

MONTHLY DIGEST ON THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

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Nigeria assumed chairship of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) in December. Four sessions were convened during the month and three of these had two agenda items (the 1126th, 1128th and 1129th sessions), making the total agenda items discussed during the month seven. Of these agenda items, three were committed to country/region specific situations whereas one addressed a thematic issue and the remaining three were committed to consideration of conclusions of some retreats and convening of the PSC which took place during the year.

Although the PSC's initial [program of work](#) envisaged a session committed to updates on the African Standby Force (ASF) and to receive updates on the deployment of 3000 troops to Sahel as an agenda item of its session convened on 16 December (the 1127th session), these two agendas were not discussed during the month as initially planned.

All sessions that took place during the month were held at ambassadorial level and the outcomes of all agenda items were adopted as Communiqués. On average, it took about 10 days for the release of these outcome documents.

PSC DECIDES TO URGENTLY DISPATCH A HIGH-LEVEL FACT-FINDING MISSION TO GUINEA BISSAU

On 12 December 2022, the PSC held its 1126th session to receive a briefing on the situation in Guinea Bissau. This session was in part convened under Nigeria's chairship due also to the fact that Nigeria is one of the countries contributing to the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) mission deployed early in 2022 and is meant to mobilize support from the wider AU system, including funding, for the mission. The outcome of the session was adopted as a [Communique](#).

The session was held after two years since the PSC last considered the situation in Guinea Bissau back in January 2020 during a time where the country was experiencing political instability following an electoral dispute between two presidential candidates. The political differences between the ruling party and opposition leaders have persisted after President Umaro Sissoco Embaló came to power.

The PSC session in December 2022 was held in the context of recent political developments following an attempted coup in February 2022, (an incident that highlighted the fragility of the situation in Guinea Bissau and prompted the deployment of a regional stabilization force by ECOWAS Mission in Guinea Bissau (ECOMIB). Moreover, the continued disagreement between the president and the Assembly has resulted in President Embaló dissolving the parliament and calling for legislative election originally scheduled for 18 December 2022.

Following the attempted coup in February 2022, ECOWAS in an extraordinary summit held on 3 February in Accra expressed solidarity with President Embaló and decided 'to deploy a force with a view to supporting the stabilization of the country'. AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat in a statement released on 1 February called 'upon the military to return, without delay, to their barracks and to ensure the physical integrity of President Umaro Sissoco Embalo and members of his Government and to immediately release those among them in detention'.

The PSC, convening this session ten months after the attempted coup, condemned the attempted coup and reiterated its zero tolerance to unconstitutional changes of government. The PSC also expressed concern over the delayed parliamentary elections slated for December 2022 and called on the national authorities to undertake the necessary preparation and completion of pending issues related to the National Electoral Commission, national census and voters' registration.

The PSC further commended ECOWAS's continued leadership in providing support to Guinea Bissau and welcomed the deployment of the ECOMIB and called for predictable support to the mission to enable it undertake its mandate more effectively.

Relevant previous PSC decisions:

- 905th session [[PSC/PR/BR.\(CMV\)](#)]: in the context of the disputed presidential election in 2019/2020, PSC called for the respect and adherence to legal processes to settle difference between the different parties and stressed the role of the Supreme Court to play its role.

Key actionable decision requiring follow-up:

- PSC decided to urgently dispatch a fact-finding mission to Guinea Bissau in order to assess the recurrent political and governance challenges and to evaluate the country's preparedness towards holding legislative elections.
- AUC requested to provide support to Guinea Bissau in holding the legislative elections
- AUC requested to closely collaborate with the relevant UN agencies, ECOWAS, the AU Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AF-RIPOL) and the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) in providing technical assistance to fight the growing threat of organized crime, money laundering as well as human and drug trafficking.

PSC CALLED FOR THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE MNJTF INTO A MULTIDISCIPLINARY FORCE WITH ROBUST POLICE AND CIVILIAN COMPONENTS

On 12 December, PSC held its 1126th session to consider the renewal of the mandate of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram as one of the two agenda items of the session. The outcome of the session was adopted as a [Communique](#). The Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Head of MNJTF, Mamman Nuhu, and MNJTF Force Commander, Major General Abdul Khalifah Ibrahim briefed the PSC while Chairperson of the AU Commission submitted a [report](#) that provided an update on key developments on the activities of the

Force since PSC's 1057th session held in January 2022.

