

The situation in the Lake Chad Basin

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Tomorrow (31 May), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to hold its 1086th session to receive an update on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

Following the opening remarks of the Permanent Representative of Cameroon, Churchill Ewumbue Monono, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye, is expected to brief the PSC. The Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Head of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), Mamman Nuhu is expected to make a presentation. Basile Ikuegbe, Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson and Head of AU liaison office in Chad is also scheduled to deliver a briefing. It is also expected that Governors of the Lake Chad Basin namely the Governor of the Far North Region of Cameroon and current chair of the Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum, Executive Governor of Borno State, Governor of Diffa region in Niger and Governor of Hadjer Lamis in Chad will provide updates of the Territorial Action Plans (TAPs).

The Lake Chad region continues to be afflicted by a deteriorating security, humanitarian and ecological conditions. The Boko Haram affiliated and splinter groups and the expansion of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) are considered major threats to the security and stability of the Lake Chad Basin. MNJTF has intensified its military operations against these terrorist groups. MNJTF spokesperson Muhammad Dole was quoted by the media on 17 April as saying that “well over a hundred terrorists have been neutralized, including over 10 top commanders...following intelligence-driven lethal airstrikes in the Lake Chad islands by the combined air

task forces". Various reports indicate that increasing number of ex-Boko Haram fighters are said to have been surrendering which underscores the need to support their rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian life through the effective implementation of a DDR process.

On 14 January, at its 1057th session, the PSC considered the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the MNJTF against the Boko Haram and welcomed the significant progress made in the fight against Boko Haram terrorist group in the region. It also renewed the mandate of the MNJTF for another 12 months, effective from 1 February 2022. Furthermore, the PSC reaffirmed its support for the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience (RSS) of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region developed by the LCBC with the support of the AU.

The violence perpetrated by terrorist groups operating in the Lake Chad Basin has further compounded the humanitarian situation in the region displacing close to three million people, according to the UN. With the dire food security situation, around 11 million people are also said to be in need of humanitarian assistance. The region continues to face the adverse impact of climate change with worsening drought and receding water levels in Lake Chad. This has weakened the livelihood of the peoples of the region and exacerbated communal violence. The Lake Chad Basin Commission has been working to address the interlinked security, humanitarian and development challenges of the region. Tomorrow's briefing may provide update on these interlinked issues and on the implementation of the RSS. In this regard, accelerating the implementation of the regional strategy is considered the key to addressing the underlying causes and drivers of extremism, violence and underdevelopment.

The eight governorates (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States of Nigeria, North and Far North Regions in Cameroon, Lake Region

and Hadjer Lamis in Chad and Diffa region in Niger) from the five countries sharing the border with the Lake Chad Basin developed TAPs to identify the needs and priorities to localize and institutionalize the implementation of the strategy. The TAPs were presented at the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development held in Yaoundé on 4-5 October 2021, which is said to have assessed civil-military-humanitarian cooperation, the rehabilitation of persons associated with Boko Haram, cross-border collaboration and the revitalization of Lake Chad. According to a 5 October Communique adopted at the end of the Forum, the Governors agreed, among other things, to ensure the systematic and effective implementation of the TAPs in line with local and national development plans and to periodically monitor the progress achieved.

As a follow up to the Governors' Forum, the UN Peacebuilding Commission convened a meeting on 20 April 2022 to discuss the peacebuilding priorities of the Lake Chad Basin and mobilize further support. The meeting, which saw the participation of the AU PAPS Commissioner, Bankole Adeoye and other key stakeholders, stressed that a purely military approach is insufficient and called for sustained political will and scaled up funding to address the root causes of insecurity and violence. It also recognized the need for predictable funding for the implementation of the regional strategy, including through the establishment of a basket fund. Furthermore, the meeting underscored the need for projects specifically dedicated to strengthening institutional capacity of LCBC states to implement the regional strategy. The Lake Chad Basin Commission has been benefiting from the support of the UN Development Programme which since 2019 has been facilitating the implementation of the strategy through its regional stabilization facility.

The expected outcome of tomorrow's session is a communique.

The PSC may express concern over the continuing insecurity due to Boko Haram and its splinter groups as well as ISWAP and the dire humanitarian situation in the region. The PSC may reaffirm its support to the work of the LCBC to address the root causes of conflict and violence through the peace and development nexus approach and welcome the progress made by MNJTF in fighting terrorist and violent extremist groups operating in the region. The PSC may commend the developments of TAPs and underline their instrumentality in contributing to the implementation of overall stabilization strategy. The PSC may call for the mobilization of international assistance to support the implementation of the regional strategy through the TAPs to promote peace, security and development in the Lake Chad Basin. The PSC may underline the importance of national ownership, policy coherence, technical, political as well as sustained financial support for the successful implementation of the RSS. In this context, the PSC may call on AU's Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Centre to support the implementation of the various pillars of the strategy.