

Provisional Programme of Work of the PSC for the Month of May 2021

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The Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council for May will be Algeria. The program of work of the PSC for the month shows that the PSC is scheduled to have five substantive sessions. Out of three country/region specific sessions planned for the month, two will be convened at the ministerial level. There is one session covering two agenda items, namely mandate renewal and the annual thematic session on protection of children in conflict situations. The fifth session will be at a ministerial level with a focus on access to COVID19 vaccine in Africa. Although no specific date is assigned, PSC may also convene a session on the situation on Chad as a follow up to the decision of its 993rd session.

PSC is also scheduled to have an anniversary session on the occasion of reaching the convening of its 1000th session. The PSC retreat initially proposed for February is now scheduled to take place at the end of the month as the last activity of the PSC for May.

On 6 May, the main agenda item focuses on AU's role on the fight against terrorism in Mozambique. The recurrence, scale and geographic spread of terrorist attacks have alarmingly expanded in Mozambique's northern province of Cabo Delgado. The most dramatic deadly incident took place in late March when armed terrorists attacked the town of Palma, which led to displacement of more than 40,000 people. Civilians bear much of the brunt of the atrocious attacks, with displacement nearing the 1 million mark. In a statement issued on 31 March, the AU Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, expressing

utmost concern about the situation, called for urgent and coordinated regional and international action. PSC's session serves as an initiative for enabling the AU to play a more active part. The second agenda item focuses on preparation for the retreat of the PSC planned to take place at the end of the month.

The next session, scheduled to take place on 11 May, has two substantive agenda items. The first one will be on the protection of children in conflict situations in Africa, which is one of the annual standing thematic agenda items of the PSC that is usually convened in May. Among the increasingly concerning trends in the continent, one is the illicit trafficking of children, particularly in post- conflict settings and in countries with fragile and weak security apparatus. Another major concern that may be addressed by the PSC is the continued abduction of children and their use either for fighting or for sexual slavery by extremist groups such as Boko Haram. As repeatedly emphasised by various humanitarian agencies, targeting of schools in armed conflicts in contravention of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) also remains to be a worrying trend in Africa. Another issue expected to receive PSC's attention during this session is the situation of refugee children and the protection needs of such children.

The second agenda item of the session will be PSC's consideration of AMISOM's mandate renewal. During this session, the PSC is expected to discuss the future of AMISOM, including its financing having regard to the political crisis in Somalia and the ensuing heightened threat for Al Shabaab's expansion. The PSC will also receive update on the revised Concept of Operations and AU's independent assessment. It is to be recalled that on 12 March 2021, the UNSC reauthorized AMISOM until 31 December 2021, through the unanimous adoption of Resolution 2568 (2021), maintaining AMISOM's overall 19,626 uniformed personnel level, which is in accord with the PSC's

request at its 978th session for the UNSC not to change the current troop ceiling of the mission. This has become even more important following the current political instability and ensuing insecurity in the country, as well as the continued threat posed by Al- Shabaab.

On 13 May, the PSC will consider and adopt programme of work for June via email exchange.

Although no session is planned to discuss the theme, the PSC is also expected to issue a Press Statement on the commemoration of the “Day of Living Together in Peace”, which is celebrated on 16 May of each year.

On 18 May, Council will convene its second country specific session focusing on Libya, which is envisaged to be the first ministerial level session of the month. While a Permanent Ceasefire Agreement signed on 23 October 2020 between the conflicting parties brought some hope for the resolution of the Libyan conflict, foreign military backing, illicit export of petroleum and the presence of foreign terrorist fighters are still challenging the successful implementation of the agreement and hindering an effective resolution to the conflict. The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has also recently expressed concern over the halt in oil production at the National Oil Corporation’s (NOC) eastern facility, which could further destabilise the country. The PSC may reflect on these major outstanding issues and how the AU could play a more substantive role in supporting the implementation of the peace agreement and the preparation for elections.

On 22 May, the PSC is scheduled to convene a ministerial session on Africa’s access to vaccines against the COVID19 pandemic as a human security issue. Thus far, Africa only accessed 2% of COVID19 vaccine and remains to be the continent least vaccinated. The current approach to the production and distribution of the COVID19 vaccine is one in which a handful of pharmaceutical companies decide the amount of vaccines

produced, the countries for which those vaccines are sold and the price at which the vaccines are sold for different countries, leading to what President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa called vaccine apartheid, which entails grave consequences to human security in Africa in particular. It is to be recalled that the AU Assembly adopted a decision during its 34th ordinary session held in February 2021 calling for the temporary waiver of patents relating to COVID19 vaccines to enable the generic production of the vaccine for equitable access by all. PSC's ministerial session serves as an opportunity for following up on this decision and on other avenues for the manufacturing of COVID19 vaccines on the continent.

PSC's third ministerial level session of the month is expected to take place on 24 May, focusing on the situation in Mali. Since the formation of the Malian Transitional Government which was welcomed at PSC's 954th session, some progresses have been noted such as the establishment of the National Transitional Council (which serves as the interim parliament) and the holding of a meeting on 11 February 2021, by the Monitoring Committee of the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, which brought together Malian ministers, leaders of armed groups signatory to the 2015 Agreement and international mediators. The Transitional Government's announcement that it will honour its promise to hold the presidential and legislative elections by determining a specific timeline (27 February 2022) has also been a commendable step. Regardless of such progress in the political situation, Mali's security and stability is still seriously impeded as a result of the continued terrorist attacks, including the recent attack on MINUSMA's base that killed four peacekeepers.

On 25 May, which marks the 17-year anniversary of the official launch of the PSC, the Council is scheduled to mark the convening of its 1000th meeting. Expected to take place partially in person, the session will discuss the activities

of the PSC since its establishment with high- level speakers including from heads of state and government expected to deliver statements. It is an occasion for taking stock of the 17 years journey of the PSC and reflect on progress achieved and challenges facing the PSC.

The retreat planned to take place from 27 to 29 May will be the last activity that Council will undertake during the month. This presents an opportunity for the PSC to, among others, review working methods issues that have emerged during the past year. These include rotation of the monthly chairperson of the PSC as it relates, among others, to implementation of Article 5 of the PSC protocol and the convening of virtual sessions of the PSC.