

Provisional Programme of Work for the Month of September 2023

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Date | September 2023

For the month of September, Cameroon takes over the role of chairing the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) from Burundi. The PSC's Provisional Programme of Work of the month, prepared under the guidance of the incoming Chairperson, includes six substantive sessions. While two sessions will address country-specific issues, the remaining four will cover thematic topics. Except for one session that will be held at the ministerial level, all the sessions will be held at the ambassadorial level. The PoW for the month also envisages that PSC will be on a mission to Mozambique for the commemoration of the Amnesty Month.

As the next phase of the drawdown of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) approaches, the first session of the PSC, scheduled for 7 September focusing on conflict specific situation, is dedicated to an updated briefing on the situation in Somalia and the activities of ATMIS. It is to be recalled that the first drawdown of ATMIS troops, following the initial extension on the request of the Government of Somalia, took place last June. It is anticipated according to the timeline for the drawdown that the second drawdown that will involve the departure of 3000 troops will take place at the end of September. This session is expected to hear from the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and Head of ATMIS about the state of preparedness of ATMIS for the drawdown. Related to the drawdown, UN Security Council Resolution 2687 [[S/RES/2687\(2023\)](#)] envisaged

the conduct of a technical review by the AU and Somalia to evaluate the progress of the initial withdrawal. ATMIS is also expected to provide update on this review, whose conclusions are expected to be released by 15 September. Additionally, the session will also receive update from Somalia as well as ATMIS on the security situation in Somalia including the ongoing offensive operations against Al Shabaab and the readiness of Somalia security forces to shoulder the security responsibilities from ATMIS troops that will be departing as part of the drawdown. In light of the violent clashes in LasAnod, the PSC may also use the session to seek briefing on the nature and scale of the crisis and how the AU including through ATMIS may facilitate the resolution of the conflict.

With September as the Amnesty month, the next activity of the PSC involves the commemoration of Africa Amnesty Month, which is planned to take place from 11 to 13 August in Maputo, Mozambique. While Africa Amnesty Month has been commemorated by the PSC every September since 2017, in line with the decision of the AU Assembly adopted at its 29th Ordinary Session [[Assembly/AU/Dec. 645 \(XXIX\)](#)] and at 14th Extraordinary Session, [[Ext/Assembly/AU/Dec.1\(XIV\)](#)], it is in 2022 that the PSC started to mark the annual event outside of Addis Ababa through various symbolic activities including collection and burning of weapons and arms. Beyond the symbolic activities, the Amnesty Month also serves to highlight the role of illicit arms and weapons as major drivers of conflicts and insecurity in Africa. The PSC may also use the mission as an occasion for canvassing the current state of the conflict involving terrorist groups in the Cabo Delgado province and to interact with representatives of the Southern Africa Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM).

On 18 September, the PSC is scheduled to hold the second substantive session of the month. It is expected that the PSC will receive a briefing on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. According to the International Maritime Bureau's (IMB)

[report](#), the trend of maritime crimes in the region has decreased in 2022 and the first quarter of 2023. Despite this hopeful trend, the Gulf of Guinea remains to be the main locus for maritime insecurity in Africa. Apart from reviewing the state of maritime security in this region, this session also serves as an occasion for following up on previous decisions of the PSC on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. In this regard, the last time the PSC discussed maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea was at its 1128th session held on 19 December 2022. At that session, the PSC tasked the AU Commission to convene a meeting to facilitate the establishment of a body of experts or task force to coordinate and share knowledge on maritime security, and to plan the First Regional Maritime Command Post Exercise to enhance naval preparedness and collaboration within the African Standby Force (ASF) and Combined Maritime Task Force (CMTF) frameworks. Therefore, the PSC is expected to follow up on these requests during the upcoming session. In addition, the upcoming session is expected to assess the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct to explore challenges and determine the most effective utilization of accessible resources.

