

MONTHLY DIGEST ON THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

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MONTHLY DIGEST ON THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL – MARCH 2023

THE MONTH AT A GLANCE

In March, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) was chaired by Tanzania. Four sessions were convened in March and two of these were committed to country specific situations whereas the other two addressed thematic issues on the agenda of the PSC. The [initial program of work](#) of the PSC also envisaged sessions on three other substantive issues¹ but these were postponed.

All the sessions were held at the level of ambassadors, except one which was held at ministerial level.

The outcomes of three sessions were adopted as Communiqués while one session had no publicly available outcome document. On average, it took 20 days for the release of published outcome of documents.

¹ The sessions that did not take place during March and were postponed to coming months were: Consideration of the Status Report on the implementation of the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework: Country Structural Vulnerability Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) and Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies (CSVMS); Briefing on the conduct of a Continental Maritime Command Post-Exercise; and Updated Briefing on the Situation in Mozambique and Operations of the South African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM).

PSC RECEIVES BRIEFING BY THE PANEL OF THE WISE AFTER YEARS OF INTERRUPTION

Constituting PSC's first session of the month, the 1142nd meeting convened on 03 March was dedicated to a briefing by the AU Panel of the Wise. A publicly available outcome document was not adopted for this session.²

The briefing on the activities of the Panel of the Wise was delivered by Domitien Ndayizeye, Chairperson of the 5th Panel and former President of Burundi.

Despite its decision to receive regular briefings on the activities of the Panel of the Wise, the last time the PSC received such briefing was in 2017. The Panel was largely dormant for a number of years and had no engagement with the PSC.

Relevant previous PSC decision:

665th session [[PSC/PR/COMM\(DCLV\)](#)]: the PSC decided that 'the Panel of the Wise shall make quarterly briefings to the PSC, in order to enhance the conflict prevention capacity, early warning and timely decision- making processes of the Council'.

Restoring the formal engagement between the PSC and the Panel of the Wise, the 1142nd meeting served to revive the active role of the Panel, particularly on concerns relevant to peace and security ranging from electoral disputes to complex transitions. It also presented the opportunity to reflect on the challenges that confront the Panel, particularly those related to limitations in resources and continuing lack of clarity about the scope of the mandate of the Panel as well as the modalities for the execution of its mandate. In that respect, a call was made for member states as well as the AU Commission to extend the required support to enable effective mandate implementation of the Panel.

² Convened at ministerial level, the session was chaired by Stergomena L. Tax, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of Tanzania, PSC Chair of the Month. Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye also presented a statement.



In his statement presented at the session, PAPS Commissioner Bankole Adeoye underscored the need for the Panel of the Wise 'to sustain their support to electoral processes and facilitate dialogue to prevent any electoral related disputes from escalating'.

Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for PAPS

Source: @AUC_PAPS

It is to be recalled that the newly appointed members of the 5th Panel of the Wise held their inaugural meeting at the end of March 2022 where they reflected on horizon scanning of issues related to peace, security and governance and outlined thematic and country specific topics that require prioritising. Situations in conflict affected member states such as Sudan, South Sudan, Chad and Somalia were accordingly identified as issues that need to be prioritised. Considering that these situations are subject of various engagements, it would be curious how the Panel's engagement would be crafted around the Panel's strategic use of its preventive diplomacy role. If the outbreak of fighting in Sudan is anything to go by, the Panel remains as far behind the curve for making good on its plan as before.

In terms of engagement of the Panel on matters that the PSC is dealing with, one interesting recent development is the request that the PSC made for the Panel to conduct a fact-finding mission to Chad, one of the priority countries of the Panel. Conducted in line with the Press Statement of PSC's 1121st session [[PSC/PR/PS.1121 \(2022\)](#)], the mission took place with the aim of engaging relevant actors and gathering first-hand information on the outcomes of Chad's national dialogue, particularly around two contested issues – the ineligibility of the members of the Military Council to run for elections and the duration of the Transition.³

³ It is to be recalled that contrary to AU norm banning perpetrators of coup from standing for election organized for restoring constitutional order and the various decisions of the PSC that expressly stated that the members of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) are

In and on its own, the deployment of the Panel of the Wise to Chad demonstrates specific ways of coordination between the PSC and the Panel and exemplifies how the later can effectively be utilised to enhance execution of PSC's mandate in respect to specific country situations. As such, the briefing of the 1142nd session conducted after years of interruption has been a welcome development which needs to be continued on a quarterly basis in line with the decision of PSC's 665th meeting.

