

Provisional programme of work for the month of December 2023

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In December, the Republic of The Gambia will assume the chairship of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) under the leadership of H.E. Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the AU. This month's provisional programme of work includes a total of three substantive sessions, one of which will be held at the ministerial level and chaired by H.E. Mamadou Tangara, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia. In addition to its sessions on thematic and country specific issues, the PSC will also convene its 3rd annual joint retreat with the APRM in Johannesburg, South Africa and conduct the 10th High-Level Seminar, at ministerial level, in Oran Algeria.

On 01 December, the first session of the month, at ambassadorial level, is scheduled to discuss private military and defence companies operating in Africa. The last time the PSC reflected on this topic was during the 1159th Ministerial-level meeting held on 22 June 2023. During that session, the agenda focused on the 'Status of Implementation of the Common African Defence and Security Policy and other Relevant Defence and Security Instruments on the Continent.' In its [Communique](#), the PSC expressed its concern regarding the surge of mercenaries and foreign fighters in Africa, inconsistent with the principles outlined in the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP). Mercenaries were identified in the CADSP as common external threats to

continental security in Africa. Consequently, the first session of the month is expected to give an update on the status of the review of the OAU/AU Convention for the Elimination of Mercenaries in Africa, initially adopted on 03 July 1977. It is noted that out of the total 55 countries, only 36 signed the convention and among them, only 32 have ratified it.

Additionally, there will be a briefing on the outcome of the 3rd edition of the Luanda Biennale. The Biennale of Luanda (Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace) is an event which is held every 2 years in Angola's capital city, Luanda. Its primary objective is to promote experience sharing and dialogue on the promotion of the culture of peace and intergenerational dialogues, as a means of preventing violence and resolving conflicts. During this segment of the session, the PSC is expected to receive a brief on the outcome of this year's forum under the theme "Education, Culture of Peace and African Citizenship as tools for the sustainable development of the continent" which was held on 22-24 November 2023.

On December 4 and 5, a Ministerial and High-Level Open Session will be held in Banjul, The Gambia. The purpose of this session is to discuss the African Child Protection Architecture and the African Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (AP-CAAC). During the last 1101st meeting on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts in Africa held on 18 August 2022, the PSC expressed deep concern about persistent violent conflicts undermining the fundamental rights and welfare of children. The PSC praised the AP-CAAC for its efforts to mobilize action to address grave violations against children rights and urged member states and partners to support the platform. The Ministerial high-level session is set to bring together various stakeholders with a view to take stock of the state of children affected by armed conflict on the continent, the various role players in the AU system and articulate measures for advancing effective action and close

coordination and synergy among various role players. It also affords the PSC the opportunity to consider how to systematically mainstream the protection of children both across the peace and security architecture and the entire conflict cycle as the AU engages specific conflict situations. Among others, the ministerial meeting may take cue from some of the best practices of the UN in this regard, including most particularly the tracking, monitoring and reporting on trends and dynamics in status of compliance with children rights and protection in various conflict and crisis settings on the continent with a view to inform a more systematic as opposed to ad hoc policy response to the challenges to compliance with protection of children. More concretely, the Ministerial session may also consider the urgent and pressing situation of children caught up in the raging war in Sudan, which is classified by UNICEF as the world's largest child displacement crisis.

On the same week, December 8 in particular, the PSC Committee of Experts (CoE) will convene to prepare for two major annual fora: the 3rd PSC and Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Retreat and the 10th High-level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. At the 1129th PSC meeting on the consideration of the adoption of the [Conclusions of the Second Joint Retreat of the PSC of the AU and the African Peer Review Mechanism \(APRM\)](#) held on 20 December 2022, a [Communique](#) was adopted providing PSC's decision to hold the Third Joint Retreat in Durban, South Africa, during the third quarter of 2023, at a date to be jointly agreed upon in due course. In that context, the Joint Retreat will take place on December 11 and 12 in Johannesburg, South Africa. This year's retreat coincides with the 20th Anniversary of the APRM. Building on the theme of the 2nd Joint Retreat held in Durban in November 2022, the upcoming retreat will assess the collaboration between the PSC and APRM in early warning and conflict prevention, as well as the

synergy between the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA).

Furthermore, the 10th High-level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa: *Assisting African Members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (A3) in preparing to address peace and security issues on the continent*, will be held at the Ministerial Level on December 17 and 18. Coined 'the Oran Process', this year's seminar will fall under the theme 'Celebrating 10 years of progress and cooperation: A decade of transformation and innovation, reaching new heights together'. The meeting, traditionally held in Oran Algeria during December in accordance with the PSC's Annual Indicative Programme, is expected to address the A3's practices in setting and prioritizing African issues in the UN Security Council agenda and how to advance support for and close coordination with the A3 by the PSC and the AU in general. Additionally, discussions will focus on how to address the challenges and set strategies for supporting incoming A3 states.

The last session of the month scheduled for 21 December will be an Informal Consultation to provide an updated briefing on the countries in political transition namely Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso. On 26 April 2023, PSC convened for the first time an informal consultation with representatives of member states undergoing political transitions i.e. Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Sudan. The consultation served as an opportunity for the PSC to directly engage with the member states suspended from the activities of the AU in relation to unconstitutional changes of government (UCG), in an informal consultation format, which carries no formal outcome. On the same day, the PSC is expected to consider the recently concluded 15th PSC Retreat on the review of its working methods held from 25 to 27 November 2023 and would consider the adoption of the Terms of Reference for the operationalization of the PSC Sub-committee on Sanctions. The programme of work

for the month also indicates that the deliberations on the same day will consider the PSC Annual Indicative Programme of Work for 2024.

The footnotes on the programme of work indicate that from 7 to 9 December 2023, the PSC Chairperson (representing West African region) and one PSC Member per region will attend the COP 28.

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