

MONTHLY DIGEST ON THE AUPSC

AMANI AFRICA

Media and Research Services

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MONTHLY DIGEST ON THE AUPSC – JULY 2021

THE MONTH AT A GLANCE

During July, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) was chaired by Nigeria. Throughout the month, eight sessions were convened, out of which five addressed thematic issues while the remaining three focused on country/region specific situations.

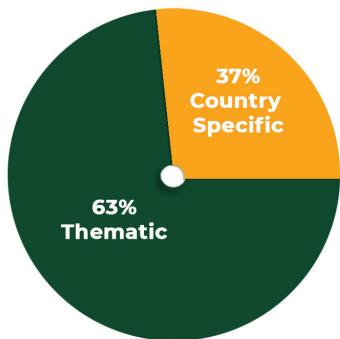


FIG 1: TYPE OF SESSIONS

July's programme of work was revised twice. The final revised agenda saw the inclusion of a field mission to Mali, changes in the dates of some of the initially planned sessions as well as the postponement of one session and the addition one more session.¹

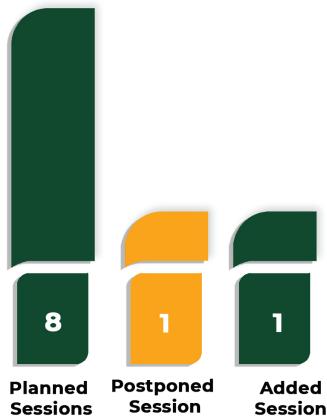


FIG 2: PROGRAMME OF WORK PATTERN

All sessions were convened at ambassadorial level during the month. In terms of types of outcome documents, while there were no publicly available outcome documents for two of the sessions,² the

outcomes of all other sessions were made available in the form of communiqué. On average, it took 12 days for the release of these communiqués.

One of the things that stood out in July's agenda was the balance between thematic and country/region specific issues. Over recent years, Council has expanded its engagement on thematic issues as well as the type of themes it addresses, whereas in its earlier days, it committed majority of its sessions to country/region specific issues. The themes discussed by the Council in this month relate to the underlying root causes as well as exacerbating factors which fuel conflicts and instabilities in the continent, as well as how the various mechanisms set up by the AU to respond to crises and conflicts can be used more effectively.

MANDATE RENEWAL OF THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE

The 1006th meeting of the PSC and the first session for the month of July was the consideration of mandate renewal of the G5 Sahel Joint Force. The outcome of the meeting was adopted in the form of a [Communiqué](#), a week after convening. The Force Commander of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, ECOWAS and Members of the G5 Sahel took part in this session.

The main decision coming from the meeting was the renewal of the mandate of the Joint Force for a one year period, until 13 July 2022. In addition to mandate renewal, the session discussed the challenges facing the G5 Sahel joint Force and measures that need to be taken to ensure its effectiveness. Council stressed the need for 'enhanced coordination and complementarity of efforts' among all military deployments in the Sahel. The presence of plethora of military deployments in the region including the G5 Sahel Joint Force, Operation Barkhane, United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), TAKOUBA, and the Multi-National Joint Task Force against the Boko Haram (MNJTF), without much coordination has led to security 'traffic jam' while the peace and security landscape of the region has rather shown significant deterioration. This raises two important questions. The first is the question of whether the

¹ A session dedicated to discuss AU's support to member States in transition and post-conflict situations was postponed from July and took place in August 2021 forming Council's 1017th meeting. On the other hand, the session committed to consideration of the report on Council's Field Mission to CAR conducted from 27 June to 01 July was not anticipated in Council's original programme of work.

² The first of these sessions which did not have a publicly available

outcome document was an Update on the Common African Position on Financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations through UN Assessed Contributions. The second session was Consideration of report of AU Independent Assessment Team on the AU's engagement in and with Somalia post-2021.

decision of the Assembly (at its 33rd Ordinary Session in February 2020) to deploy additional 3000 troops in the region would move the needle towards peace and stability of the Sahel. In this session, though the Council urged the Chairperson of the Commission for consultation with concerned stakeholders to fast-track the deployment of additional forces, there is a need to critically reflect on the feasibility as well as desirability of additional deployments. The limited success of the security approach over the years, limited buy-in from the regional bloc³ and uncertainty over the sustainable and predictable funding are some of the factors worth considering while pursuing the implementation of the Assembly's decision to deploy additional forces in the region.

