

# **Second Annual Consultative Meeting between the PSC and Representatives of CSOs and ECOSOCC**

**Second Annual Consultative Meeting between the PSC and Representatives of CSOs and ECOSOCC** Date | 6 July 2023

Tomorrow (6 July), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to convene its 1161<sup>st</sup> session which will be dedicated to the second annual consultative meeting of the PSC with representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC).

Following opening remarks by Mohamed Lamine Thiaw, Permanent Representative of Senegal and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of July, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye is expected to make a statement. Representing ECOSOCC, Kyeretwie Osei, Head of Programmes will be delivering a statement. A representative of the Pan-African Civil Society Organizations Network on Political Affairs, Peace and Security will also be taking part in the session. CSO representatives from the five AU regions are also expected to make statements.

It is to be recalled that the PSC had its first consultative meeting with CSOs and the ECOSOCC on 14 September 2022, under the chairship of Ghana. Article 20 of the PSC Protocol which stipulates that the PSC shall encourage active engagement and participation of community-based and other CSOs in efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa, serves as the main basis for the conduct of the annual consultative meeting. Although yet to be explored, Article

8(11) of the PSC Protocol also envisages the holding of informal consultations with CSOs as one avenue of supporting the discharge of its responsibilities.

Further to the legal foundation provided under the PSC Protocol, the framework for engagement between the PSC and those in the CSO space is also articulated in the Livingstone Formula of December 2008, which was elaborated in line with the conclusions of PSC's first retreat – the Dakar Retreat of 2007 which called for the development of a mechanism for managing engagement between the PSC and CSOs. The Maseru Conclusions of 2014 on Enhancing the Implementation of the Livingstone Formula for Interaction between the PSC and CSOs also form another important component of the framework for PSC-CSO engagement.

The normative provisions and the modalities outlined in PSC working methods attest to the recognition given to the significant contribution that CSOs make to the maintenance of peace and security in the continent. Yet, this recognition at normative level has not been systematically translated into practice, although the PSC has on many occasions invited the participation of CSOs in its sessions on thematic issues and on ad hoc basis. Indeed, outside of the ad hoc invitation extended to representatives of CSOs with relevant expertise to brief in sessions of the PSC on thematic issues and/or participate in open sessions of the PSC, there was no convening of the formal consultation between the PSC and CSOs until 2022. In this context, the holding of an annual consultation between the two not only institutionalises their engagement, but it also addresses gaps faced in terms of better refining the depth of discussions that can be held on a wide array of subject matters.

Those occasions when the PSC drew on the expertise and technical resources of research organizations and CSOs have attested to the value of such engagement in expanding the diversity of perspectives and policy issues. In the context

of the expanding demand on the limited resources of the PSC, tapping into the expertise and technical resources of CSOs is not just a matter of legitimacy and normative commitment but it is also a strategic imperative. In the face of the growing peace and security challenges facing the continent, it has become increasingly clear that the effort of the PSC and state actors is not enough. The challenges require a whole of society approach in which CSOs in all their diverse formations and communities assume key role. This necessitates that attention is given to the engagement of CSOs both at the stage of policy making and implementation.

As the annual consultative meeting becomes institutionalized, one key issue that require attention is how to make it more than a ticking box exercise. This requires clarifying what the consultative meeting contributes to. The consultative meeting can be organized for the presentation by the CSOs of the five regions on the situation in the different regions from a non-state perspective, thereby contributing to the PSC' report on the state of peace and security in Africa. It can also be an occasion for providing feedback on the policy actions of AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on the various peace and security issues of the different regions with a view to contribute to the revision and updating of those policy actions.