Another key thematic session of the PSC scheduled for 20 September, which would also be a signature event for Cameroon as Chairperson of the PSC, is envisaged to focus on military-civil relations in Africa in enhancing conflict prevention mechanisms. This would be the first time for Council to convene a session committed to this specific issue, although the issue arises in relation to various contexts. The issue of civil-military relationship brings to the centre of attention not only the issue of ensuring the republican character and the allegiance of the security forces to the national constitution but also that of bringing the instrument of violence under effective civilian oversight on the basis of constitutionally established rules and processes. Considering the danger arising from exposing the army to partisan

politics, the session may also address the issues of the politicization of the military which on various occasions led to the intrusion of the military in politics and that of situations of instability leading to the militarization of politics. These issues have become particularly salient for current peace and security policy making in the context of the resurgence of military coups in the continent throughout 2021-2023, the session is expected to highlight the issue of UCGs during discussions. It is worth noting that in various sessions addressing UCG in concerned member states, and during the Extraordinary Summit on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Change of Governments held on May 28, 2022, the PSC has repeatedly stressed the importance of military non-intervention in politics. Other issues of significance in considering civil-military relations involve the military's professionalism, including its adherence to codes of conduct and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

On 23 September, the PSC will convene its fourth substantive session, which is also the only session that will be held at the ministerial level. This session will consider the financing of AU peace support operations. The session will be held in New York on the side-lines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meeting. The last time the PSC discussed the topic was during its 1153rd session. At that meeting, the PSC requested the AUC to increase the ceiling of the Crisis Reserve Facility (CRF), use the AU Peace Fund to fill the current financial gap in the ATMIS, and expedite the establishment of the Peace Fund Secretariat, including its governance structure. Additionally, the PSC requested the development of modalities for enhanced AU-UN joint work, including collaborative planning and mandating processes.

The next session scheduled for 27 September involves engagement with the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR) on post-Malabo Extraordinary Summit on Humanitarian issues. It is expected that the session will review the follow up on the outcomes of the Humanitarian Summit, particularly regarding funding, institutional cooperation, and the 10-year AU Humanitarian Agenda. Additionally, the PSC's discussion on this session could benefit the existing situations across the continent. One such instance is the situation in Sudan. According to the UNHCR, as of July 21, 2023, more than 3.3 million people have been displaced and the estimated number of refugees could reach 860,000 by October 2023. It would be not only a missed opportunity but also a dereliction of duty that the situation in Sudan, including the atrocities and grave humanitarian emergency in Darfur, has not attracted dedicated attention for a while.

On 29 September, for its final substantive and second country-specific session, the PSC is expected to receive an updated briefing on the political transitions in Guinea and Mali. For this session, the PSC is expected to receive updates on its key actionable decisions from its 1162nd and 1106th sessions. The PSC held a session dealing with Guinea and Mali on 20 July 2023 at its 1162nd meeting within the ambit of the *Situation in the Sahel*, where it considered and expressed concern over the withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) from Mali and the risks of reversal of the gains made in the implementation of Mali's 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. As it welcomed progress made in the transitional process, the PSC also urged the transitional authorities in Guinea and Mali to resume engagements with the Economic Commission for Western African States (ECOWAS) mandated mediators. Furthermore, it is recalled that on its 1106th meeting on 19 September 2022, the PSC had a session designated to receive briefings on particular Sahelian countries, including Guinea and Mali. For Guinea, it had called for the transitional authorities to

conduct transparent and impartial investigations on the reports of the use of coercive measures that jeopardize fundamental freedoms and human rights, as well as on the operationalization of the Monitoring Mechanism on the Transition in Guinea from its decision on 10 September 2021. Regarding Mali, the PSC had urged the fulfillment of pledges of support for the Malian Transition.

In the light of the reports of military coup taking place in Gabon on 30 August, the PSC may also convene a session on the situation in Gabon.

In footnote, the Program of Work also envisages a press statement will be issued marking the international day of peace on 21 September.

In addition to the activities of the PSC, the program of work also lists activities of the Military Staff Committee (MSC) and the Committee of Experts (CoE). The MSC will convene a meeting on 5 August for the consideration of the Code of Conduct on Military-Civil Relationship. The CoE will meet on 14 August for the preparation of the 8th Informal Joint Seminar and the 17th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting between the PSC and UNSC.

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