This proliferation of military response in the Sahel, has a narrow response to the threats related to terrorism and diverts financial resources from more comprehensive interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of insecurity in the region. The Council in this session highlighted the importance of a 'comprehensive and multidimensional approach' in addressing the structural root causes of the violence in the Sahel. The finalization of the AU Sahel Stabilization Strategy, which the Council requested its expedition in this session, will be a step forward towards the implementation of a holistic approach to address the multi-layered security challenges of the region. Perhaps, Council may consider setting a timeline to finalize and submit for consideration of the Strategy to ensure a timely delivery of the task. It also remains imperative to ensure complementarity with other initiatives such as the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS).⁴

In terms of requests made by Council, the AU Commission was tasked with dispatching an assessment mission to the Sahel region, to monitor the general security and humanitarian situation in the region and specifically, the impacts of the exit/

³ One factor behind the delay over the implementation of the Assembly's decision to deploy additional 3000 troops is the concern raised by some members of ECOWAS on the lack of sufficient consultation with the regional bloc on critical issues such as the financial sources of the deployment and countries that are going to contribute troops.

⁴ It is to be recalled that the UN has developed a results-focused multidimensional approach through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), around key priorities in governance, security and resilience, designed to address root causes of the security challenges facing the Sahel region. In 2019, the UN further operationalized United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel (UNSP) which refocuses the priorities of the Strategy.

downsizing of Operation Barkhane. France's military force in the Sahel region, Operation Barkhane consists of 5000 troops and has been supporting States of the region in their fight against extremists. However, its decision around July 2021 to put an end to Operation Barkhane through a gradual drawdown to be completed in the first quarter of 2022 has come at a time when the political and security crisis in the region is worsening. In addition to Mali's recent coup, the region has generally been experiencing heightened threats of attacks from extremist groups. The assessment may hence highlight what the security gap could look like once Operation Barkhane is effectively concluded, particularly in terms of emboldening terrorist groups, and what kind of opportunity it may present for the AU to be more actively present in responding to these challenges.

Another key aspect of the discussion is on ways of enhancing the effectiveness of the G-5 Sahel Force in discharging its mandate. In this respect, Council encouraged the G5 Sahel Force countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) to continue to cooperate with China for the swift delivery of the equipment in line with the Agreement concluded in May 2020. In terms of enhancing coordination between the AU Commission and the G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat, Council also took an important step by deciding to establish a G5 Sahel Strategic Support Cell within the Commission to play the 'critical role of cross communication, information sharing, effective management of administrative, logistics and provision of support to the G5 Sahel Force'.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE AND THE AU CONTINENTAL LOGISTICS BASE

The 1007th session of the PSC which took place on 8 July addressed the operationalisation of the African Standby Force (ASF) and the AU Continental Logistics Base (CLB). The outcome of the session was adopted 8 days after convening, in the form of a [Communiqué](#).

In addition to welcoming some progresses obtained in operationalising the ASF, the session served to reflect on the challenges which continue to hinder the

finalisation of the process. One of the main challenges identified was the low level of support to the continued operationalisation of the force. While AU member States showed much enthusiasm at its inception, their support for the ASF has been waning over the years due to various factors. One of the main reasons behind the dwindling States' support for operationalising the force has been the existence of a parallel mechanism – the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). Although the latter was established as a temporary force until the ASF is fully capacitated to carry out rapid responses, it was never deployed. Nonetheless, ACIRC's existence alongside the ASF created the perception of duplicated efforts. At the session in review, Council drew attention to (Ext/Assembly/AU/Dec.1 (XIV) of December 2020, which decided to dissolve the ACIRC. This Assembly decision could perhaps contribute to reviving some of the support from the side of member States and allow all efforts to be refocused on the ASF.