The role of ECOSOCC is the other critical aspect in the relationship between the PSC and CSOs as envisaged in the Livingstone Formula and the Maseru Conclusions. ECOSOCC, an advisory organ composed of relevant professional and social groups from AU member states and whose central purpose is to promote and advance CSOs' active involvement in shaping and contributing to AU's programmes and policies, has been engaged in efforts that aim to establish a proper and systemic mechanism for enhanced engagement between the PSC and CSOs. It is to be recalled that ECOSOCC played the role of identifying the CSOs from the five regions that briefed the PSC during the

inaugural consultative meeting held in September 2022.

In terms of follow up from the last session, the efforts by ECOSOCC to develop a comprehensive database of CSOs has in particular been identified as an important initiative at the inaugural annual consultative meeting of the PSC and CSOs. At the second consultative meeting taking place tomorrow, updates on progress made towards finalising the development of the database is expected to take centre stage among the envisaged discussions. Once finalised, the database is aimed to function as a hub of various accredited CSOs that could actively be engaged by the AU in its implementation of key agendas and initiatives, including those relevant to peace and security and the mandates of the PSC.

There are a number of advantages of developing the envisaged database. One important contribution such database could make is the identification and theme-based classification of CSOs. The idea of having a comprehensive database first of all enables a wide range of CSOs, including those at the grassroots level, to be in the records and gain a level of visibility that would enable them to actively participate in the policy space. At the same time, categorising the different CSOs on the basis of the main focus or central areas of work they are involved in allows the creation of thematic grouping of CSOs that have expertise in specific fields. For the PSC, this would be critical in gaining access to a ready list of CSOs with varied levels and areas of expertise, which can serve as the main source to guide PSC's engagement.

Notwithstanding the potential contributions the CSOs' database could make towards advancing better CSO engagement with the PSC, one should bear in mind the issue of inclusivity, particularly considering the diversity of CSO. ECOSOCC is currently in the process of conducting a series of consultations with various CSOs coming from the different sub-regions and engaged in a variety of thematic areas of works relevant to the PSC. The most recent of such consultations

took place in April 2023, which afforded rich discussions between represented CSOs including Amani Africa and representatives from relevant AU departments as well as the various RECs. A follow-up consultation of the ECOSOCC is also expected to commence tomorrow, on 6 July as the PSC convenes its second consultative meeting.

Another issue that may come associated with the development of the database pertains to the creation of bureaucratic bottlenecks that may prove to be counterproductive. In this respect too, the PSC may wish to hear from ECOSOCC on what measures are put in place to ensure transparent processes in the utilisation of the database.

In addition to following up on the status of the development of the CSOs' database, tomorrow's meeting may also serve to reflect on where things stand with respect to implementing some of the key outcomes of the inaugural consultative meeting including CSOs efforts towards realising the decisions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG) in Africa [[Ext/Assembly/AU/Decl.\(XVI\)](#)], as this formed one of the main areas discussed during the inaugural meeting, and the request made for ECOSOCC to conduct a stock taking exercise on the Livingstone Formula and Maseru Conclusions, so as to make recommendations for enhancing their realisation.

As an outcome of the consultative meeting, the PSC may issue a communiqué as it did for the last consultative meeting. Taking note of the progress made thus far in finalising the CSOs' database, the PSC may encourage ECOSOCC to take all the necessary steps towards ensuring the finalisation of the database while ensuring inclusivity and transparency in the modality for its use. The PSC may underscore the significant role that CSOs play in supporting the realisation of its mandate in conflict prevention, management and resolution. It may further call on CSOs to fortify their efforts to respond

to the increasingly complex and challenging threats to peace and security in the continent. Taking note of the critical role of CSOs in bringing the PSC and its policy decisions closer to African citizens, the PSC may also encourage CSOs in Africa to strengthen their role in promoting the culture of peace, in fighting misinformation, disinformation and incitement of hate and violence, in enhancing the adoption of informed policy decisions by relevant actors at national, regional and international level and in the advancement of the implementation of decisions for conflict prevention, management and resolution by the AU as appropriate. The PSC may also call for clarifying the focus and the end to which the consultative meeting contributes.