

Ministerial session on the interdependence between peace, security and development

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Tomorrow (14 December), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1055th session at a ministerial level to address the issue of the interdependence between peace, security and development.

Tomorrow's session is expected to proceed in open and closed segments. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, is expected to preside over the meeting as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month. In the open session, following opening remark by Demeke Mekonnen, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye, is expected to make presentation. The representatives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Development Bank, as well as the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General to the AU and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU), Hanna Tetteh are also scheduled to present.

The Council's first dedicated session on the theme was held at a ministerial level on 27 September 2019, at its 883rd meeting. In that session, the Council requested the Chairperson of the AU Commission to submit annual report on the measures taken towards enhancing collaboration and coordination between departments within the AU Commission and AU Specialized Agencies on account of its recognition of the interdependent nature of peace, security and development.

The second session on the theme was convened at a summit level during its 975th meeting that took place on 27 January this year. The session addressed issues on how best to finance peace, security and development in the continent and ways to factor in security challenges in development financing. The deliberations during the session reflected on trends in which funds originally committed to financing development efforts are at the risk of being diverted to address security challenges in the context of growing threats of terrorism and violent extremism. Among other, the PSC called on the international community for 'debt relief, cancellation and restructuring' in light of the financial burdens resulting from the multi-dimensional threats imposed by terrorism, violent extremism, climate change and the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. As noted in the concept note, tomorrow's session presents the Council the opportunity to 'continue with the discourse on the inextricable link between peace, security and development from a policy perspective and advance its messaging on current efforts in the Continent and what needs to be done further in this regard'.

A major concern in the conceptualization of the security-development nexus is the risk of shifting the focus from addressing the structural underlying causes of insecurity (such as poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, marginalization, human right abuses, and governance deficits) towards strengthening the security apparatus of member states. While addressing the Council during its last session on the theme, Comfort Ero, Crisis Group Africa Program Director, noted this concern stating that 'the full spectrum of insecurities leading to violence is often overlooked' though states often 'give a nod to addressing the root causes of conflict'. As security sector assistance will not resolve the broader sources of insecurity, it is worth heeding to Comfort Ero's call for the AU to focus on 'overall "sustainable security" strategy that links hard security to broader development and human security concerns'. The presentations

from the representatives of NEPAD and African Development Bank may particularly highlight the role these institutions play in addressing the deeper socio-economic challenges and set the continent on the path of sustainable development.

Furthermore, the idea of prioritizing and sequencing security and development in the sense that security issues need to be first addressed to pursue development goals has its own limits at least in three respects. First, it may divert meagre national resources towards maintaining stability as opposed to national development. Second, it raises the question of 'securitization of aids', having implication on the type of programmes funded by donors and prioritization of 'fragile states' in aid flows. Third, it may also encourage military approach over political solution in response to conflicts arising in the continent though holistic approach has been promoted on paper. The last concern, for instance, has been flagged up by the Council during its 975th session when it urges for capacitating national armies as a quick fix to address security threats while emphasizing the need to 'supplementing' military approach with preventive diplomacy and political solutions to promote and sustain peace.

Evidences also show the close link between peace, security and development. According to World Bank, a civil conflict costs the average developing country roughly 30 years of GDP growth, and countries in protracted crisis can fall over 20 percentage points behind in overcoming poverty. It further estimates that by 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor may live in fragile and violent conflict settings. It is against such link between security and development that the Constitutive Act of the AU maintains security as a 'prerequisite' for the implementation of the development and integration agenda. The concept of security-development nexus is also rooted in the understanding of security as a precondition for development. As violent conflict is often associated with weak and fragile state institutions, it is argued that efforts should be geared

towards building or rebuilding the capacity of state institutions (particularly the security sector) to address security concerns, which in turn create a conducive environment for development.

Given the cyclical nature and mutually reinforcing relations between peace, security and development, tomorrow's session may stress the need for a balanced and simultaneous security and development responses instead of a siloed or sequenced approach towards achieving sustainable peace and development. As highlighted in the PSC's 883rd session, the interdependent nature of peace, security and development requires not only the cooperation and coordination of different departments within the AU Commission but also developing mechanisms that underpin 'integrated, inclusive, holistic and multidimensional' approach with the view to achieving sustainable peace and development in the continent. One of the available mechanisms likely to receive attention in tomorrow's discussion within this framework is AU's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) framework. The latter plays pivotal role in contributing towards strengthening the capacity and resilience of state institutions as well as addressing underlying root causes of violent conflicts. While AU's PCRD initiative gets impetus with the establishment of PCRD Centre in Cairo, it remains critical to avail the necessary resources for the Centre to effectively discharge the envisaged role. The full implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA) are also worth mentioning as important step in addressing the imperatives of peace, security and development in an integrated and holistic manner.

Over the last decade, not only violent conflicts have spiked but also their nature have changed fundamentally with conflicts becoming increasingly internal, intense and protracted. In its most recent session (1014th) on early warning and Africa's security outlook, the PSC has expressed

its concern over the continental security landscape dominated by the growing influence of armed groups and non-state actors, the expansion of terrorists' territory and theatre of operation, increasing convergence of terrorism and transnational organized crimes, as well as increasing political and social tension with the rising incidence of violent inter-communal conflicts. Foundational instruments including the AU Constitutive Act, the protocol establishing the PSC and the Common African Defence and Security Policy clearly recognize instability due to these multi-dimensional threats to peace and security as the major impediment to the realization of development aspirations of the continent.

The outcome of tomorrow's session is expected to be a communique. Among others, the Council may reiterate its 883rd session in emphasizing that AU's efforts towards conflict prevention, peacekeeping and the consolidation of peace are informed by the link between peace, security and development. While acknowledging the importance of strengthening the security sector, the Council is expected to stress on the need for addressing the structural root causes of violent conflicts in order to transform exiting conflicts, avoid relapses, and consolidate durable peace. The Council is likely to highlight the imperative of an integrated and holistic approach while tackling the interlinked challenges of security and development in the continent. In this respect, the Council may further reiterate its 883rd session that urged the Commission to enhance 'the collaboration and coordination between the different departments within the AU Commission and AU Specialized Agencies'. Given the unique role that AU's PCRDC initiative plays in tackling the underlying fundamental root causes and drivers of violent conflicts in an integrated and holistic manner, the Council is likely to urge the Commission to support the PCRDC Centre in undertaking its mandate.