Another important point noted at the session was the importance of consultations among Member States and RECs/RMs in order to ensure there is coherence of decision-making with regards to deploying ASF capacity. In addition to lack of resources and sustainable funding, a factor which could constrain the ASF from attaining full functionality is lack of political will and receptiveness from conflict or crisis affected Member States to allow the deployment of ASF in their territories. Such challenges demonstrate the importance of fortifying cohesion between the relevant RECs/RMs and member States regarding the need to respect mandates of the ASF.

Another challenge the ASF may be confronted with is also the changing nature of conflicts and factors influencing conflict landscape on the continent. Hence, it is important for the ASF to adapt to emerging threats on the continent such as terrorism and violent extremism. Council paid attention to this concern as can be understood from its request for the AU Commission "to finalise the 2021 – 2026 Comprehensive Roadmap on the Enhancement of the ASF, including for the establishment of the special unit for combatting terrorism and violent extremism, with clearly defined timelines and submit to the 2021 Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS) meeting and to this Council in the last quarter of 2021".⁵ Other emerging concerns

for peace and security on the continent also include the impacts of climate change and outbreak of new diseases such as the Covid-19 Pandemic. Hence, there is need to pursue comprehensive approaches within the framework of the ASF to ensure that such threats are detected and addressed through coordination with relevant mechanisms such as the Africa CDC.

Regarding the CLB, the AU Commission was requested to finalise the proper structure and its financing model.⁶ The AU Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) was also requested to consider the staffing requirements for the CLB as a specialised mechanism within the ASF. Another request emphasised by Council during the session was for the PSC Military Staff Committee (MSC) to work with the AU Commission and finalise drafting the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Deployment and Employment of the ASF.⁷ One important question that comes to mind with regards to the MoU is whether it is envisaged to govern the relationship of the AU with all the RECs/RMs through a one-size-fits all approach. Provided that each of the RECs/RMs have their own unique peace and security architecture and also taking account of the different level of capacity and engagement of each in discharging their mandates, it is worth reflecting on whether the best approach is to draft MoUs which are tailored to the specificities of each REC/RM.

The session came to an end with reiteration of Council's commitment to convene its annual consultative meeting with RECs/RMs where it will exchange views on the operationalisation of the ASF and CLB. It is to be recalled that the meeting with RECs/RMs was

⁵ A draft work plan for 2021 to 2025 on the enhancement of the ASF was intended to be submitted to the 14th meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS). Although the meeting of the STCDSS was intended to take place in December 2021, it could not be conducted due to lack of quorum. For more details, see Report of the PSC on its Activities and the Status of Peace and Security in Africa (Assembly/AU/3(XXXV)) submitted to the 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly.

⁶ The CLB has already achieved its Initial Operational Capability (IOC) and nine member States have confirmed their pledges to contribute towards various strategic lift assets. The AU Commission has also established the Continental Movement Coordination Centre (CMCC) charged with the facilitation and coordination of strategic lift as well as movement of equipment and personnel for deploying AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs). The remaining crucial step for rapid deployment of personnel and equipment for AU PSOs is the signing of relevant MoUs between the AU and member States (see Report of the PSC on its Activities and the Status of Peace and Security in Africa (Assembly/AU/3(XXXV)) submitted to the 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly).

⁷ A draft MoU between the AU and RECs/RMs on the deployment of the ASF was another document which was intended to be submitted to the 14th meeting of the STCDSS.

planned to take place during May this year (according to Council's annual indicative agenda). Although the meeting did not take place on the scheduled time, Council committed a session in August to its annual consultative meeting with RECs/RMs where the issue of operationalising the ASF and CLB were among the issues that were discussed at length.⁸

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE STABILIZATION, RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE OF THE BOKO HARAM AFFECTED AREAS OF LAKE CHAD BASIN (LCB)

Council's 1010th session convened on 19 July addressed the implementation of regional strategy for stabilisation, recovery and resilience of areas of the LCB affected by Boko Haram insurgency. The outcome of the session was adopted eight days after convening, in the form of a [Commuqué](#).

