

MONTHLY DIGEST ON THE AUPSC

AMANI AFRICA

Media and Research Services

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MONTHLY DIGEST ON THE AUPSC – JUNE 2021

THE MONTH AT A GLANCE

Under Burundi's chairship, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) convened five sessions during June. Out of these, three addressed country/region specific conflicts and one focused on a thematic agenda item. All sessions convened during the month took place at ambassadorial level.

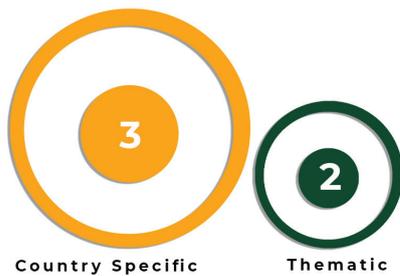


FIG 1: TYPE OF SESSIONS

One of the country specific sessions – the situation in Mali – was not part of Council's agenda for the month but took place in the context of new developments in the country's political and security situation following the coup of 24 May. Moreover, although a session was initially devoted for a consultative meeting between the PSC and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACTHPR), the meeting did not take place within the month.¹ Another session conducted during the month which hasn't been on Council's agenda since 2015 was the situation in the Comoros. Although there has been no publicly available outcome document for this session, it was convened in light of the deteriorating political situation the island State has been experiencing since 2018, following the referendum which abolished the 2001 constitution.²

¹ It is to be recalled that at its inaugural consultative meeting of the PSC and the ACTHPR, which took place at Council's 540th meeting convened in 2015, it was agreed between the two organs to have annual consultative meetings. Since the inaugural meeting of 2015, the two have not had another consultative meeting so the one which was planned to take place during June 2021 would have made the second consultative meeting.

² The 2001 constitution allowed for rotation of presidency among the main islands of Grande Comore (Ngazidja), Anjouan, and Mohéli. The referendum, which was boycotted by multiple oppositions, allowed the current president – President Azali Assoumani – to extend his term in office for two consecutive term of five years each. The recent PSC session was initiated in light of mounting tension with opposition groups calling for a nation-wide protest aimed at obtaining resignation of President Azali and a return to the presidential rotation system in line with the 2001 constitution.

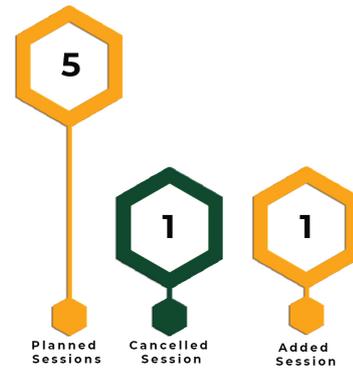


FIG 2: PROGRAMME OF WORK PATTERN

With the session dedicated to the situation in The Comoros having no publicly available outcome document, the outcomes of three of its sessions convened during the month were adopted as Communiqués while the outcome of one session was adopted as a press statement.

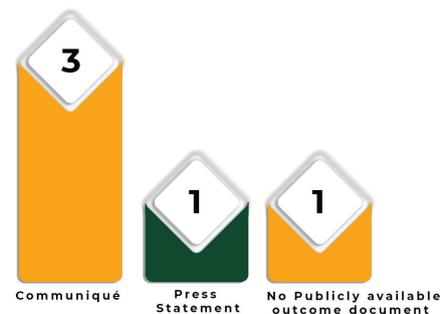


FIG 3: TYPE OF OUTCOME DOCUMENTS

THE SITUATION IN MALI

The 1001st meeting of the PSC and first session of the month was convened on 1 June and addressed the situation in Mali. Following on its emergency session convened at its 1000th meeting, this session led to Council's decision to suspend Mali from all AU activities until the restoration of normal constitutional order in the country. The outcome of the session was adopted in the form of a [Communiqué](#).

