

# PSC Program of Work for the Month of March 2018

Automatic Heading TextDate | March 2018

Following consultation between the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Secretariat and the incoming chair of the PSC, the draft provisional program of work of the month for March 2018 was considered and adopted at the 13th February 2018 session of the PSC. The provisional program is relatively light with only six sessions of which only four focusing on specific peace and security situations. As the 10 members of the PSC serving for the past two years conclude their tenure by the end of the month, time has also been assigned in this month's program of work for the induction of the newly elected and returning members of the PSC. Niger, whose two-year term comes to an end at the end of the month, assumed the Chairpersonship of the PSC today. For Niger, the G5 Sahel joint force featuring in this month's program of work is the main item of most direct interest.

When the Council started its program of the month this morning, it had two items on its agenda. One of these is the draft provisional program of work of the PSC for April 2018. It is the first time that the program of work for the next month is tabled for consideration on the very first day of the preceding month. The other is review of the preparation for the AU-PSC and EU-Political and Security Committee (PSC) joint mission to the Central African Republic. For ten years, the main mechanism in the partnership between the AUPSC and EU-PSC has been the annual joint consultative meeting that rotates between Addis Ababa and Brussels.

The two sides held their most recent consultative meeting in November 2017. With the joint mission, the two entities have established an additional mechanism that opens avenues for

shared understanding and coherent and complementary policy approaches. The joint field mission is scheduled to take place from 6 to 9 March 2018. The Council will meet just over a week later the 15th of March to discuss and adopt the report of the joint mission.

On 13 March, the council will examine the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). With the authoritarian drift of the government amid mounting opposition against the president over the delay in holding general elections, the political and security situation has become worrisome. This situation is marked by sporadic clashes between protesters and security forces in the capital Kinshasa and recurring fighting between proliferating armed militias and government forces in several other areas of the country. For the region and the AU, there are two major concerns. First, there is ever mounting fear over the impending relapse of the country back to major national scale conflicts. Second, the uncertainty over the holding of the general elections scheduled for December 2018, already postponed two times since 2016. The proliferation of armed fighting and rising tension between opposition groups and the government has made the situation dire.

In its last meeting on DRC on 7 November 2017, the PSC discussed the report of its field mission by its members to the DRC from 22 to 26 October 2017. The meeting emphasized on the importance of the agreements signed by political stakeholders on a free, fair, peaceful, credible and transparent elections in the DRC, as a vehicle to a democratic transition, which failed to materialize as the electoral calendar was postponed for yet another one year.

One of the standing annual thematic agenda of the PSC relate to women and children in armed conflict. Following its annual schedule, the PSC will convene an open session on 13 March on the plight of women and children in Conflict situations. Apart from the expected role of the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Women and Peace and

Security, the open session will involve, among others, the participation of representatives of RECs, embassies accredited to the AU and civil society organizations.

On 23 March, the council is scheduled to consider the situation in Mali and the Sahel and the G5 Sahel Joint Force. The Council will receive the report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Mali and the Sahel. The AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel and Head of the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), former President Pierre Buyoya will brief the Council on the political and security situation in Mali. As part of the renewal of the mandate of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the Council will also consider the status of operationalization of the Force. The last time the council discussed the Sahel on 21 November 2017 it expressed its frustration on the slow progress in the implementation of the elements of the Algiers Process. It also expressed its concern on the worsening security situation in parts of Mali and the Sahel.

The three days between 26 to 28th March are dedicated to the induction of the new members of the council elected at the AU summit that took place at the end of January 2018. The induction moved to be held in Djibouti covers briefings on the PSC Protocol, the mandate of the PSC, the working methods of the PSC and the roles, among others, of its member states, the monthly rotating chairperson of the Council and the PSC Secretariat. Of the ten members of the PSC whose two-year term will start on 1 April 2018, only three countries namely Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Togo are current members re-elected for another two-year term. The induction will in particular be useful for the new members (Liberia and Morocco) that have no previous representation in the PSC. Guinea Bissau will be the last item on the agenda of the PSC for the month of March. On 29 March the council will receive a briefing on the situation in Guinea Bissau. The country, which has been passing through a security and political crisis, last featured on the agenda

of the PSC on 13 February 2018. The meeting noted the continued political standoff and the 'paralysis affecting the government institutions and the People's National Assembly' as the biggest concern for stability. It called on civilian oversight of the security and armed forces and refrain from political intervention. The planned meeting on 29 March will review the political and security situation in the country and the status of the ECOWAS mission present in the country.