

Provisional Programme of Work for the month of February 2023

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South Africa will assume the role of the chairperson of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) for February. The draft provisional program of work for the month prepared under South Africa's leadership envisages that the PSC will convene five sessions during the month. With the exception of one thematic session added after the adoption of the first program of work for February, all sessions are dedicated to country specific situations. According to Ambassador Edward Xolisa Makaya, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the AU, the focus of the program of the month on specific conflict situations seeks to 'inject some urgency in the resolution of these situations'. It is interesting to note that the items placed on the program of work cover conflict situations from all regions except West Africa and Sahel and Southern Africa.

The PSC is expected to hold its sessions at all the three levels of its meetings. While there will be one session each at the level of ministers and heads of state and government, the remaining three sessions will be held at ambassadorial levels.

Apart from the five sessions, the provisional programme of work also envisages two field missions and a meeting of the PSC Military Staff Committee (MSC).

The first session of the month is expected to be held on 01 February and will be assessing updates on the situation in

Libya. It is to be recalled that the PSC only held one session on Libya in 2022. The last time the PSC held a session on Libya was at its 1091st session held in June 2022. Months later and despite fortified efforts deployed by the newly appointed UN special representative to Libya, Abdoulaye Bathily, no significant progress has been registered towards achieving political consensus among the rival entities on a political roadmap for ending the political paralysis and fragmentation. Further compounding already complex situation is the persistence of the meddling in of multiple and competing external actors providing support for the rival entities contesting control over the governance of the country. The upcoming session is expected to provide key updates on efforts aimed at resolving the stalemate over achieving agreement on the political roadmap that will facilitate the convening of elections and the overall political, security and humanitarian situation in the country.

On 03 February, the PSC will undertake a field mission to Mekelle, Tigray Region of Ethiopia. This will be the first field mission of the PSC to be conducted to the region since the outbreak of conflict in November 2020, although multiple AU visits have been undertaken under the auspices of the High Representative for the Horn of Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo. The field mission is taking place under South Africa's chairship, which also played a role in hosting the negotiation and signing of the peace agreement between the warring parties in November 2022. It is also to be recalled that South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa was the first to dispatch a high-level diplomatic team to Ethiopia early in the conflict in 2020 with a view to facilitate peace efforts.

On the same day, the MSC will have a briefing to discuss the status of AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs). This is a timely issue considering that the continent has witnessed the proliferation of ad hoc security response arrangements as opposed to those mobilized within the framework of the PSC

Protocol.

The second session of the month is planned to take place at the ministerial level on 06 February and will be committed to updates on the situation in Sudan. This session will review developments since the last PSC session including notably the signing of a framework agreement between a coalition of civilian organizations and political parties and the military on 05 December 2022. While the parties continue to hold talks over the most critical issues on the transition process in Sudan including the formation of civilian transitional government, security sector reform including the future role of the army not only vis-à-vis civilian oversight but also in the economy and justice and accountability for past and recent atrocities, Sudan's de facto authorities are seeking to leverage the 5 December agreement for securing the lifting of suspension from the AU.

The third session is scheduled for 08 February. This session is scheduled to have two agenda items. The first agenda of this session will be committed to a briefing by the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) on the peace and security outlook on the continent in 2023. It is to be recalled that the PSC, as part of the decisions it adopted at its 1073rd session on 'continental early warning and security outlook in Africa', it requested the AU Commission to facilitate quarterly briefings to the PSC by CISSA, among other organs relevant for ensuring prompt conflict prevention. Within this context and informed by the trends observed over the past year, CISSA's briefing could highlight some of the concerning threats and challenges expected to confront the continent in 2023 including the increasing spread of terrorism and violent extremism, growing governance related security challenges and the potential threats in the realm of cyber security. This session may also put a spotlight the preventive diplomacy role of the PSC particularly through identifying ways of enhancing the use of the Panel of Wise.

The second agenda items of the session is expected to consider the African Peer Review Mechanism's (APRM) African Governance Report (AGR) 2023. The APRM prepares the AGR every two years and the 2023 AGR unsurprisingly focuses on unconstitutional changes of government in Africa.

On 10 February, the PSC will consider and adopt the provisional programme of work for the month of March 2023.

The fourth session will be convened on 17 February at Heads of State and Government level. The session will be dedicated to consider the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), that registered further deterioration recently and the deployment of Regional Force by the East African Community (EAC). It will be held in person. The session is expected to consider the situation within the framework of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) Agreement for DRC and the Region.

The second filed mission of the month is planned to take place from 23 to 25 February and will take the PSC to South Sudan. The field trip will be undertaken in line with the PSC's decision adopted at its 1123rd session to conduct 'a solidarity visit to South Sudan on the third anniversary of the formation of the Transitional Government on 22 February 2023'. As indicated in the Communiqué of the 1123rd session, the filed mission is expected to serve the central purpose of encouraging South Sudanese stakeholders 'to remain resolute in pursuing the transitional tasks outlined in the 2022 Roadmap on Outstanding Issues, with a view to concluding the political transition before 22 February 2025'.

The fifth and last session of the month is scheduled to take place on 28 February. The PSC will consider and adopt the report on the findings of its field mission to South Sudan at this session. In tandem with the focus of the field visit and having regard to updates reflected in the report of key

findings, the session is expected to reflect on the status of ongoing efforts to finalise the outstanding tasks in the implementation of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) outlined in the 2022 Roadmap of Outstanding Issues.