The 24 May coup in Mali coincided with Council's 999th ministerial level meeting on Mali which was convened the same date the coup took place. Owing to the change in circumstances, no outcome document was adopted on Council's ministerial session on Mali. Instead Council convened an emergency session on 25 May to address the unfolding events in the country. Although Council condemned the arrest of transitional authorities at this emergency session, it

refrained from referring to the military power grab as a coup or an unconstitutional change of government.

A major outcome of this session is Council's decision, in line with its relevant instruments and established practice, to suspend Mali from all AU activities until the restoration of constitutional order.

Council also endorsed the decision of ECOWAS adopted at its extraordinary session on Mali held on 30 May 2021. In addition to suspending Mali from the activities of the regional bloc, the communique adopted at the extraordinary session outlined set of conditions for Malian authorities to bring Mali back to the transition process. Among others, the bloc urged for a new civilian interim government, reiterated the need to respect the transition period of 18 months; and the head as well as the vice president and prime minister of the transition not to run in the presidential election. Same conditions were outlined by the PSC in its communique adopted at this session, while Council further went on threatening to take punitive measures against spoilers that may stand on the way of a swift return to a civilian-led transition in line with the agreed transition roadmap for Mali.

The other important outcome of the session is Council's decision to form an evaluation mission to Mali with the view to identifying areas in which the AU could provide support the transition in Mali.

Council's 1001st session on Mali was concluded with a request to the Chairperson of the AU Commission to closely monitor the situation in the country and provide quarterly updates to Council.

THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEES, IDPS AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN AFRICA

On 8 June 2021, the council convened an open session on the theme: "The Plight of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Forced Displacement in Africa". The session was convened as one of the regular thematic agenda of the PSC, this session comes ahead of the commemoration of the World Refugee Day, which is observed on 20 June 2021 under the theme 'Together we heal, learn and shine'. Outcome of the open session was adopted as a [Press Statement](#)

released 10 days after the session.

Centre of the discussion was regarding the growing concern of the rising numbers of refugees and IDPs as a result of a combination of factors, which include violent conflicts, terrorist attacks, political and economic crises, adverse impact of climate change and natural disasters, such as cyclones, volcanic eruptions, drought, famine, desertification, landslides, floods, animal diseases, pest infestations, epidemics and pandemics. Further, the council expressed particular concern regarding the increasing rate of displacement in the continent and the growing vulnerability of women, children, the elderly, and people living with disabilities who are also members of displaced populations.

The high level of food insecurity among displaced societies was also of central focus of the session. In light of that, the AU Commission in collaboration with relevant international organisations including the UN World Food Programme (WFP), UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was requested to identify how food insecurity among refugees and IDPs can be addressed.

One of the major points emphasised at the session was also the need to boost Africa's readiness to respond to complex emergencies by operationalising the African Humanitarian Agency (AHA). While as highlighted by Council at its 921st session, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to light the urgent need of operationalising the AHA, its importance for addressing AU's challenges in financing humanitarian interventions has been noted on various occasions including Council's 762nd session where the glaring lack of AU's presence in humanitarian operations on the continent was emphasised and member States were urged to commit to the implementation of EX.CL/Dec.567(XVII) which decided to increase member States' contribution to the 'Refugees and IDPs Fund' from 2% to 4%.

Council also made reference to the importance of replenishing the Special Emergency Assistance Fund (SEAF) for Drought and Famine Relief in Africa. The SEAF was operationalised as early as the mid-1980s. While the Fund's basic purpose is to gather and provide grants and loans to countries affected by drought and famine, it faces serious challenges in

terms of financing.

In addition to the AHA and SEAF noted by Council, the Africa Risk Capacity (ARC) is also another AU mechanism which could play an instrumental role in responding to the continent's displacement crisis. The ARC was endorsed by Assembly/AU/Dec.417(XIX) and has the main purpose of building the capacity of member States in their emergency response to natural disasters and extreme weathers including droughts and floods, which are among the underlying causes of forced displacement in Africa. However, the treaty on the establishment of the ARC is yet to enter into force since it hasn't acquired the required level of ratification.

