

Reflection meeting on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa

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Tomorrow (25 April) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1080th session to have a reflection meeting with the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs) on issues related to Youth, Peace and Security in Africa. The meeting will be held in Burundi in a hybrid format.

Following the opening remark by Willy Nyamitwe, Permanent Representative of Burundi and the Chairperson of the PSC for April, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye is expected to make a statement. The Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AUC on Youth, Chido Cleo Mpemba and the five new AYAPs are also expected to make statements. President of Burundi H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye will be the guest of honor at tomorrow's session.

The PSC has held five sessions on Youth, Peace and Security since its inaugural 807th session on the topic held in November 2018 in which it decided to 'institutionalize and regularize an annual open session dedicated to the theme of Youth, Peace and Security in Africa'. This year the Council held an annual open session on 3rd March 2022 during PSC's 1067th meeting. Tomorrow's session is a follow-up on this year's session and will offer the council to engage with the new cohort of AYAPs, on the status of progress in the implementation of the 10-Year Implementation Plan of the Continental Framework on Youth Peace and Security. The meeting is also an occasion for the host country and PSC Chair for the month of April, Burundi to showcase its experiences and lessons learned about youth,

peace and security. Thus, the session would be beneficial in making the linkage between national-level initiatives and continental efforts.

It is to be recalled that, towards promoting youth efforts in the peace and security agenda AU Youth Envoy was appointed by the AU Chairperson in November 2018. Moreover, the first cohort of AYAPs were appointed in 2019 and 33rd AU Summit endorsed the appointed ambassadors. The AYAPs are mandated to promote meaningful youth participation at all levels of peacebuilding across Africa for two years non-renewable. The mandate of AYAPs is in line with Article 17 of the AU Youth Charter (2006) and the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 (2015). The second cohort of AYAPs who were selected in November 2021 and endorsed by the 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Heads of State and Government in February 2022. Thus, tomorrow's session serves as a platform for the AU Youth Envoy and AYAPs to discuss their work and plans for advancing the YPS agenda at various levels.

Tomorrow's session is preceded by a Continental Youth Dialogue that brought together the AU Youth Envoy, the AYAPs and more than two hundred youth participants across Africa and aimed at strengthening youth engagement in peace and security and enhancing their meaningful participation. The platform allowed various national youth advocates to engage with a wide range of youth leaders operating at the regional and continental levels. The key outcomes of the dialogue are expected to feed into and contribute to the reflection meeting taking place tomorrow.

Since PSC's inaugural session, major steps have taken place in developing the necessary policy frameworks that laid the foundation for the YPS agenda. The PSC at its 933rd PSC session, considered and adopted the two PSC mandated documents, the 'Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (CFYPS)' along with the 10-year implementation plan

(2020-2029), and the 'Study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth towards Peace and Security in Africa'. The subsequent sessions of the PSC have shifted their focus towards the operationalization and implementation of the various policies through the development of National Action Plans (NAPs).

Indeed in this context, the most recent PSC session, the 1067th meeting held on 3 March 2022 among others requested the AUC to submit the final document of the Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of National Action Plans for the AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security for its review. It further requested its Committee of Experts (CoE) to comprehensively review the Guidelines and enrich ahead of PSC's consideration. The session may provide an update on the work that is being undertaken in line with this decision.

It is to be recalled that the PSC has stated its recognition in its several communiqués that youth contribution to peace and security across the continent is critical. Thus, the PSC has played pivotal roles in advancing the YPS agenda and going forward it's importance to build on these existing steps. The PSC in its 1067th session highlighted, the important role played by the youth at the national, regional and continental levels in the prevention of violence, the promotion of good governance, peace, security, stability and socio-economic development. Similarly, the PSC at its 963rd meeting emphasized the need for regular convening of stakeholders' meetings to update and plan implementations, as well as facilitate experience sharing, lessons learned and best practices to support the advancement of youth, peace and security agenda. Thus, tomorrow's session will be an important platform to exchange knowledge and best practices and further sharpen the YPS agenda.

It would of interest for the meeting to reflect on the persisting gaps and challenges that are hurdles to enhancing

the role and agency of youth in peace and security. In this respect, the session may deliberate on some of the issues identified by the AU Continental Framework on YPS including limited technical resources for youth programs; financial constraints for such programs; weak organizational capacities of youth groups; limited coordination among youth groups and networks; limited visibility and adequate documentation and evaluation of their contributions to peace and security and lack of evidence-based approach to programming on youth, peace and security.

The expected outcome is a communiqué. The Council may underline the significance of the youth in peace and security and in advancing continental agendas. It may once again welcome the AU Youth Envoy and AYAPs and underline their critical role in realizing the goals and aspirations enshrined in continental peace and security norms and policies. The PSC may also commend the work of the Youth for Peace (Y4P) program in terms of coordinating and facilitating the meaningful participation of youth in all spectrums of peace and security. The PSC may also underscore the need to address the gaps and challenges that hinder youth from actively participating in peace and security issues. The PSC may commend the work undertaken by member states, the AU Commission and the RECs and RMs for their pivotal role in advancing the YPS agenda and their efforts to implement the continental framework on youth, peace and security. The Council may request the AU Commission, in close collaboration with the RECs/RMs, to continue supporting member states to develop NAPs; and may reiterate its request to the AUC to regularly brief the Council on the status of progress in the implementation of the Continental Framework on YPS and its 10-Year Implementation Plan and challenges faced, including through periodic reports and annual briefings. In this regard, the Council may note that given the implementation efforts and programs on YPS agenda are context-specific, it is imperative that there is coordination and synergy among the various stakeholders namely

the AU Youth Envoy and the AYAPs, as well as Youth Focal Points in the RECs/RMs and various youth networks for peace.