate change, the increasing need to

secure borders from terrorist and criminal networks are increasingly making delimitation and demarcation of boundaries key to preventing border conflicts and implementing cross border cooperation. Despite this, the level of member states' engagement in delimitation and demarcation of their joint borders remains unsatisfactory. The percentage of the delimitation and demarcation of African borders remain low. Additionally, the AUBP intervenes only when all the states concerned agree to it.

Despite the amount of delimitation and demarcation work that has been done thus far and currently under way, there is concern that the new timeline of having African boundaries

fully delimited and demarcated by 2022 would again be missed. Underscoring the importance of delimitation and demarcation for both security and regional socio-economic cooperation, member states would be encouraged to delimitate and demarcate their common border. In this respect, major issues that require attention in tomorrow's session include the identification of the various factors that impeded delimitation and demarcation in the previous deadlines and the development of a realistic plan to address them.

Apart from sharing their experience, PSC members are expected to recognize the increasing risks associated with non-delimitation and demarcation of borders and the challenges arising from the porous nature of the borders of many AU member states. In this context, issues requiring attention include the need for initiating conflict prevention measures with respect to those borders facing major threats and the beefing up of not only border security but also over all border management capacities that ensure secure cross border cooperation and regional integration.

Tomorrow's session and this year's celebration of the Africa Border Day have come at a time when the AU witnessed landmark legal and policy developments. Notably, The adoption at the extraordinary summit of the AU held in March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda of the African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) and the Protocol to the Abuja Treaty on Free Movement of Persons, Rights of Residence and Establishment is major development that brings African borders to the center of AU's push for regional integration. Indeed, key to the successful implementation of these instruments is the management by member states of their borders including in terms of delimitation and demarcation, policing, cross border cooperation and infrastructural development. It is thus of

interest to PSC member states how the AUBP contributes for addressing the security, border policing and management capacity and other issues that can impede the CFTA and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons.

Within the framework of its work on cross border cooperation, the AUBP supports various initiatives including the establishment of bilateral border agreements, facilitation of dialogue, security cooperation and local development activities and cross border service infrastructure in the common border areas of member states. The AUBP also promotes the ratification, domestication and implementation of the AU Convention on Cross-border Cooperation (Niamey Convention) of 2014. The briefing will note that the Convention have been signed by fifteen countries and ratified by only five. In this context, the importance and necessity of ratifying and implementing the Niamey Convention as key instrument for pursuing the objectives of the CFTA and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons are issues that also deserve attention during the deliberation in tomorrow's session.

Other areas of work with respect of which the report highlights progress since the last report of June 2017 are capacity building, national and regional border policies and strategies, coordination within the AU and with Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs). The work done in these areas also show that the AUBP is serving as instrument for strengthening of the capacities of personnel in charge of border issues and development of national and regional border policies and strategies.

The expected outcome of tomorrow's session is a press statement. The statement is expected to urge member states to

ratify and domesticate the Niamey Convention as key instrument of regional integration including for the effective implementation of the CFTA and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. It would also underscore the role of the AUBP to address the various security and border related issues for speeding up the ratification and implementation of these instruments. In terms of conflict prevention, it may underscore the need to monitor and identify major risks of border conflicts for timely deployment of preventive measures.