The main outcome of the session was the renewal of the mandate of the Force for another 12 months with effect from 1 February 2023.

Background to AU's authorization of MNJTF

- PSC first authorized the deployment of MNJTF on 29 January 2015, at its 484th session convened at the level of heads of state and government, for an initial period of 12 months renewable. At the time, the Force was envisaged to have a strength of up to 7,500 military and other personnel with the mandate to create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, facilitate the implementation of overall stabilization programmes in the affected areas, and facilitate humanitarian operations and delivery of assistance to the affected populations. The size of the Force has significantly expanded since then, currently reaching a total strength of 16,080 personnel of which 15,980 are troops drawn from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria.

Current composition of MNJTF

- 15,980 – troops
- 99 – Staff Officers (SOs) at the Headquarters of the MNJTF
- 1 – Senior Police Advisor to the MNJTF Commander

Source: AU Commission Chairperson report on MNJTF submitted to the 1126th PSC session

During its 1126th meeting, PSC welcomed the progress made in the fight against Boko Haram terrorist group but also highlighted that the terrorist group remains an 'existential threat to peace, security and development' in the LCB region and the continent at large. Against the continued threat posed by Boko Haram, it highlighted the need to continue supporting MNJTF.

In this session, PSC also urged countries of the LCB region to remain 'extremely vigilant' and 'enhance border security' to confront the proliferation of foreign fighters and arms, echoing Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari who called, during the 16th

Summit of the LCBC in November 2022, for more vigilance and tightening of security around borders over the proliferation of arms linked to the war in Ukraine and Libya.



'Regrettably, the situation in the Sahel and the raging war in Ukraine serve as major sources of weapons and fighters that bolster the ranks of the terrorists in the Lake Chad Region. A substantial proportion of the arms and ammunition procured to execute the war in Libya continues to find its way to the Lake Chad Region and other parts of the Sahel. Weapons being used for the war in Ukraine and Russia are equally beginning to filter to the region.'

'...There is, therefore, the urgent need for expedited collaborative actions by our border control agencies and other security services to stop the circulation of all illegal weapons in the region.'

Statement of President Muhammadu Buhari as the chairman of the Summit during the 16th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) held on 29 November 2022

In addition to the mandate renewal of the Force, the other main outcome of the session was PSC's call for the 'restructuring of the MNJTF into a multidisciplinary force with robust police and civilian components that takes into consideration a comprehensive approach to addressing terrorism'. Such restructuring of the existing peace support operations (PSOs) into multidisciplinary forces could reflect a shift in thinking that an effective intervention in the current security dynamics in the continent requires PSO's engagement to go beyond maintenance of peace and security and integrate peacebuilding aspect aimed at enhancing state capacity to address the structural causes of insecurity. Therefore, in practical terms, the restructuring of MNJTF may entail change in its composition (adding police and civilian component) as well as recalibration of its mandate in a way that shift the focus towards peacebuilding efforts.

Key actionable decisions requiring follow-up:

- PSC requested the AU Commission and the LCBC to renew the MoU and Support Implementation Agreement (SIA) that guides the provision of additional AU support to the MNJTF for a period of one year (1st February 2023 to 31st January 2024).

PSC CHAMPIONING PEACEFUL USE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY IN AFRICA WHILE URGING ALL CONCERNED TO REFRAIN FROM TO THE THREATS TO SAFETY OF NUCLEAR FACILITIES DURING ARMED CONFLICTS

One of the agenda items of the 1127th session convened on 16 December was a briefing on the activities of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). Accordingly, the PSC was briefed by Enobot Agboraw, AFCONE Executive Secretary and Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary to the CTBTO.

The development of a joint action plan of AFCONE and CTBTO was welcomed at the meeting. As indicated in the [Communiqué](#) of the meeting, the joint action plan aims to strengthen efforts for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament as well as the peaceful application of nuclear energy.

