

# Open session on corruption and conflict resolution

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## Corruption and conflict resolution

Tomorrow (12 April) the PSC will hold an open session under the theme 'nexus between corruption and Conflict Resolution: The imperative of promoting good economic governance in Africa'. Although it was initially planned for 24 April, this session was brought forward for tomorrow following the postponement of the field mission to South Sudan from 9-12 April to 16-20 April.

The PSC is expected to receive briefing from Paulus Noa, a member of the African Advisory Board on Corruption, a body overseeing the implementation of the AU Convention on preventing and combatting corruption. Eddie Maloka, the Chief Executive Officer of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Secretariat is similarly expected to brief the PSC on the theme. With AU Department of Political Affairs providing the concept note for the session, it is expected to be part of the briefings.

The session is part of the January 2018 summit decision declaring this year the African Anti-Corruption Year on the theme 'Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path To Africa's Transformation.'

Beyond addressing the theme of the year, for the PSC the meeting avails an opportunity to draw attention to the multifaceted connection corruption conflicts have in Africa and the impact thereof on conflict resolution. While there is need for empirical research work on this theme, it is generally recognized that corruption operates as one of the underlying factors for, as driver of conflicts and as a factor

that transforms or entrenches conflicts. In conflicts involving resource rich countries in particular, corruption often leads to conflicts and becomes major factor in sustaining conflicts as conflict actors establish webs of corrupt relationship with business, neighboring countries and entities of old and emerging powers. As a recent research work on conflicts in the Horn of Africa titled The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power showed, corruption contributes both to the onset of conflicts and to their perpetuation. Accordingly, corruption seriously impedes and undermines efforts for resolving ongoing conflicts and making peace.

Within the framework of the role of the PSC in conflict resolution, the foregoing gives rise to a number of issues. There is the issue of whether and how far corruption is given attention in conflict early warning and broadly in the conflict analysis processes of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Additionally, there is also the issue of whether and how best the designing and implementation of conflict resolution efforts (including mediation and peacemaking) take account of and tackle the role of corruption with respect to a particular conflict situation.

The briefings from both the Advisory Board and the APRM Secretariat are expected to highlight their respective work with a focus on the link between corruption and conflict resolution. For the Board, this presents an occasion for contributing to the work of the PSC including in providing report both on the role of corruption as trigger, driver and sustaining factor of conflicts in Africa and on how it can be best dealt with in conflict analysis and in the planning and implementation of conflict resolution processes of the AU.

The briefing from Mr. Noa would highlight how corruption affects vulnerable groups, state institutions and election processes. It also underscores the importance of resource and financial management, the role of institutional oversight and

active participation of citizens in resource and financial management processes. In terms of follow up, it is expected to propose the operationalization of the PSC sub-committee on Governance proposed in the 2015 PSC-African Governance Architecture (AGA) retreat. It also draws the attention of the PSC on the need for facilitating the adoption of the AU transitional justice policy and ratification of the Protocol to the Statute of the African Court vesting the Court with jurisdiction over international crimes.

Initially the title of the open session was limited to 'good economic governance' but with input from Peace and Security Department and other member states of the PSC, the scope was rightly broadened to cover good governance in general. The briefings from the Advisory Board and APRM Secretariat would focus on the initial formulation limited to economic governance, with other participants expected to underscore good governance broadly.

While members of the PSC welcome PSC engagement on the theme of the year, this theme is of immediate interest for Nigeria. Most notably, it forms part of the effort of Nigeria to implement the role that the AU Assembly entrusted to President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria at the January 2018 summit for championing the theme of the year.

There was no indication for a specific outcome when we go for print. Yet, there is indeed a need for understanding how and the extent to which corruption plays a role in the onset of conflicts and significantly as factor that sustains conflicts. In terms of taking this agenda forward, the PSC may task the Advisory Board and the APRM Secretariat to submit joint report highlighting the role of corruption in African conflicts on the agenda of the PSC and how best it can be factored in within the conflict early warning, conflict analysis and in the planning and implementation of conflict resolution activities of the AU. This may be best done through a communiqué.