Apart from resource constraint, one of the issues of concern raised during the session on the work of the Panel was cooperation from member states. Political sensitivities including the increasing use of sovereignty are reported to be increasingly frustrating cooperation of member states with the Panel.

ATMIS's DIRE FINANCIAL SHORTFALL PUT ON THE SPOTLIGHT

On 7 March, at its 1143rd session, the PSC met to receive updated briefing on the situation in Somalia and the Operations of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission (SRCC) for Somalia, Ambassador Souef Mohamed El-Amine, briefed the session for the first time since he assumed duty last November. The representatives of Somalia and the Inter-Governmental Authority Development (IGAD) delivered statements as the concerned state and regional mechanism, respectively. The United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), who are main logistical and financial supporters of the mission, were also among the speakers in the open segment of the briefing session.

A report of the Chairperson of the Commission was presented to the PSC, providing update on the implementation of the UN Security Council (UNSC)

ineligible for election set to be held at the end of the transition, the national dialogue stipulated that the members of the TMC are eligible for election, thereby making a mockery of the continental norm and clear decision of the PSC, leaving the PSC divided on how to respond & triggering the request for the Panel to undertake a fact-finding mission. For more see the edition of the Insights on the PSC relating to the session on Chad held in November 2022 and the monthly digest for that month.

Resolution 2628 (2022) from November 2022 to January 2023, including progress made in the areas of joint operations in support of the Somali Transition Plan (STP) and the National Security Architecture (NSA) as well as implementation of strategic objectives.

The [communique](#) adopted at the 1143rd session, among other things, welcomed the progress on the coordinated joint and independent operations by the Somali Security Forces (SSF) and ATMIS to disrupt, degrade, and dislodge Al Shabaab, which led to the liberation of several towns and villages. Since August, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has launched 'SSF-led and owned offensive' in collaboration with and on the behest of local militias against the terrorist group with support from ATMIS. The offensive has put Al shabaab under enormous pressure, particularly in HirShabelle and Galmudug, highlighting increased coordination between local militia fighting against the terror group and SSF's increasing operational capacity.

The communique stressed the imperative of accompanying the successful offensives with stabilization strategy to extend governance and state authority in newly liberated areas. It is in this light that the FGS launched the National Stabilization Strategy (NSS) in early December last year, which focuses on the areas of rule of law, local governance, community recovery, and community reconciliation.

In terms of progress in the reconfiguration of ATMIS, while noting some of the progress, PSC requested the mission and FGS to 'complete all outstanding tasks to ensure the completion of Phase I of the transition plan', including the drawdown of 2000 troops by 30 June 2023. The original timeline for the drawdown was 31 December 2022, but this was extended to 30 June upon the request of the FGS which the PSC endorsed at its 1121st session in November 2022.

Yet, the issue of pressing concern, which also received particular attention in the AU Commission Chairperson's Report as illustrated by the number and content of paragraphs in the recommendation section addressing the issue, was the dire funding shortfall of the ATMIS. Expressing its 'deep concern' over the lack of predictable, adequate, and sustainable funding for the mission, the PSC reiterated the different options that it previously considered to narrow down the funding deficit that ATMIS has continued to face.

Relevant previous PSC decisions

At its 1075th session [[PSC/PR/COMM.1075 \(2022\)](#)] held on 12 May 2022, which was a dedicated session on the predictable, adequate and sustainable financing for ATMIS, the PSC:

- appealed to the UN Security Council to consider the holding of a special session on financing for ATMIS and the Somalia Security Forces.
- called on the EU and other development partners to establish a financial support package, to cover all required costs of ATMIS to enable effective implementation of the CONOPs.