Council encouraged Member States, which have not yet done so, to consider to sign, ratify and domesticate all AU and international instruments aimed at addressing the plight of refugees, IDPs and forced displacements, especially the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention and the 2009 AU Kampala Convention. In this regard, Africa possess a unique and progressive legal framework on forced displacement in the form of the "African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa" (better known as the Kampala convention), which came into effect in 2012. So far, 33 states have ratified the convention which legally binds government to protect the well-being of IDPs.

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF MOMBASA RETREAT

The 13th Retreat of the PSC was conducted in Mombasa, Kenya, from 27 to 29 May 2021. At its 1004th session convened on 17 June, Council considered and adopted the Conclusions of the Retreat in line with its [Communiqué](#) published a few days later.³ The Retreat

³ At the 1004th meeting, Council also received briefing on a Joint High-Level Delegation conducted to CAR, although this briefing did not form part of its agenda for the month. The high-level delegation to CAR which was conducted from 2 to 5 June consisted of participants from the AU, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU), which met with high officials including Head of State Faustin Touadéra and the president of the national assembly Mathieu Sarandji to discuss the need for an all-inclusive political dialogue to ensure stability in the country. The conduct of the visit by the high-level delegation can be regarded as giving effect to Council's request at its 979th session for the AU, UN, ECCAS and EU to better coordinate their efforts to support durable peace in CAR.

served the main purpose of reviewing and further strengthening the PSC's working methods. In addition, the PSC Committee of Experts also convened on the margins of the Retreat to finalise the "Draft Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism on the Implementation of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2030".

Issues relating early warning, elections in member States and priorities for utilisation of the AU Peace Fund also featured in the discussion. With regards to early warning, it was agreed that horizon scanning briefings and informal consultations should be regularised as platforms for the AU Commission and the PSC to share sensitive early warning information. In relation to elections in member States, it was noted that the periodic reports of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on elections need to be more analytical and comprehensive.

With regards to the AU Peace Fund, in addition to the urgent need of its operationalisation, one of the interesting points agreed on at the Retreat was to consider capacity building in post conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) within the framework of one of the windows of the Peace Fund (window-2). Provided that sufficient clarity has been lacking on whether the windows of the Peace Fund were imagined to entertain PCRD initiatives, this agreement will play a vital role in financing AU initiatives aimed at supporting States in transition and emerging from conflict situations. The expeditious implementation of AU Assembly decisions on opening/re-opening AU Liaison offices and taking assessment on existing ones was another point agreed on within the framework of operationalising the AU Peace Fund. In light of that and having regard to the pattern of requests, Council has been urging the AU Commission to mobilise resources to the various AU Liaison offices, one of the priority areas for the utilisation of the Peace Fund could be capacitating AU liaison offices.

One of the agreed conclusions emanating from the Mombasa Retreat with regards to Council's working methods is the need to ensure that all Council members have physical representation/permanent mission at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The absence of some PSC member States, particularly during 2020, has notably affected the efficiency of the PSC as exemplified by the challenge it faced in convening the minimum required number of sessions

within a month (as has been observed during August and December 2020)⁴. Hence, the emphasis drawn to this particular issue was timely and relevant.

Another important point underscored in the conclusions of the Retreat is the importance of Art.69 of the Manual on the Working Methods as an exception as opposed to a rule. As Art.69 itself emphasises, swapping arrangements for chairing the PSC should be an exception – while the rule remains to be alphabetical rotation of monthly chairs. Over the months in 2020 as well as the months of 2021 so far, the use of Art.69 has become too common, which may have prompted Council to reflect on this issue.

