

# Update on the situation in Northern Ethiopia

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Tomorrow (8 November) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene an emergency session. The session, prompted by recent changes in the context of the conflict, is set under a theme 'update on the situation in Northern Ethiopia'.

The session will receive the statement of the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye, after the opening remark by the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of November, Mohamed Gad, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the AU. Initially, it was envisaged that former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo, who was appointed as the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa in August 2021, would provide the update on the situation in Northern Ethiopia. However, the session may proceed without his briefing due to him traveling to Northern Ethiopia. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as the concerned regional body and Ethiopia, as the country concerned, are also expected to deliver a statement.

It is to be recalled that in March 2021 during the Heads of State Meeting of the PSC, Ethiopia's Prime Minister presented a 'Statement to the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) on the current situation in Northern Ethiopia. The statement was delivered under AOB and as such there was no formal deliberation on the situation. Tomorrow's session will thus be the first session for the PSC to deliberate on the situation formally.

The session comes against the background of reports of increasing fighting and in a context of reports of declaration

by Tigrian forces of taking control of the towns of Dessie and Kombolcha. On 3 November, the AU Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, issued a statement calling for 'the immediate cessation of hostilities, the full respect for the life and property of civilians, as well as state infrastructure.' The statement additionally called on 'the parties to urge their supporters against acts of reprisal against any community, and refrain from hate speech and incitement to violence and divisiveness.' After reminding 'their obligations regarding compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, with particular regard to the protection of civilians and ensuring access to humanitarian assistance by communities in need,' the statement called on 'the parties to engage with the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa, former Nigerian President H.E Olusegun Obasanjo.'

In the briefing, it is expected that PSC will be informed about Obasanjo's engagements on the situation thus far. It is to be recalled that, he briefed the PSC on 28 October broadly on his mandate and plans on execution of the mandate. For purposes of tomorrow's session, it would be of interest for the PSC to learn about his engagements regarding the situation in Northern Ethiopia, including meetings held with the key stakeholders both in Ethiopia and in the region.

PSC members would in particular be interested to hear about AU's assessment of the situation and how the PSC lends further support towards AU's effort to help avert further deterioration of the situation. Recent developments have attracted increased attention both in the region and outside of the region as well. In a statement issued on 4 November, IGAD Executive Secretary, Workneh Gebeyehu, among others, called for the cessation of hostilities and for immediate ceasefire. Kenya also issued a statement appealing 'to the parties on the urgent need to bring an end of the conflict'. On Friday 5 November, the UN Security Council held a meeting

on the situation and issued a statement. Expressing deep concern about the intensification and expansion of military clashes and the impact of the conflict on the humanitarian situation, stability of the country and the region, the statement of the UNSC called for respect for international humanitarian law, for safe and unhindered humanitarian access, the reestablishment of public services, and scaling up of humanitarian assistance. The statement additionally called to put an end to hostilities and to negotiate a lasting ceasefire, and for the creation of conditions for national dialogue.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. The PSC is expected to express concern about the escalation and expansion of the fighting and the human toll of the situation as well as its impact on the stability of the country and the region. Considering the geo-strategic location of the country and the implications of further deteriorations, the PSC may underscore the importance of peace in Ethiopia for the entire region and the continent. The PSC, taking note of efforts and expressions of commitment to address the situation, reiterate the AU Commission Chairpersons call for the cessation of hostilities and the need for starting a political process for ending the escalating fighting. To this end, the PSC may express its support for the role of the AU High-Representative for the Horn of Africa and urge full cooperation for enabling him to help achieve a negotiated settlement.