

Peacekeeping in Africa: Emerging Challenges and Critical Lessons for Sustainable Peacekeeping Operations

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Tomorrow (18 March) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 988th session on 'Peacekeeping in Africa: Emerging Challenges and Critical Lessons for Sustainable Peacekeeping Operations'. This session will be held at the Ministerial level, which is the first since the last ministerial session in December 2019.

Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya, Raychelle Omamo, is set to make the opening remark as PSC chairperson for the month of March. Kenya, apart from being a major Troop Contributing Country (TCC) to AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), is a member of the UN Security Council (UNSC). Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) is also expected to deliver a statement. The main presentation for the session is expected from the Cabinet Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of Kenya, Monica Juma. Also expected to make statements during the partially open segment of the session are representatives of the UN and the European Union (EU). The representatives of ongoing peace support operations including AMISOM and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin will also participate.

Coming against the background of ongoing discussions about AMISOM, tomorrow's session will address not only the issues

affecting AMISOM, by far AU's largest peace support operation, but also emerging trends and dynamics affecting peace operations on the continent including ad hoc missions like MNJTF. This is not the first time for the PSC to discuss issues affecting peace support operations in Africa. It is to be recalled that the 851st session of the PSC held on 22 May 2019 was to consider the AU Commission's report on the challenges faced by AU led Peace Support Operations (PSOs).

The AU has mandated about a dozen PSOs since coming into operation in 2002. Until its end on 31 December 2020, the AU was running jointly with the UN the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). AU further authorized and provided political and technical support for three ad hoc regional security coalitions including the MNJTF and the G5 Sahel Joint Force. AU's nearly two decades of experience has shown that peace support operations face various issues resulting from the changes in both the peace and security landscape of the continent and international relations.

One of the major challenges likely to gain PSC's attention is funding. Despite the willingness that the AU has shown over the years for deploying missions in conflict situations where there is no peace to keep and thereby contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security, its missions suffer from lack of predictable and sustainable funding. In recent years, efforts have been underway to address this challenge by trying to identify various funding arrangements including via AU's major step for mobilizing funds from within the continent. Yet, financial arrangements for African peace support operations remain neither sustainable nor predictable, thereby significantly affecting their effectiveness. In deliberating on this perennial issue, it would be of interest for the PSC to reflect on the status of operationalization of the Peace Fund, the implications of the new financial tool of the EU that came in to operation early this year replacing the Africa Peace Facility and on the preparatory work and next

steps that should be undertaken on the part of the AU for reactivating the draft UNSC resolution on AU peace support operations through UN assessed contributions.

Also of interest to PSC members is emerging security threats and their implication to peacekeeping in Africa. Africa witnessed some 1,878 terrorist attacks and over 8,200 death toll in 2020, with incidents of such attacks showing worrying persistence and rise in the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, Somalia and Northern Mozambique. Other features of the security landscape that present further challenge to peace operations include porous borders, transnational criminal networks, human and drug trafficking, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, climate change, and most recently by public health emergencies such as COVID-19. Characterized by asymmetric warfare and proliferation in particular of local identity militias, non-traditional security threats have increased in scale, intensity and complexity, a development that makes PSOs extremely challenging, with peacekeepers suffering increasing fatalities as witnessed in Mali and CAR in 2020.

There is a growing call for a robust mandate to peace support missions for them to deal with changing security dynamics. As the various experiences including AMISOM and the plethora of security operations in the Sahel show, relative success of peace support operations with robust mandate depends not only on gains made in the security sphere through degrading the capacity of groups such as Al Shabaab but also and importantly in the progress achieved in the political process on which the political end state of such operations has to be anchored. This underscores the 'primacy of politics', in that the use of political process is the primary means for the resolution of conflicts, with robust peace operations playing supporting role. This principle of the 'primacy of politics' is recognized as one of the nine core principles of the AU Doctrine on Peace Support Operations, adopted by the 3rd extraordinary meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee

on Defense, Safety and Security in January 2021, described as referring to 'the principle and commitment by the AU to ensure that all AU PSOs are deployed with the primary objective to facilitate a political end state as set out in its mandate'.