At its 1121st session [[PSC/PR/COMM.1121 \(2022\)](#)] convened on 11 November 2022, the PSC requested the AU Commission and the UN to consider, in conjunction with IGAD and development partners, jointly organizing an international pledging conference by March 2023.

The communique further highlighted two more options in the effort to address the perennial issue that has become pressing. The first is the use of the AU Peace Fund in line with the decision of the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly held in February that approved the 'immediate use of the AU Peace Fund and its Crisis Reserve Facility (CRF)' to fill the financial gap in ATMIS.

The second is the roadshow for the mobilization of resources to raise awareness about the funding challenge of ATMIS. In that regard, Commissioner Bankole already launched the inaugural ATMIS roadshow in Addis Ababa earlier in November 2022 while the follow up roadshow engagements were held in New York and Washington DC in March this year with partners. However, as noted in Amani Africa's '[Ideas Indaba](#)' on the first anniversary of the mission, 'there was no indication of any new pledges' resulting from the roadshow in the United States, although in the subsequent week India announced to contribute \$2 million to support ATMIS.

The mission's budget deficit for the year 2022 was around €25.8 million. The shortfall is expected to significantly rise in 2023 as no funding arrangement has been provided for the six months delay of ATMIS

drawdown. This was indeed one of the issues raised by SRCC Souef in his statement during the PSC session.



'...Security Council Resolution 2670 (2022) agreed to the Federal Government's request to delay the drawdown of 2000 ATMIS troops to June of this year. In doing so, it was anticipated by the African Union that ATMIS partners would financially support a delay of the drawdown'.

'Regrettably, Resolution 2670 (2022) does not provide the funding modalities required to support the six-month extension and key partners, including the European Union (EU), have indicated no new funding. This is despite the recent announcement of the European Union last week on its intention to release additional funding of €85million to ATMIS to support mainly the allowances of ATMIS troops'.

Statement of SRCC Souef to the PSC's 1143rd session

Source: <https://atmis-au.org>

The financial crisis facing ATMIS is a clear testament of the imperative for predictable and sustainable funding, a point underscored in UNSC resolution but clear progress has as yet to be made to address it through UNSC action.

Key actionable decisions requiring follow-up:

- PSC requested the Commission to expedite the conclusion and deployment of the substantive ATMIS Force Commander.

PSC WELCOMES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AfCFTA PROTOCOL ON WOMEN AND YOUTH IN TRADE AND CALLS FOR INCLUSION OF WPS IN THE PROTOCOL

PSC's 1144th meeting convened on 14 March was an open session committed to its annual engagement on the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. This year's discussion on the theme had a specific focus on the integration of WPS in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The outcome of the session was adopted as a [Communiqué](#).

Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on WPS briefed the PSC. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) and Head of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) also presented a statement on behalf of Pramila Patten, SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict. A statement was also read on behalf of Wamkele Mene, Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Secretariat. Other participants in the session included Awa Ndiaye Seck, UN Women Special Representative to the AU Commission and United Nations Economic Commission (ECA) as well as representatives of women from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Republic of Sierra Leone.

Taking into account the AU's theme for 2023, 'Year of AfCFTA: Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area Implementation', the 1144th session aimed to bring to light the gender specific challenges women face in their cross-border trading activities, particularly in conflict and post-conflict setting, with the purpose of advancing an implementation of the AfCFTA that takes these realities of women into consideration. In light of that, the PSC emphasised at the session, the nexus between trade, economic development, peace and security, and called for greater political will to better enable women to trade without impediments.

An interesting and critical perspective highlighted in the Communiqué of the 1144th session was also the potential and unique position that women cross-border traders have to contribute to peacebuilding efforts. Further to conversing around ways to ensure safety and security of women in cross border trade

in conflict affected areas, it is also important to seek approaches through which these women can use their diverse network to contribute towards and assist in peace efforts.



'Women at borderland are not only victims of conflict and poverty, but they are also agents for peace, development and stability, including through their role in conflict early warning, cross-border community mediation and peace crusades.

Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on WPS

Source: @AUC_PAPS

Another important component of the session was its highlight on how women's economic empowerment, including through ensuring their access to trade benefits through the AfCFTA scheme, consequentially contributes to economic stability and development endeavours of member states, which in turn contributes towards ensuring peace and security.

Key actionable decisions requiring follow-up:

- Welcoming the development of AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade, the PSC called for specific inclusion of WPS agenda in the Protocol.
- AU Commission was requested to ensure support to member states in their efforts to address 'challenges related to trade, peaceful coexistence and stability, as well as the safety and security of women and girls in borderlands'.

PSC URGES THE M23, FDLR, ADF AND OTHER ARMED GROUPS OPERATING IN EASTERN DRC TO UNCONDITIONALLY DISARM AND CALLS ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS AGAINST ARMED GROUPS IN THE REGION

At its 1145th meeting held on 31 March 2023, the PSC considered the report of its field mission to the DRC which took place from 20 to 23 March. The outcome of the session was adopted as a [Communiqué](#).

Since the outbreak of conflict with M23 in March 2022 and the ensuing spike of tension between DRC and Rwanda, the PSC has not been able to conduct a visit to the country, although, in the context of its engagement on GLR it planned to undertake a visit in June 2022 (from 20 to 22 June) which eventually took the PSC only to Burundi.

It took about three weeks before negotiations on the contents of the communique of the 1145th session were finalized. This was in part, as we learned, due to protracted back and forth on what needs to be included in the report of the field mission as there was lack of consensus on some elements raised by DRC interlocutors during the field mission.

As indicated in the [Press Release](#) published ahead of departure of the PSC to DRC, the recent field visit was conducted under the auspices of Burundi, standing in for Tanzania who was the chair for the month of March. It is worth noting that instead of the members of the Troika of the PSC (immediate past Chairperson, South Africa, incoming Chairperson, Uganda), who declined to stand in for Tanzania, it was Burundi that led the delegation that travelled to DRC.



Source: @AUC_PAPS

H.E Willy Nyamitwe, Burundi's PR to the AU and Head of the delegation giving press briefing

The mission took the PSC to Kinshasa as well as key areas in Goma, particularly North Kivu which continues to be majorly affected by the ongoing conflict in eastern DRC. The mission paid a courtesy call on President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi.



Source: @AUC_PAPS

President Tshisekedi during PSC field mission

Members of the PSC taking part in the mission also engaged with key national actors including the Governor of North Kivu Province as well as stakeholders from the Minister of Social and Humanitarian Affairs; the Armed Forces of DRC (FARDC); the UN Stabilization Mission in DRC (MONUSCO); the East African Community (EAC) Regional Force; the Joint Verification Mechanism and civil society organisations.



Source: @AUC_PAPS

PSC Field Visit to the DRC, 20 to 23 March 2023

Demonstrating its commitment to civilians affected by the continuous fighting in the region, the PSC also visited and engaged with internally displaced persons (IDPs) staying in Kanyaruchinya camp in Goma. The engagement was key to highlight the deteriorating humanitarian situation as well as insecurity in the region which continues to render impossible, the safe return of IDPs to their homes.



Source: @AUC_PAPS

PSC Field Visit to the DRC, 20 to 23 March 2023

While the full report of the field mission is yet to be made public, the Communiqué the PSC adopted at its 1145th meeting emphasised outcomes emerging from its various engagements during its visit. Some of these key outcomes include:

- Armed groups including the March 23 Movement (M23), the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) urged to withdraw from territories in eastern DRC, unconditionally disarm and cease hostilities.
- DRC and Rwanda called on to sustain efforts aimed at reconciliation through dialogue.
- A call made to the international community to sanction armed groups in eastern DRC to deter them from their ongoing acts of terror.
- A call made to the international community to contribute towards the fight against illicit exploration and exploitation of, and trade in mineral resources in eastern DRC.
- Attention given to the importance of addressing underlying root causes and drivers that perpetuate youth involvement in violence.
- A call for the AU Commission to engage with and support DRC in its preparations for the upcoming elections in December 2023.

Further to these critical points, the PSC also reiterated its continued support to the Luanda and Nairobi Processes and underscored the importance of harmonisation and coordination between these two approaches.