This session marks the first stand-alone session of the Council dedicated to evaluate the implementation of Lake Chad Basin Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy (RSS) since its endorsement by the Council in December 2018.

One of the new progresses welcomed by Council with regards to efforts deployed in the LCB to combat terrorist activities of Boko Haram insurgents was the development of Territorial Action Plans (TAPs) for areas of the LCB categorised as worst affected. The TAPs were developed with the objective of identifying initiatives to be carried out in the eight regions of the four countries which the Regional Strategy for Stabilisation (RSS) seeks to stabilise.⁹ The main purpose of the TAPs is to ensure ownership and localisation of the RSS within the identified regions. While overall monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of

⁸ See the Joint Commuqué of the 2nd Annual Consultative Meeting of the PSC and RECs/RMs (PSC/RECs/RMs/2, (2021)) available on <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final/comm.2nd-annual-consultative-meeting-between-the-psc-and-the-recsrms.26.8-2021.pdf>

⁹ The four countries in the LCB identified under the RSS for stabilisation are: Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. The eight regions targeted within these four countries are: North and Far North Regions in Cameroon; Lac and Hajider-Lamis Regions in Chad; Diffa Region in Chad and Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States in Nigeria.

the TAPs as well as ensuring consistency among the TAPs rests with the LCBC Secretariat, the Governors of each region for which the TAPs are developed are responsible for overseeing their implementation. In terms of ensuring better coordination and accounting method of the resources mobilized for the implementation of the RSS, Council highlighted the importance of establishing a 'multiparty trust fund'.¹⁰

When it comes to major concerns, the first one highlighted by Council is the continuing kidnapping of school children. According to the latest report of the UN Secretary General on CAAC, in 2020, 762 grave violation against 685 children were recorded in the LCB region. The perpetrators of these violations were identified to be Boko Haram as well as other splinter groups engaged in the recruitment and utilisation of children to support their various acts of terrorism and violent extremism.

The other concern affecting the region is the adverse impact of climate change. The drying up of the Lake Chad Basin was particularly highlighted by Council as one of the adverse impacts of climate change. The drying up of the lake has been a cause for concern among the region's leaders and populations. Coupled with socio-economic challenges and the deteriorating security situation, the impact of climate change is making the humanitarian condition even more dire leaving thousands of people at further risk of food insecurity, particularly for fishing communities in the region whose livelihood depends on the lake's fish supply. One of the solutions proposed to halt the shrinkage of Lake Chad and the ensued climate crisis is the inter-water basin transfer initiative, which aims to re-route water from the Congo River to Lake Chad through an inter-basin water transfer. In this relation, Council stressed on the need to provide the requisite support to ensure the 'immediate recharging of the lake Chad'.

Another, timely concern that was emphasised by Council is the possibility of consolidation of activities between Boko Haram and the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP). It is to be recalled that

¹⁰ The establishment of the trust fund is one of the envisaged resource mobilization plan under the RSS to fund all pillars of the Strategy with the exception of Strategic Objective 1 on support to the MNJTF on account of donor restrictions on the utilization of development assistance for military purposes. This funding plan aims to help incubate new and innovative programmes, promote rapid response financing, enhance delivery capacities, and catalyse funding for partnership with the private sector.

following the death of the former Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau, many Boko Haram members pledged alliance with the ISWAP. This is a warning sign of the possibility for the formation of a more fortified terrorist group in the region whereas previously, the region had the advantage of dealing with two main terrorist groups who were also fighting against each other for dominance. Hence, it will be important for affected States to adopt their strategies in fighting the insurgents according to these changes and the possible impact they may entail.

On the other hand, the shift being experienced since the death of Abubakar Shekau may also be regarded as an opportunity for further degrading Boko Haram, particularly in light of reports indicating that the terrorist group is experiencing large scale desertions following the death of its leader.

