

The 2018 Elections of the PSC

Automatic Heading TextDate | January, 2018

Introduction

The election for the 10 members of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) was held on 26 January 2018 at the meeting of the Executive Council of the AU. This brief provides an update on the conduct and result of the elections.

Candidacy and conduct of the elections

As shown in the table below, there were 13 AU member states in the list of candidates. Of the thirteen candidates, Rwanda, Algeria, Sierra Leone and Togo are current members of the PSC seeking re-election. Liberia and Morocco run for PSC membership for the first time.

13 candidates for the 2018 PSC election and their previous membership in the PSC

Region	Available Seats in the 2018 Election	Candidates	Years Previously Served on the Council
Central Africa	2	Equatorial Guinea and Gabon	Equatorial Guinea served for two consecutive three-year terms in 2010 and 2013 and Gabon served similar terms in 2004 and 2007.

East Africa	2	Djibouti, Ethiopia and Rwanda	Djibouti was member for two consecutive two-year terms in 2010 and 2012; Ethiopia served for two consecutive three-year terms (2004 and 2007) and for a two-year term in 2013; Rwanda, a member of the current PSC, served for three consecutive two-year terms in 2006, 2008 and 2010.
North Africa	1	Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia	Algeria served trice for three- year term (2004, 2007 and 2013) and for a two-year term (2016); Morocco is the newest state party to the PSC standing for election for the first time; and Tunisia served for once (2008).
Southern Africa	2	Angola and Zimbabwe	Angola served once for two-year term (2012) and Zimbabwe was a member for a three-year term (2010).
West Africa	3	Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo	Liberia is running for the first time; Sierra Leone is ending its first membership; and Togo served for two-year term twice (2004 and 2016).

The dynamics in the regional processes for candidacy for the PSC elections vary from region to region. While any member state fulfilling the requirements for membership of the PSC may submit its candidature, the rules on the election suggest

that the selection of member states shall be conducted at the regional level. Yet, the level of follow up of this rule varies across different regions. While Southern Africa and West Africa have generally followed the process of regional consultation and selection of candidatures, as the 2016 elections showed consensus on selection of candidates have been lacking in the three other regions. In this year's elections, the level of contestation for seats allotted for the different regions has been less intense than previous years. As reflected in the table above, only East and North Africa presented more candidates than the available seats for those regions.

Withdrawals

When the elections were held on 26 January, three candidates from these two regions have withdrawn their candidacy. Ethiopia communicated its withdrawal through a note verbal of 23 January 2018 conveyed via Djibouti as Dean of the East Africa region. This withdrawal was in favor of Djibouti. Similarly, Algeria withdrew its candidacy through a 24th January 2018 Note Verbal deposited with the Office of the Legal Counsel. This withdrawal came following the withdrawal of Tunisia, which withdrew in the 2016 elections following an arrangement with Algeria.

Due to these withdrawals, there was the same number of candidates as the number of seats for the different regions when Executive Council conducted the elections on 26 January 2018.

Conduct and outcome of the elections

The elections were held in line with the modalities on the elections of the PSC and on the basis of the five regions of the AU. In the election for the two seats slotted for the Central Africa region, the two candidates namely Equatorial Guinea and Gabon (which was unsuccessful in the 2016 elections) received 50 votes and 49 votes respectively. During

the elections for the two seats of the Central Africa region, two member states registered their abstention.

In the election for the two seats available for East Africa, Djibouti and Rwanda received 50 votes and 49 votes respectively. As with the elections for the Central Africa region, three abstentions were registered.

For the one seat allotted for Northern Africa, with both Algeria and Tunisia withdrawing from the election, Morocco run as the only candidate and received 39 votes and 16 abstentions.

Since there were only two candidates for the two seats slotted for Southern Africa, Angola and Zimbabwe received 48 and 49 votes respectively to win the election for the two-year membership in the PSC. Similarly, the three countries that were running for the three seats available for the West Africa region namely Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Togo also garnered 51, 48 and 45 votes respectively to win the election and join the PSC for the 2018-2019 two-year term. No abstention was registered with respect to the elections for these two regions.

PSC members elected for 2-year term in January 2018 and the membership of the PSC from April 2018 are those represented in the map below.

The elections of Liberia and Morocco to the PSC for the very first time has brought the number of states that have so far served on the PSC to 40 countries. As envisaged in the figure below while there are 15 member states of the AU that never served on the PSC, not all of them are parties to the PSC Protocol. Of those states that are parties to the PSC Protocol, those who attempted to join the PSC and did not succeed include Comoros and Eritrea.

In terms of the criteria for the PSC elections, those that seem to apply fairly well relate to regional representation and, albeit unevenly, rotation. While there are a number of

countries that served on the PSC more frequently since it has come into operation in 2004, Nigeria is the only country that has been on the PSC from 2004 to date.

Implications of the elections on the dynamics in the PSC

The result of the 2018 election of the 10 members of the PSC shows that the two countries that run for the first time, namely Liberia and Morocco, received the highest and the lowest votes respectively in this year's PSC elections. Three countries namely Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Togo are reelected to the PSC, the remaining five countries are returning to the PSC after a few years of absence as reflected in the table above. From the countries that will handover their seats to the new members, South Africa's and Algeria's absence is expected to be particularly felt both in general terms and in respect of specific conflict situations.

In terms of the dynamics of the PSC, Morocco's election is most notable. This is sure to affect how the PSC would keep the Western Sahara conflict on its agenda and how this affects other issues on the PSC agenda. The signs for this have clearly come out during the debate on the report of the PSC on the state of peace and security in Africa and its activities considered on 29 January 2018. Morocco particularly expressed its strong objection and reservation to paragraph 15 of the decision of the Assembly on the report of the PSC relating to the Western Sahara conflict. Yet, the presence of PSC members such as Zimbabwe with strong support for the current AU approach on this conflict is anticipated to counter balance Morocco's position.