

Update on AU Post-Conflict, Reconstruction and Development (PCRD)

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Tomorrow (28 November), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1122nd session to receive update on AU Post-Conflict, Reconstruction and Development (PCRD). The update will be one of the two agenda items that the PSC is set to consider during this session.

Emilia Ndinlao Mkusa, Permanent Representative of Namibia to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of November is expected to make opening remarks. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), is scheduled to introduce the progress report and present an update on the activities implemented during the year.

This session comes within the context of the commemoration of the second edition of PCRD awareness week (24 to 30 November 2022), which is being marked under the theme of 'towards repositioning Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in Africa: greater awareness and sustained peacebuilding'. PCRD awareness week was first launched last year in November with the aim to raise awareness on and promote collective action of AU Member States and partners, on the recovery and development needs of post-conflict societies. It is to be recalled that the Assembly (Assembly/AU/Dec. 815(XXXV)) as well as the PSC during its 1047th session of November 2021 endorsed the institutionalization and regularization of the awareness week as an annual event.

In tomorrow's session, members of the PSC are expected to

discuss on progress and challenges in the implementation of AU PCRDR policy since its last dedicated session on PCRDR in November last year. PSC's 670th session of March 2017 recognized that the 'PCRDR dimension remains the weakest link' within the implementation processes of both the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA). However, in recent years the Commission has stepped-up efforts in mainstreaming PCRDR in its activities, as well as its support to Member States that are in political transition and post-conflict situations.

Examples that highlight the increasing implementation of PCRDR support in member states include: Implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and Peace Strengthening Projects (PSPs) in Somalia; the development of Regional Stabilization Strategy for the Lake Chad Basin and the Stabilization Strategy for the Sahel; support in the areas of reconciliation and healing in South Sudan, support in the establishment of Human Rights Commission and in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) as well as security sector reform (SSR) in Central African Republic; and support in the areas of SSR, rule of law, and transitional justice in the Gambia, where the AU deployed a PCRDR mission.

In past, liaison offices were AU's main tool of channelling its PCRDR support to Member States. This is expanded as the example of the AU Technical Support Team to the Gambia (AUTSTG) shows the deployment of technical mission involving experts tasked to support peacebuilding activities ranging from SSR, transitional justice to establishment of bodies like national human rights commission. In 2021, similar types of missions were initiated for the Comoros and Chad. For example, small team of experts (two international experts on constitutionalism & Rule of Law, and election, and one national expert) are being deployed ahead of the 2024 election in the Comoros.

In terms of progress in the operationalization and strengthening AU's PCRD policy and its architecture since PSC's 1047th session, two important developments are likely to be highlighted. The first is the initiation of the revision of AU PCRD Policy Framework, which has been in place since its adoption in 2006. It is to be recalled that the PSC, at its 1047th session, requested for the 'urgent review of the AU PCRD Policy Framework in order to ensure that it is re-aligned and adaptable to the emerging challenges in the continental peace and security landscape'. The Assembly (AU/Dec.815XXXV of 6 February 2022) made a similar call, further requesting the Commission to submit the revised Policy in the upcoming ordinary session which is expected to happen in February 2023. AU Commission accordingly convened a high-level expert engagement to review the Policy from 9 to 14 September 2022 in Accra, Ghana. In his presentation, Bankole is likely to highlight the major areas of revision, including the addition of two pillars (youth and environmental security) and one principle (humanitarian principles); the definition of human security; and the expansion in scope.

The second major development is the formal launch of the AU PCRD Centre in Cairo, Egypt in December 2021 with the mandate to serve as a hub of operational excellence on peacebuilding efforts on the continent. However, as the AU Champion on PCRD, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, highlighted in his statement issued on 22 November, the full operationalization of the PCRD Centre need to be fast tracked for the Centre to deliver on the critical role that it is envisaged to play. According to the Commission's progress report on the AU PCRD policy implementation, the shortlisting of candidates for 11 positions has been undertaken as of November. The Centre is expected to have 30 staff members when it becomes fully operational. Bankole may also highlight ongoing efforts to the formulation of an AU policy on psychosocial support to survivors in post-conflict contexts in line with PSC request

at its 593rd session in April 2016.

While AU has made notable strides in creating the necessary normative and institutional frameworks and providing supports to Member States in the areas of PCRDR, there are number of challenges and outstanding issues which PSC should consider for the effective implementation of AU's PCRDR policy. In terms of challenge, the most prominent one remains the resource constraint as PSC noted with concern during its 593rd, 670th, and 958th sessions, among others. For example, lack of funding was the main reason why the AU PCRDR mission in the Gambia was brought to an end. In various of its sessions on PCRDR, PSC considered at least three options to address the resource constraints. The first is revitalization of the African Solidarity Initiative (ASI). The PSC, during its 1047th session, underlined the 'urgent need' for the revitalization of this initiative as 'an important framework for mobilization of in-kind support from within the Continent'. The second is engaging the African Development Bank, African private sector, African stakeholder-organizations, as well as international partners such as World Bank, UN Development Programme, and UN Peace building Commission. The third is the use of AU's peace fund. Among the priority activities proposed for the utilization of the peace fund under window 2 (institutional capacity) include operationalization and capacity building of the AU PCRDR Centre and enhancing Member States' capacity in the areas of DDR and SSR. Additionally, the PSC sub-committee on PCRDR, which was supposed to provide the necessary political leadership and oversight on the implementation of PCRDR activities, is also yet to be operationalized despite PSC's repeated request for its re-activation.

The expected outcome of tomorrow's session is a communique. PSC is expected to welcome the commemoration of the second PCRDR awareness week. Echoing the 21 November statement of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, PSC may note the significant

achievements made towards the operationalization and implementation of the AU PCRDR Policy, including the revision of the PCRDR policy framework and formal launch of the Cairo PCRDR Centre. PSC may also commend the Commission for the different initiatives and supports to Member States that are aimed at consolidating peace and preventing conflict relapse. On the Cairo PCRDR Centre, PSC may reiterate the call of the AU Champion on PCRDR, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, for the AU Commission to 'fast track the operationalization of the work of the Center and to endorse its functional structure'. In relation to the challenges, PSC may call upon the Commission to expedite the pilot utilization of the peace fund in line with the identified priority activities. It may further request the Commission to step-up mobilization of resources, particularly through the revitalization of the ASI and engagement of African private sector and financial institutions, as well as international partners including UN PBC. It may also call upon the UN Security Council to ensure adequate, predictable and sustainable financing for peacebuilding efforts in Africa. PSC may urge the Commission to strengthen mainstreaming PCRDR and peacebuilding aspects in all its activities including in the relevant country situations and thematic issues, as well as field visits. It may also request the Commission to expedite the preparation of AU Policy on psychosocial support to survivors in post-conflict contexts.