When it comes to requests made by Council, the AU Commission was tasked with conducting an institutional capacity needs assessment through collaboration with the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). Council's request for non-State actors to adhere to the Safe School Declaration (SSD) was also interesting and one that raises question regarding the extent to which such actors can be held accountable and how their compliance can be ensured. Non-governmental agencies and organisations such as the ICRC could play an instrumental role in this regard through engaging non-State armed groups and negotiating soft agreements with them that as to ensure that they respect the standards incorporated in the SSD as well as other relevant instruments throughout their operations.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF FILED MISSION TO CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

The 1011th meeting of the PSC which took place on 21st July was dedicated to consideration of the report of Council's field mission to CAR. The outcome of the session was adopted as a [Communiqué](#) two weeks after convening. The field mission was conducted from 27 June to 01 July and took place in line with Council's decision at its 979th session conducted on 16 Feb 2021.

The main progresses Council highlighted based on its field mission include the conduct of national elections – which were conducted during December 2020 despite challenging circumstances – and the formation of a new government as well as appointment of a new Prime Minister. The establishment of a Special Commission of Inquiry was also welcomed by Council. The Special Commission of Inquiry was established by the CAR Government in May 2021, mainly with the purpose of addressing the election related human rights violations which took place in 2020. During 2020, multiple human rights abuses and violations of IHL were documented by the Human Rights Division of UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Out of the 526 incidents recorded by the division, a minimum of 1221 victims were affected and out of these, 144 were civilians or persons *hors de combat* killed in conflict.¹¹ The establishment of the Special Commission of Inquiry is hence fundamental in conducting investigations and ensuring accountability for these and other violations committed in the country.

One of the concerns highlighted by Council at the session was the continued negative impact of the arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council (UNSC). As emphasised by Council, the embargo affects CAR's ability to build up its security and defence. When it comes to CAR's sanctions regime, including the Arms Embargo, most UNSC members have consensually agreed on the importance of allowing certain amendments as incorporated in [Res2488/2019](#). However, there is division among members of the Council when it comes to further adjustments. China is in support of completely lifting the arms embargo whereas Russia supports making allowances for further adjustments if not complete lifting of the embargo. Other members of the Council, notably the P5, do not believe that in light of the current security and political situation in CAR, the government is ready to manage heavy weapons. Thus, they are against allowing further adjustments to the sanctions regime particularly on the arms embargo. Better coordination among the A3 States as well as between the PSC and A3 is one of the important steps that could perhaps

¹¹ According to the latest report of the UN Secretary General dated 16 February 2022, the security situation in CAR has remained volatile resulting in more civilian causalities. The humanitarian situation has also shown considerable deterioration with 31 million citizens requiring humanitarian assistance and protection. According to the report, this is an amount which has not been seen in five years. (See UN Secretary-General's report on the situation in CAR of 16 February 2022 ([S/2022/119](#)))

ensure that PSC's position informs and is properly channelled in the deliberations of the UNSC.

Having noted that illicit trade of arms is among the main concerns in CAR that is fuelling the conflict, Council also requested the Chairperson of the AU Commission to conduct an assessment on illicit flow of arms in the region and submit it to Council as soon as possible. Council's request for the AU Commission Chair to mobilise resources to capacitate the AU Liaison Office in CAR is also another request which forms part of a pattern of similar requests with regards to AU Liaison Offices in other parts of the continent. This part of the Communiqué will require follow up at upcoming sessions on the situation in CAR.

MARITIME SECURITY

The 1012th session Council convened on 23rd July addressed the existing major concerns in the maritime domain. The outcome of the session was adopted as a Communiqué 10 days after the session took place.

The aim of the session was to assess the overall maritime security situation of the continent and to receive an update on the status in the implementation of regional and continental maritime security frameworks, as well as explore ways and means to effectively respond to maritime insecurity in the continent.

Given the recent rising maritime insecurity in the continent, the council expressed its deep concern over the challenging situation in some regions and areas of Africa's maritime security domain for reasons including the continued transformation of the nature of the threats and their overlapping characteristics. Then, the council condemned in strongest terms the illegal exploitation of Africa's maritime resources and the dumping of toxic waste in Africa's maritime domain, as well as all crimes committed at sea, including piracy, mercenarism, trafficking of weapons, humans and illicit drugs, and called for stern measures to be taken against perpetrators, including bringing them to justice.