While much of the elements in the communiqué of the session on the field mission are not new and constitute restatement in a new format of earlier elements of PSC communiqués from April 2022, August 2022 and February 2023, a key new element is the one relating to the upcoming elections in the DRC.

In terms of PSC's engagement on this file, it emerges from the dynamics of the conflict and the ongoing diplomatic efforts that priority should be on, a) avoiding the risk of further escalation of the fighting with Rwanda and DRC drawn into full-fledged fighting, with all its dire consequences to regional and international peace and security and b) leveraging the Nairobi and Luanda processes, including through a focus on hate speech and incitement of violence which raises risks of mass atrocities, further inflaming regional tension. Not any less important is the effective follow up and implementation of the key decisions adopted in the PSC sessions held in August 2022 and February 2023, as these would elevate the effective engagement of the AU for adding useful impetus to the Nairobi and Luanda processes.

Both the format that the assignment of leading the delegation of the field mission took and the difficulties encountered on some issues in preparing the field mission report highlight the continuing sensitivities around the conflict in Eastern DRC. It also highlights remaining working methods issue relating to how to ensure that the field mission report accurately reflects the information availed to the mission from the various interlocutors for making it factual representation of what transpired rather than presentation of matters that are deemed palatable and politically correct.

Other PSC activities during the month

Aside from its sessions, the PSC's filed mission to the DRC constituted one of its other activities undertaken during March. It is worth noting that the PSC undertook the field mission to DRC only days apart from the field mission by the UNSC. The President of the UNSC, Mozambique one of the A3 members, extended invitation to the PSC Chairperson to join the UNSC field mission. However, the PSC Chairperson did not accept the invitation as this was neither discussed in the PSC nor timely coordinated between the two Councils. The fact that both the UNSC and PSC undertook a field mission to the same conflict

situation during the same month while an A3 member is presiding over the UNSC has put a spotlight on the lack of coordination and the resultant risk of divergent messaging undermining effective peace diplomacy by the two sides. This lack of coordination not only deprived the two Councils of leveraging effectively each other's role vis-a-vis the situation in eastern DRC it has also highlighted the need for progress in the ongoing discussion on working methods, particularly on modalities for undertaking joint field missions by the UNSC and the PSC.

Another activity conducted during the month was the consideration of the key highlights of the 2023 Africa Governance Report (AGR), which took place in Djibouti, from 10 to 13 March. This was conducted in line with the PSC's decision emerging from its meeting held on 10 February 2023, when it considered a summary of the 2023 AGR and assigned the CoE to discuss the report and revert back to it.

From 16 to 17 March, an inaugural induction training workshop was also organised for the PSC Military Staff Committee (MSC), in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The central objective of the training was to enhance institutional capacity of the MSC, as to enable it better discharge its mandate in line with Article 13(8) of the PSC Protocol. The Defence Advisors of all 15 member states of the PSC attended this training, which was facilitated by the PSC Secretariat and the Peace Support Operations Department (PSOD).

In addition to exploring the mandate, power, functions principles and rules of procedure of the PSC as well as discussing the roles of the African Standby Force (ASF) as a core pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the training presented the opportunity to reflect on some challenges and opportunities to enable the MSC more effectively discharge its mandate. One key challenge underscored in the [Summary Record](#) of the training was the absence of clarity in the roles of the MSC on the one hand and the PSOD, Chief of Staff of ASF on the other hand, over the functions of ASF and other PSOs or ad-hoc security arrangements. Another critical challenge highlighted was the lack of representation and participation of the MSC in the various field missions of the PSC. Having drawn attention to these and other gaps, the training served to articulate recommendations to address them.

While the Summary Records referred to the training as an inaugural one suggesting regularity in its occurrence, no mention was made on when the next training is planned to be held.



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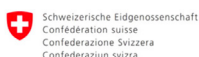
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We support the pan-African dream of peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa through research, training, strategic communications, technical advisory services, and convening and facilitation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Amani Africa wishes to express its gratitude to the Government of Switzerland, the Embassy of Ireland, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Open Society Foundations for the support in the production of this Monthly Digest.



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