

Provisional Program of Work for the Month of March 2024

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Date | March 2024

In March 2024, the Republic of Namibia will take over the role of chairing the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) from the Kingdom of Morocco. The provisional program of work of the month envisages a total of six substantive agenda items and an informal consultation of the PSC with the European Union (EU) Political and Security Committee (EUPSC). Of the six substantive agenda items, four will address country-specific and regional situations while the remaining two will focus on thematic issues. One of the sessions to be held during the month will take place at Ministerial level while the remaining will be Ambassadorial level meetings. In addition, the Military Staff Committee (MSC) and the Committee of Experts (CoE) will also be meeting during the month.

The first meeting of the PSC will be its informal consultation with the EUPSC, scheduled to take place on 01 March. It is worth noting that this is not the ordinary engagement between the two bodies. It is rather an informal meeting initiated in the context of the visit of members of the EUPSC. It is expected to serve as the platform for the two counterparts to exchange on issues related to working methods.

There will be two agenda items in the first substantive session of the month, on 04 March. The first agenda item is a briefing on the operation of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM). It is to be noted that in 2023, although indicated in the annual indicative program of work, the PSC overlooked to convene a session on SAMIM during the year. The upcoming briefing on

SAMIM's operations is expected to cover the state of operation of SAMIM and the situation in northern Mozambique. SADC would brief the PSC on progress made in the implementation of SAMIM's mandates and key developments from SADC's decision to the extension of SAMIM's mandate by an additional year, expected to end in July 2024. The session would additionally cover AU Commission's recent activities in alignment with the PSC's request at its [1119th session](#) for the Commission to '...facilitat[e] the delivery of the equipment, directly to the Government of Mozambique at the Port of Nacala (Nampula Province), donated by the Government of the People's Republic of China...'. A key update that may be highlighted in this respect is the November 2023 [mission](#) to Pemba, Mozambique, undertaken by the Director of Conflict Management of the AU PAPS Department, Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, aimed at handing over donated military equipment.

The second agenda item to be considered on 04 March is the Situation in Eastern DRC and the deployment of SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC). Although the PSC has covered the increasing tensions between DRC and Rwanda and the escalation of conflict between the Armed Forces of DRC and the M23 in eastern DRC during previous sessions, this session marks the first time when the PSC will discuss the decision of SADC Heads of State and Government on the deployment of troops to the DRC on 08 May 2023. In the communiqué of the [1140th session](#) when the PSC last considered the situation in eastern DRC, it highlighted the importance of dialogue between the two countries for de-escalating tensions and underscored the role of the Luanda and Nairobi processes, with a focus on the need for ensuring coordination and harmonization between these two processes. The deployment of SAMIDRC as a replacement of the East African Force which DRC hurriedly pushed out for failing to fight against the M23. Unlike the East African Force which was tied to the political track of the Nairobi process and the inter-state focused Luanda process, SAMIDRC lacks a political and

peace track on which it is anchored. It seems that it takes the model of SADC's deployment in Mozambique and yet the situation in eastern DRC is not akin to northern Mozambique. This is not without consequences for the Nairobi and Luanda processes.

On 08 March, the PSC will convene another country-specific session to receive a briefing on the situation in Somalia. As the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) is nearing its final drawdown in December 2024 and with the PSC convening a total of [five sessions](#) on ATMIS vis-via Somalia in 2023, it is to be noted that Somalia has been and will remain one of the PSC's key concerns in the region for 2024. During the [1173rd session](#), which was when it last discussed Somalia and operations of ATMIS, the PSC considered the second drawdown phase of ATIMS on the basis of the reports produced by the Joint Technical Assessment and the outcome of the Somalia Coordination Committee to steer their engagement. In alignment with the process of drawdown, the PSC decided on the withdrawal of 3000 ATMIS troops and 851 police personnel. Per the PSC decision, on 2 February, ATMIS reported the completion of phase two drawdown including the transfer of seven Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) to the government of Somalia and the closure of two additional FOBs. As the third phase of the drawdown nears, the AU Commission and ATMIS also held a consultative session with the Chiefs of Defense on 13 February to discuss the challenges that were encountered during the Phase 2 drawdown including the technical pause in September of 2023. Beyond that, the meeting also covered the plans for the Phase 3 drawdown and the implications it may have on the security situation in the country. As such, it is anticipated that the PSC will receive a briefing on the discussion that took place the previous month and anticipate the preparations for the phase 3 drawdown of ATMIS as well as the plan for avoiding the emergence of any security vacuum on the departure of ATMIS.

