

PSC meeting on the AU Peace Fund and the financing of AU led peace support operations

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Tomorrow (5 October), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to convene its 1036th session to consider the strategic priorities for the utilisation of the AU Peace Fund and the consensus paper on financing of AU led peace support operations using UN assessed contributions.

Following the opening remarks of the PSC Chairperson of the month and Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the AU, Alfredo Nuvunga, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye, is expected to make a statement. The Chairperson of the PSC Committee of Experts (CoE) for the month of August 2021, Jean Djoukeng, is expected to present the outcome of the meetings of the CoE on both the strategic priorities for utilising the AU Peace Fund and the consensus paper on using UN assessed contributions to finance AU led peace support operations. The AU High Representative for the Peace Fund, Dr Donald Kaberuka may also address the PSC.

The AU Peace Fund was established to finance the organization's peace and security activities, including in mediation and preventive diplomacy, institutional capacity and peace support operations. In 2016, the AU Assembly at its 27th Ordinary Session held in July 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda, decided to revitalize the Peace Fund. Accordingly in its decision Assembly/AU/Dec.605 (XXVII) on the financing of the Union adopted member states agreed to endow the AU Peace Fund with \$400m. Since 2017, fifty-four (54) AU Member States have

contributed to the AU Peace Fund and a total of \$217m has been collected. The \$400 million amount that member states agreed to mobilize for the Peace Fund would cover the three windows covering various streams of activities a) preventive diplomacy, mediation activities (Window 1 of the Peace Fund), b) building of critical APSA capabilities (Window 2) and c) peace support operations (Window 3) as well as a crisis reserve facility (with an amount of no less than 50 million USD) for funding rapid response to emergency crisis.

As part of the effort for the full operationalize of the Fund, the AU has been working to put in place the necessary oversight and administrative structures. The Chairperson of the Commission appointed five African members of the Board of Trustees representing the five regions of the continent. Representatives of the UN and the EU also seat at the Board representing international partners. The AU has also been in the process of recruiting management and staff who will serve in the secretariat. The AU policy organs have decided that 'the AU Peace Fund should not be utilised until all the governance and management structures are fully established.'

With specific reference to the utilization of the Fund, a High-Level Retreat on the operationalisation of the peace fund was also held with the participation of the AU PSC, the Bureau of the Permanent Representatives Committee, the Board of Trustees and Executive Management Committee of the AU Peace Fund, the Chair of the Sub-committee on General Supervision Budget and Administrative, the AU High Representative for Financing the Union and the Peace Fund, the Chairperson of the Committee of Fifteen Finance Ministers (F15) and the Chair of the Sub-Committee on Audit Matters. It is to be recalled that the PSC held the high-level retreat on 11 January 2020. The retreat agreed to implement, among others, the development of the Peace Fund Workflow processes and Strategic Priorities to be funded from the Peace Fund.

Subsequently, the AU PSC during its retreat in Mombasa in May

2021 considered the presentation of the AU Commission on the strategic priorities for the AU Peace Fund. As a follow up of the discussions in the Mombasa retreat and for presenting the specific proposals on priorities of the three windows of the AU Peace Fund, the Committee of Experts held its 23rd and 24th meetings on 9 and 23rd August 2021 respectively. The two meetings of the CoE focused on both the identification of the priorities for the three windows and the zero draft African Consensus on Accessing Sustainable and Predictable Financing for AU Peace and Security Activities. It is the outcome of these meetings that the Chairperson of the CoE for August is expected to present to the PSC.

With respect to the utilization of the Peace Fund, the CoE have agreed that it is only the interest accrued to the Peace Fund endowment that will be made available for supporting priorities in the three windows of the Fund. With respect to Window 1, the priority activities which have been identified for inclusion at the end of the meeting of CoE include peace mediation efforts in ongoing crisis namely the political impasse in Somalia, situation in Cabo Delgado, Sudan and South Sudan, the transitions in CAR, Chad, Libya, and Mali and deployment of special envoys. Instead of the proposed inclusion in Window 1 of the dialogue in Ethiopia and the GERD negotiations, the CoE proposed the inclusion of the reactivation of the Role of the AU Special Envoy for Western Sahara and his/her deployment pursuant to PSC Communique [PSC/AHG/COMM.2(CMLXXXIV)] adopted by the PSC's summit level 984th session. For Window 2, the priorities identified include strengthening the capacity of the AU Liaison Offices, particularly in Early Warning, Mediation, and Preventive Diplomacy, training of mediation and dialogue experts and development of a roster of mediation experts, strengthening of RECs/RMs capacities on AU Human Rights and IHL compliance standards, and operationalization of the PCRDC Centre.

For Window 3, the proposed priority activities include

deployment of Gender Experts and Child Protection Officers in AU Peace Support Operations; Supporting pre-deployment assessment missions and regular monitoring and evaluation of existing missions; Supporting strategic lift of troops, equipment and weapons to conflict/crisis zones; Fully operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF); and Strategic planning for Human Resources and Military Observers.

In spite of the progress made in revitalizing the AU Peace Fund, from the very beginning of the process as set out in the June 2015 decision of the AU Assembly, 75 % of peace and security activities will be supported through international financing its peace operations on the continent. This year, the African members of the Security Council have been trying to advance the issue in the context of the discussions and negotiations on the mandate renewal of AMISOM. However, their proposal was not incorporated into resolution 2568 (2021) that renewed the mandate of the mission. They have also been trying to advance discussions on the Secretary-General's proposal for a UN support Office to the G-5 Sahel joint force but it was opposed by UK and the US which do not support using UN assessed contributions for such forces and instead favor bilateral arrangements to provide support.

This notwithstanding, efforts are underway to revive the broader discussion on the financing of AU-led peace support operations through UN assessed contribution. In July, the AU PAPS Commissioner, Ambassador Bankole Adeoye briefed the Council on the work that is being done by the Commission to elaborate a common African position on the matter. The AU PSC Committee of Experts have been working on the draft zero consensus paper and it is expected to be considered by the PSC during its meeting on Tuesday. In his latest annual report to the Security Council on strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa, including on the work of the UN Office to the African Union, the Secretary-General supported the efforts 'to reinvigorate

discussions between the two Councils on financing African Union peace support operations through United Nations assessed contributions'. He also noted that 'the issue of a common African position on the funding of peace support operations is being considered by the African Union Peace and Security Council and the outcome of those discussions is awaited'.

The development of a common African position on the financing issue is indeed a step in the right direction. It is expected to facilitate a clear decision by the AU policy organs, which will then pave the way for the African members of the UNSC to resuscitate the discussion on the issue with a view to eventually securing a concrete commitment from the Security Council.

At the time of finalizing this 'Insight', the expected outcome of tomorrow's session was unknown. PSC may commend the AU Commission and the CoE and with some amendments endorse the priority areas identified for the three windows of the Peace Fund. PSC may also welcome the "Zero Draft African Consensus on Accessing Sustainable and Predictable Financing for AU Peace and Security Activities" and draw attention to the areas that will need further concretising. The PSC may also give guidance on the process for holding consultations with relevant stakeholders before finalizing the draft consensus position, including constructively engage with the UN Secretariat to reach agreement on the proposals identified in the draft.