

# PSC Provisional Program of Work for April 2020 under new meeting formats

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One of the consequences of the novel coronavirus (COVID19) on the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council has been the freezing by the PSC its meetings in person. As a standing decision-making body on matters of peace and security in Africa, the inability of the PSC to convene meetings in person presented a major challenge for the continuity of its work. During March, the PSC was forced to suspend its activities and hence was unable to implement its program of work for the month as initially planned.

To prevent the emergence of a void in peace and security decision-making and enable the PSC to carry out its essential functions during this period, the PSC sought to find interim methods of conducting its business. Two interim working arrangements have been agreed in lieu of its usual meetings in person (Amani Africa will publish a special research report on this). Following the assumption by Kenya of the chairpersonship of the PSC for April, a program of work of the PSC for the month (whose overview is discussed below) was finalized. To carry out the monthly program of work, the PSC will be utilizing two mechanisms for meeting remotely and exchanging electronically on the agenda of a particular session.

The provisional program of work finalized via electronic communications involves some five substantive sessions including briefings on the current COVID19 outbreak and its impact on peace and security in Africa. On 9 April, the PSC will consider two agenda items. First it will receive an

update on the situation in South Sudan. It is to be recalled that the PSC has conducted a field mission to South Sudan in February 2020 and considered the report of the field mission in March. Following the session on South Sudan, the PSC will then receive a 'briefing on the humanitarian situation in the countries affected by the desert locust menace in Africa'. The briefings are expected to be circulated to all PSC Members through emails and the expected outcome will be circulated through the silence procedure as per the PSC Manual on Working Methods.

On 14 April the PSC will receive a briefing by Africa Centre for Disease Control (Africa CDC) on the implications of COVID19 on peace and security in Africa. While much of the continental response including the two AU Assembly Bureau teleconference meetings has been on the public health and the socio-economic impact of COVID19, this session provides a muchneeded focus on the peace and security impact of COVID19.

This session is expected to take place using a virtual communication platform with members of the PSC joining to discuss the agenda of the session remotely. On 16 April the PSC will consider and adopt the provisional program of work for the month of May. The draft agenda will be circulated with all members for comments.

On 21 April the PSC will hold a discussion on the implementation of the decisions relating to peace and security adopted by the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU. This may include follow up on key decisions taken on the Sahel region and Libya. It is envisaged that the Matrix of the Summit Decisions will be circulated to all PSC Members by 15 April 2020. The most notable aspect of this session is expected to be the initiative for deploying 3000 AU troops to the Sahel region in support of the efforts of the countries of the Sahel.

Similar to the 14 April session, this one is expected to take

place through virtual meeting which will allow PSC Members to join the session online. On 23 April the African common position paper on financing AU peace support operations will be shared to all PSC Members for comments.

On 28 April the PSC will have a briefing session on IDPs, refugees and returnees in the context of COVID19 pandemic. Similar to the previous COVID19 briefing, this meeting is also expected to take place virtually. In addition to these agenda items, the provisional program of work indicates in footnotes a PSC session to consider the renewal of the mandate of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which will expire on 12 April.

Although the date of the meeting is not specified, this meeting is expected to be conducted through email communication ahead of the expiry of the current timeline for the mandate of G5 Sahel Joint Force. The last agenda item of the month is taking place on 30 April, which is the PSC briefing to the PRC. For this purpose, summary of the compilation of activities of the PSC for April 2020 will be sent to all AU member states. With the introduction of the new working arrangement, the PSC has ensured the continuity of its work. This could be important during this period not only for the PSC to deal with key existing peace and security issues but also to address emerging peace and security issues including those arising from COVID19 and elections.