It is interesting to note that the focus of the session was centred on promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology for meeting the development objectives of the continent. In this regard, AFCONE was requested to work in collaboration with CTBTO, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other relevant partners in the areas of:

- Resource mobilisation for peaceful use of nuclear energy in Africa;
- Awareness raising around nuclear civilian use, a concept incorporated in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); and

- Provision of technical support for member States in the promotion of positive use of nuclear energy.

To ensure enhanced capacity of African States in the detection and analysis of nuclear events, the PSC called on the CTBTO to expand its capacity building trainings for African States. This is within the framework of on-going capacity building trainings that the CTBTO conducts for experts from developing countries. These trainings are critical to allow member States have a better understanding of how to access and utilise CTBTO data which will enhance their active engagement in nuclear test ban verification.

Key actionable decisions requiring follow-up:

- The PSC decided to regularise and institutionalise an annual statutory meeting committed to the briefing delivered at the 1127th meeting.
- The AU Commission was requested to organise a forum to discuss the importance of the African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone for the continent's peace and security as well as the peaceful use of nuclear energy in Africa (no specific time indicated in this regard).
- The AU Commission was directed to work with AFCONE in the realisation of full ratification of the Pelindaba Treaty.

PSC ENCOURAGES THE CONDUCT OF THE FIRST REGIONAL MARITIME COMMAND POST EXERCISE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ASF

PSC's 1128th session, held on 19 December, was dedicated to discussing maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) made presentation to the session while the representatives of the Inter-Regional Coordination Centre, Yaoundé (CRESMAO/CRESMAC), the Coordinator of the Experts for the Establishment of the Combined Maritime Task Force (CMTF), the Chief of Naval Staff of Nigeria, the Chief of Naval Staff of Congo, as well as the representatives of relevant

regional mechanisms were among the speakers.

The [Communique](#) adopted at the 1128th session reiterated PSC's concern over the 'growing insecurity' posed by pirates and organized criminal networks in the GoG. Despite downward trend of piracy and armed robbery at sea witnessed in recent times, the challenge of maritime insecurity has persisted. In that context, PSC explored various security measures that Member States of the region and the AU Commission as well as other stakeholders should consider in the effort towards advancing maritime security in the GoG. Accordingly, PSC called upon Member States, among others, to:

- fully adhere and implement the Yaoundé Code of Conduct;
- further enhance the institutional capacities of their national navies, law enforcement and border control agencies;
- put in places measures that ensure permanent presence of African naval forces at sea;
- ratify the relevant regional instruments and harmonize their national laws with the view to criminalizing maritime offenses and strengthening judicial cooperation including extradition of maritime offenders and facilitation of hot pursuit; and
- put in places measures that ensure permanent presence of African naval forces at sea.

On the other hand, PSC encouraged the AU Commission to help Member States of the region to convene the inaugural meeting of the Committee of the Heads of African Navies and Coastguards (CHANS) in line with the African Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 ([AIMS 2050](#)) which called for the establishment of the same with the aim to create inter-agency and transnational cooperation and coordination on maritime safety and security at the continental level. Furthermore, PSC reiterated its previous communiqués that called for the establishment of a body of experts/Task Force for providing technical expertise to Member States, and the creation of naval capacity within the framework of the African Standby Force (ASF).

Within the framework of the ASF, the PSC specifically encouraged the Commission to conduct the 'First Regional Maritime Command Post Exercise' with the view to increasing preparedness and synergy of the navies of the region to effectively respond to the maritime security threats.

Relevant previous PSC decisions:

- 1012th session [[PSC/PR/COMM.1012\(2021\)](#)] held on 23 July 2021: PSC stressed the importance of ensuring that the ASF has the required naval capacity.
- 1090th session [[PSC/PR/COMM.1090 \(2022\)](#)] held on 28 June 2022: PSC directed the AU Commission to establish a body of experts or a Task Force to coordinate, share knowledge and make recommendations on maritime security.

