

Nuclear Energy, non-proliferation and disarmament

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Non-proliferation

Tomorrow (10 April 2018) The PSC will receive a briefing on nuclear energy, non-proliferation and disarmament. The session will discuss the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Africa, and the status of the Pelindaba Treaty, and increasing Africa's global role and contribution for a nuclear free world by strengthening its non-proliferation efforts. Apart from the Commission for Peace and Security, the PSC is expected to receive briefing from the Executive Secretary of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE).

The meeting builds on the 29 March 2016 report of the AU Chairperson to the PSC on Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. The session is taking place less than a month after the fourth ordinary session of the conference of the state parties to the treaty of Palendaba that took place on 14-15 March 2018 in Addis Ababa. The meeting reviewed the status of the implementation of the African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone treaty, known as the Pelindaba Treaty, which serves as the African legal and political regime for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Pelindaba that was adopted in 1996 entered into force on 15 July 2009. To date it is signed by 52 members of the AU and ratified and deposited by 41 member states. Beyond prohibiting the possession, use and threatening to use nuclear weapons, the agreement also sanctions undertaking, assisting or encouraging the testing of nuclear weapons.

The concerns and focus of the PSC meeting lies at issues of uranium trading, nuclear testing and the safety of using nuclear energy for civilian purposes. The PSC is expected to

discuss the status the operationalization of the Algiers based African regulatory body AFCONE which oversees the implementation of the Pelindaba treaty. The meeting will also examine the two-year program and budget for AFCONE adopted by the March meeting. The program from 2018-2020 will have a special focus on safeguarding nuclear material, enhancing the accounting and control mechanism, and upgrading verification and monitoring activities of the AFCONE. In the post Fukushima era, AFCONE will also be working on the safety of radioactive waste management and regulating the peaceful application of nuclear energy.

The increased capacity, visibility and mobility of multinational and cross border terrorist groups and networks, and the easy accessibility of the nuclear knowhow and technology is a major concern for the continent. The council will discuss this major security threat tomorrow. Africa has one of the biggest deposits of uranium in the world. A single member state, Namibia alone holds about 7% of the world's uranium reserves. The country supplies the mineral to nuclear power stations around the world. Niger, South Africa, Botswana and the DRC also have reserves or produce uranium. The threat of non-state actors holding the possession of uranium and its illicit trafficking is a major security threat the PSC is expected to address.

Africa is a nuclear weapon free zone. South Africa was the only country on the continent to have had the possession of nuclear weapons. It had its nuclear weapon by the end of the 1970s and had a total of six bombs by the time it decided to end its nuclear weapons program and dismantle the weapons in the early 1990's. The abolition of all the nuclear weapons was later confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). At the moment, South Africa is also the only African country on the continent with a nuclear power plant. The plant provides around 5% of its electricity production. In recent years however, several other member states of the African Union have signed agreements or shown interest to use of nuclear power to

generate electricity. The most notable ones include Egypt, Nigeria and Ethiopia. In 2013 Egypt announced its plan to build 1,000 MW nuclear reactor for power generation and on October 2017, Russian state-owned company Rosatom signed a deal to build two nuclear power plants in Nigeria with the cost of around \$20bn. In 2013, the Ethiopian government announced it targets generating up to 1,200 Megawatts of electricity from nuclear energy. And in March 2018 Ethiopia signed memorandum of understanding on cooperation in peaceful uses of atomic energy with Russian Nuclear Technology Agency. Other countries like Algeria, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Morocco, Namibia, Senegal, Sudan, Tunisia, and Uganda, have a serious and publicly expressed plans to go nuclear for power.

The increasing trend and interest in the use of nuclear power plants on the continent demand a proper regulatory framework, monitoring mechanisms and accountability and control. On 15 February, the AU Chairperson and head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) signed a four-year agreement (2018-2022), an agreement on a safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies for development in Africa. Beyond the development of nuclear power infrastructure, the cooperation includes areas like health, agriculture, environment and industrial applications of nuclear technology. Building Africa's capacity in radiation and nuclear safety and security is also part of the four-year deal. The PSC will discuss the details of the agreement.

Africa is aspiring to be a major actor in the global non-proliferation regime. The PSC meeting is taking place at a time where the most prominent international nuclear deal, the Iran Nuclear Deal of October 2015 between Iran and the P5 plus Germany and the EU faces its biggest challenge. The AU Chairperson hailed the agreement as 'triumph for multilateral diplomacy and a vindication of the principle of peaceful and negotiated resolution of international disputes' in a press statement on 15 October 2015, a day after the signing of the

deal. The AU also expressed its support to the deal and its proper implementation. Tomorrow's PSC meeting will discuss global trends and updates on international and regional efforts towards nuclear weapons disarmament non-proliferation and cooperation in the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology.

The expected outcome of tomorrow's PSC session is a communiqué. It is expected that the PSC would welcome the role of AFCON. It would also emphasized the need for coordination among AU actors including member states to address current threats relating to threat of possession and illicit-trafficking of uranium by non-state actors. The PSC is also anticipated to affirm AU's firm support for the Iran Nuclear Deal and to urge that the parties to the deal to maintain their commitment to the terms of the agreement.