The PSC is scheduled to consider and adopt the programme of work for the month of April, on 08 March.

The next session taking place on 12 March will be dedicated to the situation in Abyei. To enable engagement with Sudan, a member state that is currently under suspension and hence cannot participate in AU activities including formal sessions of the PSC, an informal consultation is aimed to precede the formal briefing on Abyei. The last time the PSC convened a meeting to discuss the situation in Abyei was in September 2022, at its [1108th session](#), before the outbreak of the war in Sudan. This session came against the background of major spike of violence and fighting in Abyei during late 2023 and the preceding months. The coming session also offers the opportunity to follow-up on the implementation of the outcomes of the 1108th meeting, specifically the PSC's request for the AU Commission to conduct a study on the root causes of instability in the region alongside a matrix of implementation of PSC's decisions on Abyei.

From 14 to 16 March, the second forum on unconstitutional changes of government (UCG) will be held in Accra, Ghana. Following from the inaugural convening held in Accra from 15 to 17 March 2022, the coming forum serves to follow-up on the status of implementation of key elements of the Accra Declaration on UCG in Africa as well as the Malabo Declaration on Terrorism and UCG adopted in May 2022 and the lessons from persisting challenges facing the continent with the continuation of the occurrence of coups and attempted coups.

On 19 March, the PSC will receive a briefing on the activities of the AU Panel of the Wise and its subsidiary bodies, FemWise and WiseYouth. Since the hiatus of engagement between the PSC and Panel of the Wise between 2017 -2022, the previous year saw a revival in engagement between the two bodies. The Panel of the Wise reinforcing the mandate of the PSC via its preventative diplomacy has increased its engagement with the

PSC in 2023 by providing updates on its activities and conducting field missions to specific countries including Chad, in alignment with PSC's directive. With the increasing conflicts across the continent, it is becoming imperative for the PSC to utilize the APSA tools in achieving its mandate. Building on the revitalization of engagement between the two bodies, the forthcoming session provides an opportunity for the PSC to continue increasing its engagement with the Panel to supplement and inform its work. The session will also be unique in that the PSC will receive a briefing not only on the activities of the Panel of the Wise, but also that of its subsidiary bodies, FemWise and WiseYouth. Although FemWise, established in 2017, is often dealt by the PSC under the context of its agenda on Women Peace and Security, the PSC has not engaged the FemWise within the framework of its exchanges with the Panel of the Wise. Similarly, this will also be the first instance the WiseYouth Network will brief the PSC as it was recently established and endorsed at the 35th Assembly of Head State Summit in 2022. Since the endorsement of the network, the WiseYouth has convened a [consultative meeting](#) to operationalize the network.

The last session of the month will be held on 22 March, at the Ministerial level. The session will be committed to one of PSC's standing agenda items, Women Peace and Security (WPS), being convened within the framework of International Women's Day, annually commemorated in March. A notable practice from the PSC's previous session on WPS – the [1144th session](#) – which is worth replicating was the participation of women from conflict-impacted areas in the meeting. Beyond their participation, these women representatives were able to provide the PSC with testimonies on how the ongoing conflicts in their respective regions and countries have disproportionately impacted women. In addition to upholding this practice by inviting women representatives from conflict affected countries, the upcoming session is expected to

follow-up on some of PSC's pending decision including its request for the AU Commission and Special envoy for WPS to undertake a comprehensive review of the involvement of women in the peace process.

Aside from these substantive sessions, the program of work for March envisages in the footnote a possible update briefing on the situation in Sudan. The program also anticipates a meeting of the MSC on 07 March, aimed at reflecting on ways of making the MSC more active in playing its role of supporting the PSC. The CoE is also scheduled to meet on 11 March, in preparation for the induction of the newly elected members of the PSC.

The induction of the 10 new members of the PSC, elected at the 44th ordinary session of the Executive Council and endorsed by the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly, is expected to be the last activity of the PSC for the month of March 2024. The induction program is scheduled to be held from 25 to 27 March, in Swakopmund, Namibia. This is an important occasion for the PSC to take stock of its working methods and the level of delivery of its mandate, the peace and security situation on the continent and the ways in which it can improve on its effectiveness in the execution of its mandate. This is indeed an opportune occasion considering the challenging continental and global dynamics.

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