The other key aspect of the communique is the highlight about the effort by the littoral states to establish what is referred to as the 'Combined Maritime Task Force' (CMTF) - a major regional security response initiated pursuant to PSC's 1012th session of July 2021. PSC welcomed the efforts of the Chiefs of the Naval Staff that met in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, in May 2022, which agreed to set-up a technical expert committee to expedite the setting up of the CMTF.

From the various options considered in this session, it appears that much of the focus is still on hard security measures which cannot adequately address the multidimensional nature of maritime security in the region. The phenomenon of piracy, armed robbery at sea and other crimes in the maritime domain in the GoG are attributed to multiple factors including weak or absence of effective state institutions for coastal and maritime security, environmental degradation, and governance deficits and lack of dedicated effort for the development of coastal and sea resources for addressing the socio-economic needs including employment of communities in coastal areas. Therefore, there is a need to pay equal, if not more, attention to non-security measures that would address the underlying socio-economic, political governance and environmental challenges in order to sustainably resolve maritime insecurity in this region and on the continent generally.

Key actionable decisions requiring follow-up:

The PSC encouraged the AU Commission to:

- assist Member States of the region, including considering to convene the inaugural meeting of the Committee of the Heads of African Navies and Coastguards (CHANS);
- establish a body of experts or a Task Force to coordinate, share knowledge and make recommendations on maritime security; and
- conduct the First Regional Maritime Command Post Exercise to increase preparedness and synergy of the Navies of the region within the framework of ASF and CMTF.

URGENT NEED TO ACTIVATE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON COUNTER TERRORISM AND PSC SUB-COMMITTEE ON SANCTIONS EMPHASISED AT PSC'S 14TH RETREAT

At its 1128th session convened on 19 December, the PSC considered and adopted the Conclusions of its 14th retreat which took place 17 to 19 November 2022, in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

As incorporated in the [Conclusions](#) of the 14th PSC retreat, some critical issues related to the PSC's working methods were addressed. One of these was the importance avoiding duplications in the process of setting monthly provisional programmes of work of the PSC. As witnessed during 2022 and some of the previous years as well, the monthly programmes of work are not always set in such a way that responds to the need to address a particular situation in the continent or based on a balanced approach that permits time to discuss issues incorporated in the PSC's annual indicative programme of work. This has resulted in the duplication of some thematic agenda items of the PSC addressed sometimes in consecutive months.

Aside from this and other important issues related to the PSC's working methods, the retreat also served to address key issues including the activation of the

Ministerial Committee on Counter-Terrorism and the Sub-Committee on Sanctions. The PSC Committee of Experts (CoE) and the AU Office of Legal Counsel were tasked in this regard, to develop urgently the Terms of Reference for both organs and submit to the PSC for its consideration.

Relevant other Executive decision:

- 16th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly [[Ext/Assembly/AU/Decl.\(XVI\)](#)]: the Assembly decided to establish a Ministerial Committee on Counter Terrorism 'to serve as a high level coordination, monitoring, evaluation and follow up mechanism of the implementation of the commitments' emerging from the declaration of the 16th Extraordinary Session.

Relevant previous PSC decision:

- 1061st session [[PSC/PR/COMM.1061\(2022\)](#)] the PSC requested the AU Commission to reactivate the PSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions so it can undertake the task of following up on the implementation of sanctions imposed by the PSC.

In the [Communiqué](#) issued on the consideration and adoption of the Conclusions of the 14th Retreat, the PSC decided to submit the Conclusions for endorsement to the 36th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly.

EXPANSION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE TO LOCAL, DISTRICT AND PROVINCE ADMINISTRATIVE LEVELS EMPHASISED A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF PREVENTING CONFLICTS, AT THE 2ND ANNUAL JOINT RETREAT OF THE PSC AND APRM

One of the agenda items of the 1129th PSC session, which was the last session convened in 2022, was the consideration of the Conclusions of the 2nd Joint Retreat of the PSC and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

In addition to serving as a platform for the presentation of country reviews conducted by the APRM (on Namibia, Nigeria, and South Africa) and drawing best practices as well as lessons from the findings of these reports, the 2nd Joint Retreat was an opportunity for the PSC and APRM to discuss various issues of governance with a bearing on peace and security in the continent.

