

African Free Movement of People

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Session on free movement of people and migration crisis

Tomorrow (11 May) the PSC will hold its session on the African free movement of people and the migration crisis. This is now one of the themes that Rwanda champions within the AU system. It is to be recalled that in last year's 21 July session on the same theme, on which today's session builds, Rwanda addressed the PSC in its capacity as Chair of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) on Free Movement of People in Africa and Mitigating Security Impediments.

During this session, the PSC is expected to once again receive briefings from the CISSA. Additional briefings are expected from the Departments of Political Affairs and Peace and Security. Others expected to make statements include representatives of Regional Economic Communities /Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs). It is the third session of the PSC focusing on this theme during the past year and half.

This session comes on the heels of the successful extraordinary summit that was held on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda during which the AU Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Rights of Residence and Establishment was adopted. The briefing from the Department of Political Affairs, the AU Commission's department that was responsible for the elaboration of the Protocol, would focus on sustaining the momentum on the signing of the Protocol and on addressing the concerns that member states, particularly those who did not sign the Protocol, have. Given the large number of member

states (27) that signed the Protocol, discussions are expected to focus also on how to expand signature and accelerate its ratification. In this regard, the AU Commission is expected to provide updates to the PSC on its plans and strategy for promoting ratification.

During this session, member states are expected to share their experiences on the economic benefits of cross border movement of peoples, including for peace and security. In this respect the PSC is expected to commend member states who provide for a regime that allows issuance of visas for Africans on arrival. This session would also assess the status of implementation of the AU Assembly decision of July 2016 [Assembly/AU/Dec.607 (XXVII)]. In this respect, an issue of particular importance relates to the issuance of an African passport by member states and steps that should be taken to make progress.

Particular attention is also expected to be given on the security related challenges associated, in fact or perception, with free movement of peoples and how best these challenges would be addressed, including through enhanced security cooperation. This is an area that CISSA and the Department of Peace and Security are expected to provide analysis of the risks, potential or actual, which is often associated with free movement of people. It would also highlight the actions and processes that is required of member states, including the enhancement of their institutional and regulatory capacity to facilitate the free movement of people.

This session is also expected to underscore that free movement of persons is one of the crucial parts in efforts aimed at deepening continental integration as outlined in Agenda 2063. In sharing their experiences, RECs/RMs such as the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) and the East African Community are expected to share regional best practices and mechanisms to address the security threats associated with free movement of people.

Another area expected to receive attention is the so-called the African migration crisis. Understandably, this would highlight not only the tragedy befalling African migrants as they travel within the continent across difficult terrains of the Sahara and Mediterranean Sea. But also it is expected to underscore the importance of the Protocol on the free movement of people for addressing the crisis as well.

AnotherThe expected outcome of the meeting is a press statement. It is anticipated that it would welcome the adoption of the Protocol on the Freedom of Movement and urge member states to ratify it. Importantly, the outcome of the session is expected to endorse and support initiatives notably those at the level of CISSA and the AU Commission to address the security concerns that continue to impede efforts of member states towards free movement of people. The PSC would also indicate how it plans to follow up on this agenda, although it is remains unclear if this theme would become a standing thematic agenda of the PSC.