Provisional Programme of Work for the Month of August 2022

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Date | August 2022

In August, Gambia will be chairing the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC). The Provisional Program of Work adopted on 13 July and updated on 26 July, envisages that PSC will convene nine sessions during the month. Out of these, one will address country/region specific situation, whereas the remaining eight sessions will be committed to various thematic agenda items. All sessions are envisaged to take place at Ambassadorial level and there will be one open session.

On 1 August, the PSC will convene its 1st session of the month to engage for first time, one of the Sub-Committees of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), focusing on the PRC Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Democracy and Governance (SC-HRDG). This session is envisaged to enhance coordination and information sharing between the PSC and the Sub-Committee on the areas on which their respective mandate converges.

The second session of the month is set to take place on 02 August. The session will be committed to consideration of the report the AU Commission Chairperson on election in Africa. This is an agenda carried from June and July programs. Following the previous report of the AU Commission Chairperson on elections in Africa conducted in the period from July to December 2021 — considered at Council's 1062nd session — the coming report is expected to provide details of elections conducted during the first half of 2022 (January to June 2022) and offers an overview of those expected to be held during the coming months.

On 04 August, the Council will convene its third session of the month which will be committed to a relatively new theme – "Emerging Technologies and New Media: Impact on Democratic Governance, Peace and Security in Africa". Although this will be the first time for Council to address emerging technologies and new media as they relate to democratic governance and peace and security, it has made reference at its various previous sessions, to the use of new technologies and the media for anti-peace purposes such as the spread of fake news and propagation of hate speech. Council has also dedicated two sessions so far – the 627th and 850th sessions – to the theme of cyber security where the misuse of the cyber space for purposes contrary to peace and security was discussed at length. In addition to reflecting on some of the contemporary trends around emerging technologies whose negative impacts on democratic governance and peace and security has become a growing concern, Council may use the coming session as an opportunity to brainstorm the various ways through which new technologies and media space on the one hand, and democratic governance and peace and security on the other hand can serve for a more comprehensive policy engagement.

During the same session on 4 August, the PSC is scheduled to have an update briefing on the situation in the Horn of Africa. This briefing has been scheduled a number of times in previous months but was cancelled in each of those previous occasions. This briefing is expected to provide update by the AU Commission Chairperson's High Representative for the Horn of Africa, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obadanjo, on the situation in the conflict in northern Ethiopia since his last briefing to the PSC in February 2022.

The fourth session of the month is set to take place on 8 August and will be committed to the third annual consultative meeting of the PSC and Policy Organs of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs). The first consultative meeting between the PSC and RECs/RMs Policy

organs was convened on 24 May 2019 where it was agreed to institutionalise the meeting as an annual consultation. Accordingly, the second consultative meeting took place on 26 August 2021, 2020 being missed due to COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to following up on implementation of key decisions adopted at their previous consultative meetings, the third annual consultative meeting could serve to reflect on the practice and experience in how the PSC & RECs/RMs policy organs coordinate their policy responses to crises and conflicts that they are commonly seized with.

On 11 August, the PSC will convene an experience sharing session between the PSC and the members of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Platform. It is to be recalled that within the framework of Article 19 of the PSC Protocol and taking into account the mandate of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in responding to human rights issues in conflict and crisis situations, the PSC & the ACHPR have institutionalized annual consultative meeting. This has been held annually since 2018 culminating in communiques that outlined rich modalities for close working relationship & addressing human rights issues in conflict and crisis situations. Instead of displacing this institutionalized engagement, it is expected that tomorrow's session, during which the Chairperson of the AGA Platform will brief the PSC, will focus on finding ways of enhancing synergy between the AGA & the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

On 12 August, Council will consider and adopt the draft provisional programme of work for the month of September 2022.

The sixth session of the month is expected to take place on 15 August, on the topical theme of "Sanctions and Enforcement Capabilities: Deterrence against Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG)". Based on some of the observations made at the Accra Forum on UCG conducted from 15 to 17 March 2022 and the Malabo Summit on Terrorism and UCG convened on 28 May 2022, the session will be aimed at reflecting on the extent to

which AU sanctions against UCG are working meaningfully, if they are serving the purpose of deterrence and what needs to change going forward in order to ensure their enforceability.

The seventh session is planned to take place on 18 August and it will be an open session on children affected by armed conflicts (CAAC). CAAC has been a standing agenda item of the PSC since its 420th session convened on 18 February 2014 where the Council decided to dedicate an open session annually to the theme. At the upcoming session, Council may welcome the adoption by the Specialised Technical Committee on Defence, Security and Safety (STCDSS) of two key policies on CAAC — the Policy on child protection in AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and the Policy on mainstreaming child protection in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) — in line with the request of PSC's 994th Communiqué. Council may also draw attention to some of the emerging concerns with regards to CAAC and start to address records of plight of children in country specific conflict situations.

On 22 August, Council will convene a session on "Lessons Learning session on the Implementation of the AU Transitional Justice Policy: Impact on National Resilience and Democratisation". Though this is the first time that Council dedicated a session on the AU Transitional Justice Policy since the Policy's adoption by the AU Assembly in February 2019, the issue of transitional justice has been considered by the Council under the theme of 'peace, justice and reconciliation' since at least 2013. It is also to be recalled that the Council, at its 899th meeting held on 5 December 2019, decided to convene an annual session on "experience sharing and lessons learning on national reconciliation, restoration of peace and rebuilding of cohesion in Africa". The coming session is expected to serve as a platform for member States such as Gambia to share their experiences including successes and challenges in their transitional justice processes. This

will be essential to assist those member States who are currently undergoing transitional justice processes, such as South Sudan.

The last session of the month is scheduled to take place on 29 August. The session will be committed to an updated briefing on the deployment of the 3000 Troops in the Sahel. The decision to deploy 3000 troops to Sahel was made by the AU Assembly at its 33rd Ordinary Session [Assembly/AU/Dec.792(XXXIII)]. At its 950th session, the PSC also endorsed the 'Revised Strategic Concept Note on Planning Guidance for the deployment of an additional 3000 troops to the Sahel'. More recently, at its 1006th session, the PSC also requested the Chairperson of the AU Commission to "continue consultations with the concerned stakeholders on the deployment of the 3000 troops in the Sahel region". However, despite the decision for deployment having been made, progress in implementation has been slow, mainly owing to lack of clarity on the issue of financing. This challenge of funding is not unique to this proposed deployment but currently affects existing AU missions, including those in Somalia and in the Central African Republic (CAR). Yet, there is a need for revising the deployment of the 3000 troops, given the need for reinforcing counter terrorism operations in the Sahel due to changing regional and geopolitical developments affecting the region including withdrawal of Mali from the G5 joint force.

In addition to these, Council's provisional programme of work also envisages in footnotes, possible meetings on Chad/Guinea/Mali/Sudan/border situation between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The footnotes also envisage an informal consultation between the PSC and the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), on 03 August.