Gaps in the cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders notably AU, UN, RECs, TCCs, and host government is the other issue affecting PSOs that also deserves attention during tomorrow's session. Countries that contribute uniformed personnel; those that provide financial, technical and logistical support; and those that authorize the mission are often different. Not each of these actors exert equal influence in making some strategic decisions, which from time to time negatively affects the role of PSOs on the continent. The recent experience of AMISOM highlights some of these challenges. It is to be recalled that in its 978th session on Somalia and AMISOM, the PSC expressed its regret over UN Security Council for conducting an independent review of AMISOM despite PSC's call for an AU-UN joint leadership in undertaking the independent assessment. Subsequently, further tensions emerged in relation to the negotiation over Resolution 2568(2021). The representative of Niger speaking on behalf of the 'A3+1' expressed his disappointment over the manner in which the proposal of the A3+1 to include a reference to the UN assessed contributions as a possibility to be examined with the view to enhance the predictability and sustainability of AMISOM's financing was rejected without 'any convincing explanation'.

Experiences in Africa also show the multiplicity of peace operations actors in the continent, with some of the operations taking the form of ad hoc coalitions. This also underscores the imperative not only for harmonization of decision-making between AU and RECs/RMS but also for strategic coordination to avoid reversal of the gains made including in ensuring compliance with AU standards and norms.

Challenges related to troop drawdown, transition and eventual

exit of peacekeeping missions may also feature in tomorrow's session as another issue affecting peace support operations in Africa. Although it did not show the pitfalls of previous transitions such as in Mali and CAR, this remains an issue particularly in light of recent developments in relation to the exist of UNAMID. The imperative for consensus and coordination between national, regional, continental and international actors including affected population on troop drawdown, transition and exit has been highlighted by protests held in Darfur against UNAMID's withdrawal and the sharp uptick of violence in Darfur just weeks after UNAMID's closure of operation in December 2020. All these developments underscore the painstaking venture of winding up missions which requires striking the right balance between undertaking transfer of responsibility for national governments and maintaining security gains.

The other critical lesson likely to interest the PSC is the importance of ensuring full and meaningful involvement of women and the youth in Africa's peace support missions as well as mainstreaming the women and youth in the peace and security agenda. Given the gender and age specific consequences of conflict, there is an urgent need for the inclusion of women and the youth in the planning, deployment and running of peace support operations. In this regard, there is a need for translating into strategic and operational plans the pronouncements of the PSC on the importance of mainstreaming and increasing the involvement of women and youth in all stages of peace process ranging from conflict prevention to peacebuilding as exemplified by the AU PSOs Doctrine.

The expected outcome is a communique. As part of the effort to ensure predictable and sustainable funding for AU's peace initiatives, the PSC is likely to urge member states to redouble their support and commitment to the scale of assessment for contribution to the Peace Fund pursuant to the consensus reached by the Executive Council through Decision

EX.CL DEC./1100(XXXVII) on 14 October 2020. The PSC is also likely to follow up on the Assembly's request, at its 14th extra ordinary session on Silencing the Guns held on 6 December 2020, for the PSC to articulate a common African position on financing PSOs in Africa with the view to guide the A3 members in the UN Security Council 'for adoption of a resolution that will enable Africa to access UN assessed contribution for peace support operations in the continent'. PSC may also stress the importance of strategic coordination among plethora of stakeholders in peace keeping operations in Africa, particularly among the AU, UN, RECs, and other international partners as well as national actors. It may further emphasize the importance of consultation with the AU before the UNSC makes strategic decisions on peacekeeping missions in the continent. PSC may also make reference to the recently adopted AU Doctrine on PSOs and may underscore that all AU PSOs shall be guided by the fundamental values and standards incorporated in the doctrine.