

# Provisional Program of Work of the PSC for the Month of February 2021

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The chairperson of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) for the month of February is taken up by Ghana. The program of work of the PSC, considered via email exchange, for the month shows that the PSC is scheduled to have a few sessions and plans to convene a retreat virtually. Specifically, PSC is expected to convene two substantive sessions. Both these sessions will be conducted through video teleconference (VTC). As the week for the 34th session of the AU Assembly, no session is scheduled for the week of 1 February.

The first session of the month is scheduled to take place on 9 February. The session will consider the situation in Somalia and the activities of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). At its 949th meeting and its last session during 2020 on the situation in Somalia, Council welcomed the review of the Somalia Transitional Plan (STP) and requested the AUC to revise AMISOM's Concept of Operation (CONOPs) for 2018-2021 to ensure they are aligned with the revised STP. Council may also follow up on the conduct of an independent comprehensive assessment of the security environment. As it may be recalled, this assessment was envisaged to be a joint AUC and UN exercise, but it has been carried out by the UN only. In light of the uncertainties surrounding Somalia's elections, which were scheduled to take place on 8 February, it is also expected that the PSC will reflect on the mounting tensions in Somalia.

On 12 February, the PSC will consider and adopt its program of

work for the month of March, which will be circulated via email to all members of the Council for comments and feedback. This is indicative that the chairperson of the PSC for the month of March has been identified.

The PSC is scheduled to have the next substantive session on the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) on 16 February. The political and security situation in CAR has shown significant deterioration since Council's previous session on CAR at its 972nd meeting. Particularly, the violence which broke out following the 27 December 2020 election, and the nationwide offensive launched by the newly formed coalition of armed groups – 'Patriots for Change' – has resulted in mass displacement. The session on CAR presents the PSC the opportunity to follow closely the political and security situation in the country.

Under Article 7(1) (q) of the PSC Protocol, the PSC is required to submit regularly a report on its activities and on the state of peace and security in Africa. It is to be recalled that in January the PSC was meant to consider the report on its activities and the state of peace and security in Africa. This has not been carried out in the context of the decision that the 34th ordinary session of the AU Assembly will focus on a limited number of agenda items. It is not envisaged that on 18 February, Council will in pursuit of Article 7(1) (q) of the PSC Protocol consider the report on its activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa.

On 25-26 February, the PSC is scheduled to convene a retreat. This last activity of the month is expected to be held virtually focusing on the working methods of the Council. The experience of the PSC since the onset of the COVID19 pandemic reveal the emergence of some challenges in the working methods of the PSC. These, in the main, relate to the predictability of the rotation of the chairship of the PSC and effective membership in the PSC. Under the PSC Protocol, the Article 8(6) envisages that the holding of the chairship of the PSC

'shall be in turn by members of the Peace and Security Council in the alphabetical order of their names'. As the Manual on the PSC Working Methods notes, this entails predictability of rotation of the chairperson of the PSC, subject to exceptions. Similarly, within the framework of Article 5 of the PSC Protocol, the conclusions of the PSC retreats in Djibouti and Cairo asserted the need for full and effective participation in the work of the PSC.