

# Open Session On Youth, Peace and Security in Africa

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Tomorrow (3 March) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its fourth open session on 'Youth, Peace and Security in Africa'. The 1067th session is expected to take place virtually through zoom platform.

Following the opening remark by Mafa Sejanamane, Permanent Representative of Lesotho and Chair of the PSC for the month of March, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye is expected to make a statement. The AU Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social development, Cessouma Minata Samate and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Youth Chido Cleo Mpemba are also expected to deliver statements. Representatives from different youth networks and from United Nations Office to the African Union are also scheduled to make presentations.

The PSC has held three annual sessions on Youth, Peace and Security since its descion at its 807<sup>th</sup> session held on November 2018 to 'institutionalize and regularize an annual open session dedicated to the theme of "Youth, Peace and Security in Africa.'" The last annual session was held on 12 November 2020 during PSC's 963<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

It is to be recalled that , the PSC on its 933rd PSC session, considered and adopted the two PSC mandated documents, the 'Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security' (CFYPS) along with the 10-year implementation plan (2020-2029), and the 'Study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth towards Peace and Security in Africa'. The framework was developed in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to provide policy guidance for member states and RECs/RMs for the promotion of effective and meaningful participation of the youth in all spectrums of peace, security and development in Africa. The PSC further reiterated its request to the AU Commission to be regularly briefed on the status of progress in the implementation of the 10-years implementation plan of the CFYPS.

This year's open session will be convened to follow up on the progress made in the implementation of the CFYPS and its 10-Year Implementation Plan. The PSC on its 963rd annual open session, stressed the necessity of the implementation of this instrument through the close collaboration between the AUC and RECs/RMs and through the support to member states for the domestication of the Framework, including in the development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs). Furthermore, it is anticipated that the second cohort of African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs) will officially be presented to the PSC. The AYAPs were selected following a competitive process in November 2021 and endorsed by the 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Heads of State and Government in February 2022.

The PSC during its second session on YPS in November 2019, appointed the five AYAPs to promote, in collaboration with the youth envoy, the inclusion and participation of the youth across the entire peace and security cycle. The appointment was subsequently endorsed by the Assembly at the 33rd Ordinary Session in February 2020. This is in line with the African Youth Charter, which calls on states parties to strengthen the capacity of young people and youth organizations in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution through, among others, dialogue. The AYAPs are mandated to promote meaningful youth participation at all levels of peacebuilding across Africa for two years non-renewable. On November 2021, the second cohort of AYAPs were selected and endorsed by the 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Heads of State and Government

in February 2022. Thus, on tomorrow's session, the PSC scheduled to officially welcome the second cohort of AYAPs.

It is worth to note that, since 2018, the YPS agenda has gained momentum and marks a shift in the understanding of the role of youth in peace and security. The Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa Program continued to advance the YPS agenda through different activities and initiatives. Since the program is initiated, it promoted series of Inter-Generational Dialogues (IGD) to raise awareness on the CFYPS and its 10-Year Implementation Plan as well as co-organized a High-Level Ministerial Conference on YPS for the countries in the Horn of Africa. The Y4P programme also supported the activities of African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs) in Nigeria, Liberia, Uganda, Cameroon and Zimbabwe as part of efforts to actualize the Silencing the Guns agenda. In this regard, on tomorrow's session the above successes might be cited as areas which can be further consolidated towards the implementation of CFYPS and its 10-years implementation plan.

Of particular interest to the Council could also be the recent programs held in commemoration of the AU Theme of the Year (Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building an Africa We Want). Various programme supported the activities of visual artists to explore the nexus, roles and contributions of arts, culture and heritage to Silencing the Guns. Further, based on a training manual co-developed by the Y4P programme and UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa in collaboration with youth peacebuilders from across the Continent, the programme organized some capacity-building activities to strengthen the capacities of youth leaders to contribute to peacebuilding on the continent.

The expected outcome of tomorrow's session is a press statement. The PSC may commend the progress achieved by member states in the past years to mainstream youth in peace processes. Further, the PSC may reiterate its encouragement to Member States to continue to mainstream and facilitate the

participation of the youth in all stages of peace processes and in national development. The PSC may welcome the second group of AYAPs and encourage them to continue to promote peace, security and stability of Member States and regions in line with relevant AU instruments. Further, the PSC may stress the necessity of the implementation of the CFYPS and its 10-year implementation plan, and requested the AU Commission in collaboration with the RECs/RMs, to provide support to member states for the domestication of the Framework, including through the development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs). Further, the PSC may once again reiterate its request to the AU Commission to regularly brief the Council on the status of progress in the implementation of the 10-Year Implementation Plan of the CFYPS, including through periodic reports and annual briefings. It may call on member states to sign and ratify the African Youth Charter.