As a resolution to the raising of the maritime insecurity, the council reiterated the importance of the Lomé Charter as an African instrument for promoting peace, security and safety in Africa's maritime domain. The African Charter on Maritime Security,

Safety and Development in Africa, also known as the Lomé Charter, was signed on 15 October 2016 by heads of State and governments of African Union (AU) member States.¹² The charter is a follow-up to the AU's 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy), which forms a blueprint for the advancement of African sea power.

Further, the council underscored the importance of regional cooperation in the promotion of maritime security in Africa, among the RECs/RMs particularly with ECCAS and ECOWAS in the promotion of maritime security and safety in Africa.

EARLY WARNING AND CONTINENTAL SECURITY OUTLOOK

At its 1014th meeting held on 26 July, Council addressed the theme of early warning and continental security outlook. The outcome of the meeting was adopted in the form of a Communiqué 24 days after convening. The Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), AU Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), and Africa Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) were among the briefers in this session.

This session made a comprehensive assessment of the security landscape of the continent where the Council expressed its 'deep concern' over the 'violent inter-communal conflicts', 'border disputes', 'maritime insecurity', 'growing influence of armed groups and nonstate actors across the continent', 'expansion of terrorists' territory and theatre of operation', 'increasing convergence of terrorism and transnational organized crime', 'regionalization and internationalization of domestic conflicts', and 'illicit transfer, circulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons'.

Coming at the backdrop of unconstitutional changes of government (UCG) in Chad in April 2021 and Mali in May of the same year, Council in this session 'deplored' the 'resurgence of military coups d'états and UCG in

¹² According to the latest data on the status of signature and ratification of the Lomé Charter, although 35 member States have signed the Charter, only 3 have ratified/acceded to it by far – these member States being Benin, Senegal and Togo. (See the AU's Status Chart on Ratification/Signature of the Lomé Charter, 27 April 2022, available on <https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37286-sl-AFRICAN-CHARTER-ON-MARITIME-SECURITY-AND-SAFETY-AND-DEVELOPMENT-IN-AFRICA-LOME-CHARTER.pdf>

Africa. Other key concern highlighted by the Council is the rising trend of terrorism and extremism in the continent. Coupled with the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, arms trade, and intercommunal violence and tensions, the session recognized terrorism and terrorist groups as major threats to the peace and security of the continent. It is worth noting that Council paid attention to the risk posed by emerging technologies on the peace and stability of the continent particularly their use by terrorist groups and individuals. In this respect, Council encouraged Member States to develop regulatory frameworks to govern new technologies in line with recognised universal laws'. The 'growing trend of election related violence', 'misinformation, hate speech and incitement to hatred and violence', 'illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources', climate change and its adverse impacts were also highlighted in the session as challenges to the peace and stability of the continent.

Apart from reviewing the security outlook of the continent, the session also discussed available tools and mechanisms that are relevant to the early warning system, which particularly include CISSA, ACSRT and AFRIPOL. In this respect, the Council not only urged these institutions to continue their horizontal cooperation but also requested them to update the Council, on a quarterly basis or immediate in case of emergency, on 'emerging threats to peace and security on the continent', as well as provide 'updates and analytical assessments on transnational threats were deemed necessary and required'. Such regular briefing is indeed expected to contribute in enhancing AU's early warning system, which in turn plays pivotal role in bridging the gap between early warning and early response. Furthermore, the session also followed up on its decision made at its 687th session held in May 2017 that requested CISSA, AFRIPOL, and ACSRT to develop a 5-year strategic roadmap for prevention and combating terrorism and violent extremism. Council asked them to provide update on the implementation of this request to the earliest possible, but without any specific timeframe.

OTHER PSC ACTIVITIES DURING THE MONTH

In addition to convening sessions on various substantive issues, Council also undertook a field mission from 14 to 17 July, to evaluate the status of the political transition as well as security and socio-economic situation in Mali.



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ABOUT AMANI AFRICA

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We support the pan-African dream of peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa through research, training, strategic communications, technical advisory services, and convening and facilitation.

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