The conclusions also included some agreements which concretise the decisions adopted by Council at its 983rd session. These include the need to immediately appoint a focal point in charge of coordination between the PSC and A3 and the need to ensure that incoming PSC Chairs hold monthly meetings with the A3 Coordinator at least one week ahead of assuming Chairship, and for these meetings to be reinforced by quarterly meetings between the PSC Troika and the A3. These decisions are fundamental in that they articulate the solid steps that need to be taken in order to ensure further coherence between the PSC and A3 and contributing to better representation of common African position by the A3 in the UNSC.

THE SITUATION IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

The last session for the month and Council's 1005th meeting, which was convened on 21 June 2021, assessed the security situation in the Great Lakes Region (GLR). The outcome of the session was adopted two weeks after convening, in the form of a [Communiqué](#).

In terms of Council's assessment of the situation in the region, normalization of relations among countries of the region, the removal of Burundi from the agenda of the UN Security Council and the closure of AU Human Rights Observers and Military Experts Mission in Burundi, the mutual trust and confidence

⁴ The PSC Protocol, under Art.8(2) requires that the Council convenes at least two meetings per month. In August 2020, the PSC's initial programme of work scheduled to have only one session – although an additional session was convened to respond to the emergency situation in Mali following the Coup of 18 August 2020. Similarly, there was only one session planned and convened during December 2020.

building measures, as well as collective efforts being deployed by countries of the region to address security challenges are some of the positive developments welcomed by the session.

The improvement in inter-State relations within the region and the contribution of regional leaders to that end was another positive development noted and commended by Council. In terms of normalising relationships among member States in the region, the diplomatic efforts of DRC's President Félix Tshisekedi, notably the mini summit convened at his initiative on 07 October 2020, bringing together his Angolan, Ugandan and Rwandan counterparts to discuss cooperation over key security and economic issues are to be recalled. Angola's President and the current head of the ICGLR, Joao Lourenco has also been actively engaged in mediation efforts in the region. Particularly in CAR, President Lourenco has been extending efforts to mediate between the re-elected President Faustin-Archange Touadéra and opposition armed groups.

On the other hand, Council noted criminal activities by armed groups particularly their engagement in illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources, natural disasters; and COVID-19 pandemic as major challenges affecting the peace and stability of the region. In relation to armed groups and negative forces that are involved in illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources of the region, it is interesting to note Council's threat to take punitive measures against these groups.

The other issue that received Council's attention is Kenya's decision to contribute troops to the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) of the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) [MONUSCO]. The FIB was formed by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), which has for long resisted involvement of non-members in the FIB.

Council also welcomed the launching of the contact and coordination group (CCG), which is mandated to oversee the implementation of non-military measures in order to eradicate negative forces in the region. The CCG is an initiative which emerged from the agreement of Chiefs of Intelligence and Security Services in the GLR that consolidating peace and stability would require more than just military

pressure. Following wide consultation among Chiefs of Military and Civilian Intelligence of countries in the region, operationalising the CCG was recommended at the meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Defence of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), on 14th October 2020. Accordingly, the CCG was launched in May 2021. Some examples of non-military approaches identified by the CCG at its launching event include providing support to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes of States in the GLR as well as identifying root causes of instability in the region and proposing measures to cut supply lines of negative forces, including recruitment and weapons.

Another important initiative for peace and security in the region that was duly noted by Council is the UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the GLR. A new initiative approved by the UN Secretary General in October 2020 and published in January 2021, the strategy is centred around three main pillars which elaborate ten priorities crosscutting across peace and security, human rights and development concerns. The strategy strongly builds on priorities identified in previous instruments including the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the GLR and the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (the Framework Agreement).

Council's expression of readiness to conduct a field mission and its interest in receiving quarterly briefings on the situation in the GLR is also an interesting part of its Communiqué which requires follow up.

OTHER PSC ACTIVITIES DURING THE MONTH

In addition to its substantive sessions, Council also conducted a field mission to the Central African Republic (CAR) from 28 to 30 June. The report on the findings of the field mission was considered and adopted by the PSC at its 1011th session convened during the next month (on 21 July 2021).



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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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