

Ministerial session on financing of AU led peace support operations

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Tomorrow (23 September), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1175th meeting at a ministerial level to deliberate on financing of AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs). The meeting will be held in the margins of the 78th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York, USA.

Cameroon's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lejeune Mbella Mbella, chairperson of the PSC for the month of September, is expected to open the session. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the AU Commission Chairperson, will make a statement. Donald Kaberuka, the AU High-Representative for the Peace Fund and Financing of the AU, is also expected to address the session. On the part of the UN, it is envisaged that Jean-pierre Lacroix, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, and Rosemary A. DiCarlo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, will make statement as well. The representatives of the African Members in the UN Security Council (A3), namely Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique and the incoming two African members of the UN Security Council, Algeria and Sierra Leone, will also be present for this ministerial session.

The last time that the PSC met to discuss the issue of financing AU PSOs was on 12 May of this year during its 1153rd session, which was held at the ministerial level. In that session, the PSC authorized the A3 to 'resume consultations

with the relevant stakeholders towards the adoption of a UNSC resolution on financing AU-led PSOs.’ This set the negotiation process towards the adoption of UNSC resolution in motion, a process that was put on hold after the request of the PSC in September 2019 to suspend the negotiation over the draft resolution put forward by South Africa. (For more details see Amani Africa’s 10 May 2023 [Special Research Report](#)).

From our consultations, Ghana – who is spearheading the agenda of adopting a framework resolution on financing AU PSOs – has developed a draft resolution to start the negotiation process in the UNSC. It is anticipated that the draft resolution may be circulated sometime in October with the hope to table the resolution for voting in December during Ecuador’s Presidency. Tomorrow’s session thus offers an opportunity for the PSC to provide substantive and concrete guidance on how to proceed with the negotiation particularly on the remaining delicate issues in the coming months.

The renewed interest in and the window of opportunity towards the adoption of the long pending resolution is a result of various developments both at the level of the AU and the UN as well as changes in the peace and security dynamics and the dynamics in the UNSC. The AU Commission prepared what it called ‘African consensus paper on predictable, adequate, and sustainable financing for African Union peace and security activities’, which the AU Assembly considered and adopted in February 2023 at its 36th ordinary session. This Consensus Paper not only presented the advances that the AU made in strengthening its various institutional, normative and regulatory processes but it also clarified AU’s position on burden sharing.

On the part of the UN, following the presidential statement of August 2022 under Chinese presidency of the UNSC which requested UN Secretary-General to provide the Security Council, by 30 April 2023, a report on progress made by the UN

and the AU to fulfil the commitments set out in resolutions 2320 and 2378, and recommendations to secure predictable, sustainable and flexible resources, the Secretary-General released the report on 1 May and presented to the UNSC during its 25 May 2023 session. The dynamics within the UNSC today is more favorable for the adoption of a resolution on financing than it was before as the [statements](#) delivered by UNSC members during the 25 May briefing clearly attest. Considering that a major factor for the collapse of the process for the adoption of a resolution in December 2018 was a US threat to veto the resolution, a notable positive development is US's statement expressing more positive and supportive stance towards the adoption of the resolution.

Further to that, while the nature of the peace and security context increasingly demands the use of instruments that go beyond those applicable to UN peacekeeping and hence putting UN peace operations on the continent under increasing pressure, there is no appetite in the UN for deploying UN peacekeeping. Additionally, the recent geopolitical shifts that increasingly acknowledge Africa as a key global actor can find meaningful institutional expression through, among others, the decision to use UN assessed contribution for AU PSOs.

In the context of the last attempt for the adoption of a UNSC resolution during 2018/2019 and following the suspension of the process in September 2019, the issues requiring further engagement have been identified. Broadly speaking, four issues emerged as requiring further engagement between the AU and the UN to pave the way for the adoption of a UNSC resolution: the question of burden-sharing, compliance frameworks for human rights and international humanitarian law, fiduciary standards of financial arrangements and reporting, and oversight and command and control of the missions. (For more details on the history of the negotiation and the controversial issues, see Amani Africa's 10 May 2023 [Special Research Report](#)).

Despite the favorable political dynamics within the UNSC, the negotiation over the draft resolution will not be easy. The 25 May 2023 UNSC briefing reveals that support on the part of UNSC members including some of the P5 remains uneven. In that regard, it is worth noting that the representative of the UK, during the 25 May briefing, stressed the need for the AU to 'openly and clearly establish how it intends to share the financial burden', and further warning that 'any scope for misinterpretation will result in new initiatives being stalled'. Together with the issues that others like Brazil, Albania and Japan raised, further compromise and agreement may be required on some of these sticking issues.

During tomorrow's session, it is expected that the PSC, apart from reiterating the progress made in enhancing ownership and burden sharing through the AU Peace Fund, may highlight the need for giving due recognition to the unaccounted aspects of the financial burden that AU member states bear in mobilizing and deploying troops who pay with their lives and limbs. It may further reaffirm the position of the Consensus Paper that the AU would cover the costs relating to the preparatory stages of the deployment of PSOs supported by UN assessed contributions. Considering the expectation on the part of some members of the UNSC for further commitment for financial burden sharing, the PSC may indicate in the context of the clear commitment that the AU demonstrated in recent years that instead of making unrealistic commitment for a specific percentage for all PSOs that may be funded through UN assessed contributions that further financial contribution is considered at the time of the planning and negotiation of the deployment of each PSO.

Tomorrow's session will also serve as an opportunity for the PSC to also express its support for the financing model for accessing UN assessed contributions for AU-led PSOs as articulated both in the AU Consensus Paper and the Secretary-General's May 2023 report. With respect to oversight and

command and control, the PSC may also welcome the proposed formula in the Secretary-General's report as the basis for formulating the provisions in the resolution while affirming the importance of the development of joint AU-UN planning guidelines.

The PSC should take lessons from the 2018/19 negotiation process to avoid the risk of another failure. First, it is imperative to ensure the cohesion of the A3 members and that they are able to speak in one voice on controversial issues throughout the negotiation process. In that regard, an interesting development is PSC's suspension of Gabon – a member of the A3 – after the 20 August military coup. It remains to be seen whether the sanction will affect Gabon's relations with other A3 members, as well as the PSC while engaging on the file. Second, building a broader consensus with the UNSC members is also crucial. One immediate available avenue to that end is the upcoming 17th annual joint consultative meeting between the PSC and the UNSC, which is scheduled to take place from 5 to 6 October in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. PSC may commend the efforts of the A3, and request them to fast track the finalization of the draft resolution and the negotiation on the same in order to seize the current window of opportunity for the adoption of the resolution before the end of the year. The PSC may emphasize the need for a sustained engagement between the AU Commission, the PSC and the A3 throughout the negotiation process; and to that end, it may request a regular briefing from the A3 until the successful completion of the negotiation process. The PSC may affirm AU-led PSOs authorized by the UNSC and funded through UN assessed contribution as being part of the range of tools that the UN deploys for maintenance of international peace and security. The PSC may also welcome the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's May 2023 report notably with respect to

monitoring and reporting, joint and consultative decision-making. It may commend the progress made by the AU for achieving ownership and burden sharing and signal that specific financial contribution by the AU for a PSO funded by UN assessed contribution is dealt with on a case-by-case basis. It may also express the need for the UNSC to recognize the important contribution of AU PSOs for international peace and security, hence for the realization of the primary responsibility of the UNSC.