

Stocktaking of the Implementation of the Protocol establishing the AU PSC, Article by Article – Practice, Performance and Prospects

Stocktaking of the Implementation of the Protocol establishing the AU PSC, Article by Article – Practice, Performance and Prospects | 14 May 2024

Tomorrow (15 May), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will be convening an open session, within the framework of the 20th anniversary of the official launch of the PSC, which aims to afford the opportunity for reflecting on the implementation of the Protocol Establishing the AU PSC (PSC Protocol).

As usual, the PSC will commence the session with opening remarks by the Chairperson for the month, Innocent Shiyo, Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), is also expected to deliver introductory remarks. Professor Timothy Murithi, Head of the Peacebuilding Interventions Programme, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) will be facilitating tomorrow's stocktaking PSC session and will also be delivering a presentation. Being the major research institutes engaged in the work of the PSC, Amani Africa Media and Research Services and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) are also invited to deliver presentations.

In addition to PSC member states, tomorrow's session is expected to bring together representatives of all other AU member states as well as representatives of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs).

The open session is expected to explore various issues pertaining to the implementation of the various parts of the PSC Protocol. In this respect, it is expected that the session will identify the aspects of the PSC Protocol that have not been implemented, those other areas that are poorly implemented and those parts whose implementation doesn't align with the spirit and letters of the Protocol. It is recognised even on the part of the PSC that two decades after its operationalisation the implementation of the various parts of the Protocol is uneven. This is not completely surprising nor is it uncommon in other similar bodies.

Considering that the PSC only have very finite resources and limited institutional capacity, the issue that is of strategic importance for the credibility and effectiveness of the PSC is how it utilises its time, diplomatic resources, legal powers and moral and political authority to deliver on the core of its mandates – prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. The cases where the PSC engaged successfully indicate that the PSC is effective when it makes effective use of the key tools of conflict prevention, management and resolution. For example, in 2012 the PSC exercised its conflict prevention role successfully through a decision that articulated a robust framework for averting the descent of South Sudan and Sudan into a full-fledged war following skirmishes over the Heglig oil fields. PSC's decision not only pulled the two countries from the brink but also provided the impetus for the peace process that led to the signing of a peace agreement on various outstanding issues post the independence of South Sudan.

Tomorrow's session thus affords the PSC and the wider AU Member States to engage in critical reflections on how to

enhance, consolidate and activate the implementation of those aspects of the PSC Protocol central to the delivery of its core mandates. The peace and security landscape of the continent is such that rather than seeking to implement all parts of the PSC Protocol particular attention should be given to rationalising the work of the PSC for prioritising the effectiveness of early warning and early response, preventive diplomacy and the mobilisation of sustained and robust conflict management and resolution strategy dedicated to each of the various hotspots on the continent with focus on the major one in the Sahel, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions. Such a dedicated strategy with effective follow-through is a prerequisite for containing and mitigating the spread and escalation of conflicts and creating conditions for their resolution. This underscores that while it is worthwhile to map out the gaps and inadequacies in the implementation of the various parts of the PSC, enhancing and fully implementing those aspects of the PSC Protocol central to the core mandate of the PSC merits prioritisation.

No outcome document is expected to be adopted from tomorrow's stocktaking session.