

Open Session on Hate Crimes and Fighting Genocide Ideology in Africa

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Tomorrow (4 April), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1206th session on the theme prevention of hate crimes and fighting genocide ideology in Africa.

Following opening remarks by Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the AU and stand-in Chairperson of the PSC for April 2024, Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) is expected to make a statement. Presentations will also be delivered by the Representative of the Republic of Rwanda; Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide; Representative of the European Union (EU); and Representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

Tomorrow's session is being convened in line with a PSC decision adopted at its [678th](#) session held on 11 April 2017 in which it decided to convene annually, in April, a meeting on prevention of the ideology of hate, Genocide and hate crimes in Africa. The meeting also forms part of the yearly remembrance of the 1994 genocide which will be observed on 7 April under the theme *Remember-Unite-Renew*, in accordance to AU Assembly Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.695](#) of 2 July 2018.

This year marks 30 years since Africa witnessed its most shocking violence since the end of colonialism, during the genocide against the Tutsi. For the PSC and the AU in general,

one of the issues that this 30-year commemoration raises is how to safeguard the memory of this tragic catastrophe perpetrated at extraordinary scale and brutality for avoiding its recurrence anywhere in the continent as promised in Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act of the AU. It is only through recognizing the graveness of the brutal mass killing, maiming, rape and psychological harm that victims and survivors including women and children endured during the genocide and keeping the memory alive that the region and the continent as a whole can avoid falling back into a situation where the event 'continues to be overlooked as a minor African hiccup', in the words of Salim Ahmed Salim's report on the establishment of an International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding Events. Most significantly, for the AU this issue of memory of what happened and its meaning is inseparable from the *raison d'être* for its founding, while it may be debatable if the AU has lived up to the promise encapsulated in Article 4(h) considering events in some conflict settings in recent years.

Separate but related concern for the AU and tomorrow's session is also the lessons from this experience and its consequences. As the first elected president of democratic South Africa, President Nelson Mandela, put it in his maiden address to the June 1994 Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Tunis while the genocide was still unfolding, 'Rwanda stands out as a stern and severe rebuke to all of us for having failed to address Africa's security problems. As a result of that, a terrible slaughter of the innocent has taken place and is taking place in front of our very eyes.' The AU stands a chance of not repeating the failure of the OAU that Mandela spoke of only by continuing to draw the necessary lessons from this manmade disaster and adopt the relevant measures of vigilance in all conditions of conflicts and crises. In this respect, it is of paramount significance that the AU reinvigorates its work on addressing hate speech and

supporting actions against the denial or revisionism of the genocide against the Tutsi as stipulated in various PSC decisions. Similarly, it is critical to enhance AU's work in following up on PSC's decision for reinvigorating the early warning mechanism and including an analysis on indicators of hate crime and risk factors for them to escalate to genocide pursuant to the decision of the 836th session of the PSC. In this respect, it is worth recalling that under Article 7(1)(a) the PSC is mandated to 'anticipate and prevent ... policies that may lead to genocide and crimes against humanity.'

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Nelson Mandela June 1994 OAU Summit

This 30th commemoration of the 1994 genocide should also serve as an occasion for the PSC and the wider AU to interrogate why and how some of the issues identified in the report of the OAU Panel of Eminent Personalities remain unresolved and continue to fester to this day. This issue currently has particular resonance in respect to the conflict in Eastern DRC. While the genocide ended in July 1994, as the report of the OAU Panel of Eminent Personalities pointed out, its consequences continued to reverberate in the Great Lakes Region at the time the Panel finalized its report and since. According to the report, 'the failure to disarm the genocidaires and the re-emergence of Mobutu' ('as a central actor in the tragedy' involving the genocidaires to whom he gave diplomatic protection and supply of arms) 'combined to trigger a series of stunning developments, most notably two successive wars centred on Zaire/Congo.' While Mobutu's Zaire/Congo and contemporary DRC are not the same, some of the issues that led to the two successive wars that the Panel cited including the continued

presence of the genocidaires notably the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and ethnic tensions in Eastern DRC seem to be apparently at play in the current conflict in Eastern DRC.

Tomorrow's session can also serve for finding ways of implementing some of the outstanding decisions of the PSC on the subject. The last PSC session on this theme was its [1147th](#) session held on 6 April 2023. As can be noted from the outcome of this and previous sessions, some of PSC's decisions have been recurrent. These include PSC's request to the AU Commission to develop a shared working definition of what constitutes 'hate speech' and 'hate crimes', in order to enable member states to enact necessary legislation to combat these scourges. Another decision is the request to the Chairperson of the AU Commission to expedite the appointment of an AU Special Envoy on the Prevention of Hate Crimes and the Crime of Genocide. There has been also the call by the PSC for the need to consider the Rabat Action Plan as the basis for establishing an Annual African Forum, in coordination with the AU Commission, on the prevention of ideology of hate, hate crimes and genocide, which will be an annual event that will bring together all concerned actors within the framework of PSC meetings to address the scourge and for fighting the ideology of hate, hate crimes and genocide. In addition, the PSC also requested the AU Commission to undertake a review of the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report of the OAU International Panel of Eminent Personalities on the 1994 Rwanda Genocide and the Surrounding Events by the Panel of the Wise and called for the establishment of an African Centre for the Study of Genocide ([1088th](#) session).

Amani Africa [recommended](#) that, since 2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide, it would be valuable for the PSC to organize a comprehensive stock taking exercise at

the continental level, aimed at reaffirming their commitment to the principle of 'never again,' as outlined in Article 4 (h) of the AU Constitutive Act. 2024 also marks the 20th anniversary of the operationalization of the PSC. This commemoration, which will be celebrated in May 2024, will be an opportunity for the PSC to showcase its accomplishments over the past two decades in contributing to sustainable peace including through its efforts to address hate crimes as well as learning from historical events, in particular the Rwanda genocide, and efforts in ensuring prevention of such atrocities from recurring.

The expected outcome of the session is a communique. As in the previous sessions, PSC may express its concern over the persistent trend of the ideologies of hate, genocide and hate crimes in Africa and may in this light reaffirm the importance of using the annual commemoration as useful avenue for articulating practical actions for addressing the challenges posed by hate speech and misinformation and disinformation on the basis of ethnic identity, particularly in fragile and conflict settings. It may also commend the progress made particularly at the national level in Rwanda to overcome the consequences of the genocide against the Tutsi. The PSC is likely to call upon member states who have not yet done so, to sign, ratify and/or accede to the relevant international legal instruments particularly the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and to adopt formal and informal education policies to foster social cohesion free from ethnic, regional, national and religious biases, while emphasizing human rights protection. PSC may urge member states to intensify their collaboration with the RECs and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) in order to enhance their efforts on prevention strategies including those that holistically tackle the underlying causes and catalysts of violent conflicts. PSC may call for the need for dealing with the regional consequences of the genocide including through enhancing collective action for resolving the conflict in Eastern DRC.

Within the framework of the 30-year anniversary, the PSC may also decide that a stocktaking exercise is undertaken as part of the 20 years anniversary of the operationalization and official launch of the PSC including for facilitating implementation of the decisions of its previous sessions including the designation of a special envoy on the prevention of genocide.