

# Open Session on Implementation and Commemoration of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

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Tomorrow (29 November), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is set to convene its 1052nd session, which will be an open session to commemorate United Nations (UN) Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and discuss its implementation in Africa.

Following the opening remarks of the PSC Chairperson of the month and Permanent Representative of Egypt to the AU, Mohamed Omar Gad, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye, is expected to make a statement. Presentations are also expected from Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on WPS; Hanna Tetteh, Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and Head of UN Office to the AU (UNOAU); Head of Egyptian National Council of Women; a representative of FEMWISE and Helen Kezie-Nwoha, Director of the Women International Peace Centre (WIPC).

Tomorrow's session is expected to focus on the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 in Africa. It is to be recalled that at its 918th session, the PSC raised concern over the pandemic's impacts on peace and security efforts in the continent. At its 951st session where the PSC commemorated the 20th anniversary of UNSC Resolution 1325 and followed up on its implementation in Africa, it also specifically emphasised how Covid-19 has

negatively impacted the realisation of the WPS agenda by exacerbating pre-existing challenges including vulnerabilities to human rights abuses and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), particularly in the context of armed conflicts. Even before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, major security challenges threatened many parts of Africa. Terrorism and violent extremism, intercommunal violence, as well as socio-political tensions were already on an upsurge, deteriorating economies and causing serious humanitarian crises across the continent.

Women, already experiencing various forms of discrimination, violence and inequalities during the pre-pandemic period, are now confronted with these challenges disproportionately. As highlighted in a study conducted by UN Women, despite being excessively affected by the pandemic, women in multiple African countries are either unrepresented or underrepresented in decision-making processes related to Covid-19 response. This demonstrates the entrenched marginalisation of women in the policymaking sphere, a prominent challenge to the full realisation of UNSC Resolution 1325.

In addition to the pandemic's immediate effect on women, its socio-economic impacts are also likely to impose more long-term challenges. With majority of employed women in Africa working in the informal sector, more uncertainty and unpredictability is introduced to their livelihoods as a result of the pandemic. Not only will this disempower women, it also curtails their effective contributions to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, a main tenet of the WPS agenda and core pillar of UNSC Resolution 1325.

Another challenge to the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325, which has emerged due to Covid-19 pandemic, is the possibility of budget cuts for funding the WPS agenda and non-governmental institutions promoting and advancing it. As a result of various governments' decisions to invest more on

measures aimed at containing the pandemic and the reprioritisations of initiatives to make more budgets available to respond to the public health emergency, there is concern that the WPS agenda may not receive the policy attention it deserves. While such decisions may be justified in light of the spread and impact of Covid-19, this may also risk undermining the gains made so far in advancing the WPS agenda. More importantly, the development of response mechanisms, which fail to integrate the WPS agenda, could disregard women's experiences and their specific needs, particularly in the context of conflicts. Women have also been at the frontlines responding to the pandemic and playing instrumental role in times of crisis.

In addition to reflecting on the impacts of Covid-19 on realisation of UNSC Resolution 1325, tomorrow's session also presents Council the option to discuss updates on Member States' implementation of the resolution. It is to be recalled that at the 25th AU Summit convened in June 2015, Member States decided to develop, implement and report on national and regional action plans for the implementation of the resolution. Since then, 30 AU States have adopted national action plans, while six regional economic communities (RECs) have adopted regional action plans, according to a 2020 report of the AU Special Envoy on WPS. In addition to the possible adoption of national and regional action plans by more Member States and RECs, AU's Special Envoy on WPS may update Council on the progresses and challenges in the implementation of the WPS agenda, particularly in the context of Covid-19 pandemic, in those Member States and regions where national and regional action plans have already been adopted.

At Council's 951st session one of the main achievements noted with regards to implementing the WPS agenda in Africa was the Second Report on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa, using the Continental Results Framework (CRF) adopted by the Peace and Security Council in

May 2018. The framework is aimed at monitoring implementation of various commitments made by AU Member States, relevant to WPS. One of the significant contributions of the CRF is that its monitoring and assessment of implementation is based on indicators, which are tailored to African context and AU policies including Agenda 2063 specifically aspiration number 6 and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). Accordingly, it looks into socio-economic threats, political factors, and emerging security threats such as terrorism and violent extremism through the lens of WPS. It is important therefore to employ the CRF to assess the impacts of Covid-19, which not only qualifies as an emerging threat to peace and security on the continent, but also poses socio-economic threats.

The expected outcome of the session is a press statement. Council may commend the progress made around the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325. The PSC may also highlight the need to address challenges that affect the vital role of women in peace processes. Council may call on Member States as well as relevant regional and international actors to ensure that all measures adopted in response to the Covid-19 pay particular attention to the needs and experience of women. It may emphasise the importance of continued support to the WPS agenda and appeal to relevant actors to ensure that the necessary funds for its implementation are not reduced due to the pandemic. It may also call on Member States and RECs which have not yet adopted national and regional action plans for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 to do so and to mobilize necessary funds for its implementation. Member States may also be urged to ensure compliance with legal commitments relevant for the implementation of WPS agenda. The PSC may reiterate its previous request to the Commission to prepare the report that evaluates the implementation of its previous decisions to undertake a stocktaking exercise and to assess the level of implementation of the WPS agenda.