

Consideration and adoption of the conclusions of the Cairo Retreat of the PSC

Automatic Heading TextDate | 16 September, 2019

Tomorrow (16 September) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to hold a session at 10am for the consideration and adoption of the conclusions of the Cairo Retreat of the PSC.

Previously, this agenda was included in the provisional program of works of the PSC for the months of February and April 2019. Tomorrow's session could bring to a close this postponement in the adoption of the Cairo Retreat conclusions. The Secretariat of the PSC is expected to present the conclusions of the retreat.

It is to be recalled that the Cairo Retreat was held from 29 to 31 October 2018. The retreat was held in pursuit of the decision of the AU Assembly on the Reform of the AU, particularly the dimension of the reform that concerned the PSC. In this respect, the Assembly directed that 'the Peace and Security Council (PSC) should be reformed to ensure that it meets the ambition foreseen in its Protocol, by strengthening its working methods and its role in conflict prevention and crisis management'. It was as a follow up of its meeting of 25 April 2018 during which the PSC deliberated on the issue of the reform that the PSC convened the Cairo retreat. During the April 2018 meeting, the PSC concluded that the specific details of the PSC reform are to be drawn from the conclusions of the various retreats of the PSC on its working methods held between 2007 to 2017 and the PSC related chapters of the APSA study that the PSD conducted – 'Study on the Implementation of the African Peace and Security

Architecture from 2002 to 2018’.

The draft conclusions drawn up based on the various presentations and the extensive deliberations during the retreat have four parts. The first part is the introduction highlighting brief background of the retreat and summarizing the inputs that served as basis for the deliberations. During the retreat in Cairo the PSC received presentations on ‘a) African Peace and Security Architecture, b) the African Governance Architecture, c) consolidation and enhancement of the working methods of the Peace and Security Council: Rationalization and streamlining, and d) reform of the PSC within the context of the implementation of the AU Assembly decision 635 (Assembly/AU/Dec.635 (XXVIII) on the AU Institutional Reforms’.

The second part of the conclusions present the ‘Achievements of the Peace and Security Council’ since its operationalization in 2004. In this regard, apart from noting its operationalization as well-organized and better prepared AU Organ, in terms of implementation of its mandate the PSC highlighted, among its achievements, the ‘deployment of the various peace support operations and missions in some areas of the Continent affected by conflicts... AMISOM, AMIS, AFISMA, MISCA, LRA, MNJTF, G5 Sahel’ and ‘Seizure and consideration of important thematic issues of relevance to the promotion of peace, security, and stability, as well as development, in Africa.’ In terms of organization of its work, the conclusions highlighted ‘[e]laboration of detailed and predictable provisional monthly programmes of work and the Indicative Annual Programme of Work of the PSC’, ‘[s]treamlining and strengthening the role and work of the African members of the UN Security Council’ and Mobilizing within the AU system for a predictable and sustainable budget for the activities of the PSC and its subsidiary bodies.’

The third part covers ‘[r]ecommendations on enhancing the effectiveness of the Peace and Security Council’. It is this

part of the conclusions that identified the areas for the reform of the PSC. At a general level, it is important to note that the retreat 'stressed the continued relevance of the PSC Protocol to address the evolving challenges and threats to peace and security in the Continent' and rightly 'agreed that there is no need to review the PSC Protocol, but to focus on strengthening the PSC in the areas of conflict prevention and crisis management, as well as enhancing its working methods'.

In terms of conflict prevention, the retreat conclusions identified thirteen (13) areas. The major areas for action include '[s]trengthening coordination between the PSC and all the supporting APSA and AGA pillars', '[e]stablishing a trigger mechanism and indicators to facilitate the role of the PSC in assessing whether a given situation calls for an early action by the PSC. In this context, the Commission should elaborate the mechanism and indicators for consideration by the PSC. (within the context of operationalization of the CEWS)' and the 'need for regular meetings/briefings between the PSC and the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Commissioner for Peace and Security on peace and security matters in Africa, in line with Article 10 of the PSC Protocol.'

On crisis management, eight (8) areas have been identified. Of these the ones that are of particular significance include, 'full operationalization of the ASF and its Rapid Deployment Capability, '[a]ccelerating the establishment of the institutional and regulatory infrastructure of the AU Peace Fund', and '[e]mpowering the PSC for it to be able to institute individual punitive measures against peace spoiler/obstructionist to realization/restoration of peace in conflict situations' (i.e. to impose sanctions).

The conclusions identified 15 areas for improvement on its working methods. The major areas worth noting include the 'imperative for PSC Members to deploy the adequate capacity in terms of Human Resources and equipment, to ensure full and

effective participation in the work of the PSC', '[i]mperative for provision for all necessary information on a given conflict/crisis to enable the PSC to take informed decision. To this effect, the PSC agreed to accord itself adequate time to discuss issues on its agenda', the '[n]eed to mainstream voting in the decision-making of the PSC, where and when issues under consideration so necessitate,' and to ensure that the 'national interest of the Chairperson of the PSC of the month' does not 'interfere or undermine the collective work of the PSC'.

While some of the areas identified in the conclusions have been taken over by developments since the retreat most notably the convening of the PSC meeting with the RECs/RMs policy organs to discuss and agree on modalities for coordination of peace efforts and the elaboration of a manual on PSC working methods based on the outcome documents of the 10 retreats the PSC held since 2007, it would be of interest for PSC members how other aspects of the conclusions particularly those relating to conflict prevention and crisis management would be followed up. From the areas of reform on working methods identified during the Cairo retreat, those requiring further follow up include the decision-making approach of the PSC particularly the introduction of voting, the adoption of a framework for a sanctions regime and modalities for coordination between the PSC and UN Security Council (UNSC) including the African three non-permanent members of the UNSC (A3).

It is not expected that there would be a formal outcome document by way of a communique or press statement. The adoption of the conclusions of the retreat may however lead to the incorporation into the Manual on the Working Methods of the PSC that was finalized and adopted at the Rabat retreat of the PSC held on 24-26 June 2019.