One of the important issues addressed in this regard was the state of political transitions in Africa and the importance of enhanced cooperation among relevant AU bodies in the areas of democracy, good governance and rule of law. The [Conclusions](#) of the joint-retreat took note of the democratic backslide experienced in Africa as demonstrated through the spike observed in unconstitutional changes of government (UCG) and underscored the imperative of strengthening institutions, particularly the legislature and judiciary in order to avert the manipulation of constitutions.

The significance of promoting good governance at all administrative levels of governance including provincial and local levels was also emphasised as an important element of preventing conflicts. In that spirit, the proposal made to convene a conference on 'Local Governance, Peace, Security, and Development' was welcomed. In the [Communiqué](#) of the 1129th session where the PSC adopted the Conclusions of the 2nd Joint-Retreat, it called on the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department and the APRM to work towards convening the conference together with relevant partners. Morocco's offer to host the conference was also welcomed by the PSC.

Another important area the 2nd Joint Retreat covered during the session was on strengthening the nexus between governance, peace and security, within the frameworks of African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and African Governance Architecture (AGA). Some of the key findings emanating from the discussions in this regard were the need to prioritise preventive diplomacy to avert the escalation of disputes; the importance of adopting inclusive approaches in development efforts; and the need to strengthen as well as professionalise governance and security institutions and structures in order to ensure appropriate responses to situations of demonstrations, uprisings and conflicts.

AU COMMISSION DIRECTED TO UTILISE THE ASF FRAMEWORK IN MANDATING, IMPLEMENTATION, MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT OF ALL AU PSOs

The other agenda item addressed at PSC's 1129th session was the consideration and adoption of the Conclusions of the Inaugural Lessons Learning Forum (LLF) on all AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and on the African Standby Force (ASF).

The LLF was convened in Abuja, Nigeria, from 1 to 3 November 2022, with the central objective of discussing the need to reconceptualise the ASF as to align its visions of being continentally coordinated, with current practices and realities on the ground, particularly the more proactive role played by Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and affected countries in the deployment and management of ad hoc security missions.

In line with the basic objective of the inaugural LLF, the [Conclusions](#) highlighted some of the necessary steps required in realigning the concepts of the ASF, with processes of PSO mandating and managing in practice. One of these was the request made for the AU Commission and RECs/RMs to 'determine what should constitute RECs/RMs mandated operations vis-a-vis operations that transcends regional boundaries that the AU should mandate and coordinate'. This will be a critical step for achieving clarity in the review and reconceptualization of the ASF Concept. Another key step mentioned in the Conclusions is the request made for the AU Commission to ensure alignment of the ASF framework with the AU Doctrine on PSOs which will also be an important aspect that should inform the review process of the ASF.

Having adopted the Conclusions of the Inaugural LLF, the [Communiqué](#) of the 1129th session requested the AU Commission and RECs/RMs to draw practical lessons in enhancing institutional capacity of AU PSOs and ASF regional standby arrangement. A key decision emanating from the meeting was also the direction given by the PSC for AU Commission to 'utilise the ASF framework in mandating, implementation,

management and oversight of all AU PSOs'.

Relevant other Executive decision:

- 14th Extraordinary Assembly on Silencing the Guns [[Ext/Assembly/AU/Dec.1\(XIV\)](#)]: the assembly declared the ASF fully operational and directed the PSC to utilise the framework in mandating and authorising AU PSOs.

Other Activities of the PSC

Aside from its various sessions conducted during the month, the PSC also convened the 9th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa which took place in Oran, Algeria, from 07 to 09 December. An annual convening held with the central purpose of strengthening the capacity of the African three members of the UN Security Council (the A3) to effectively promote, articulate and defend common African positions on peace and security issues relevant to the continent, this year's Oran High-Level Seminar covered key contemporary peace and security concerns for Africa including: terrorism, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and imposition of sanctions against AU member States by international organisations and partners in addition to discussing enhancing coordination between the PSC and A3, as highlighted in the [Conclusions](#) of the Seminar.



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