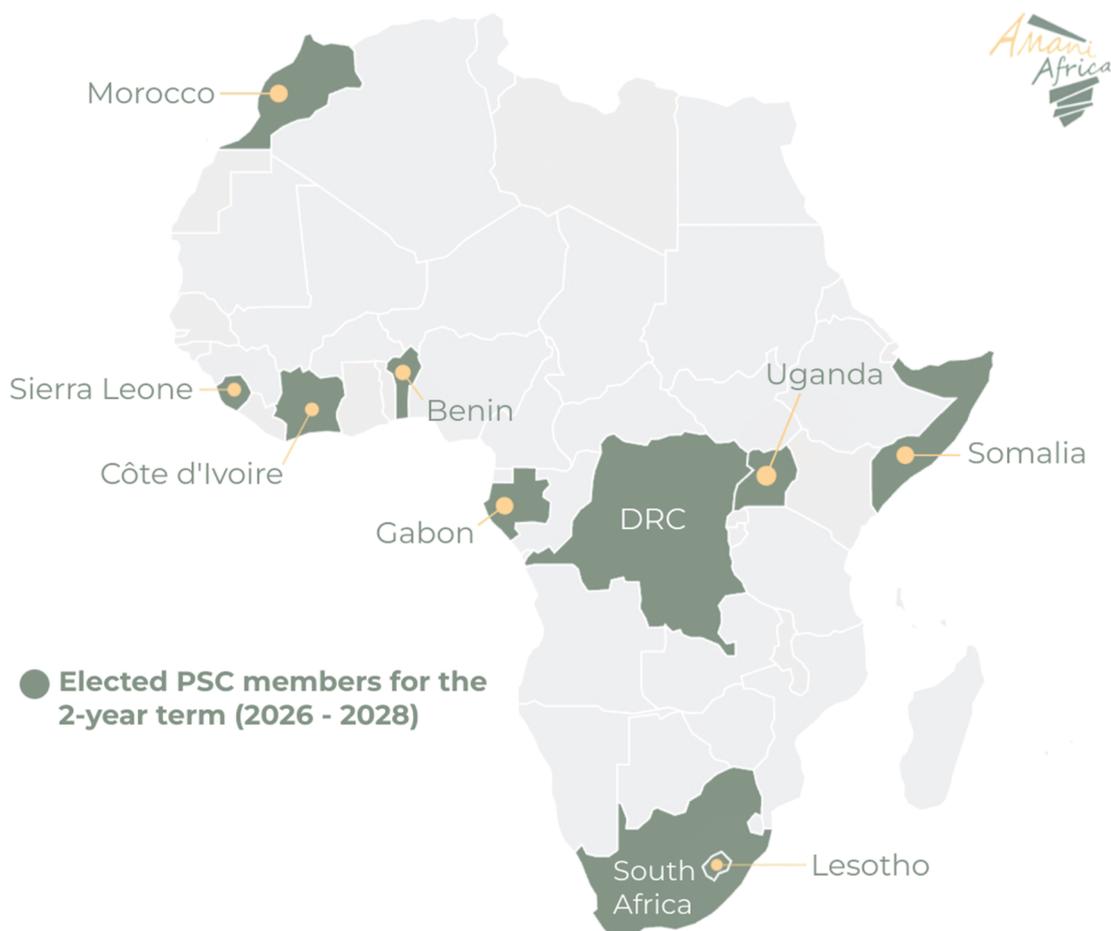


2026 ELECTION OF THE 10 MEMBERS OF THE PSC: REJUVENATION OR CONTINUING DECLINE?

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INTRODUCTION

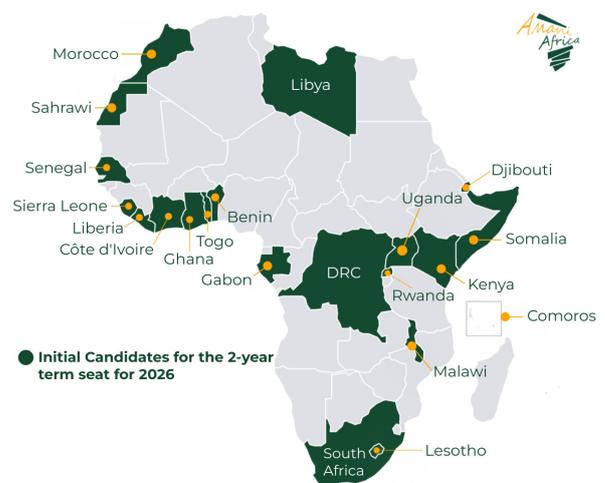
The 2026 election for the 10 members of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) was held by the Executive Council on 11 February 2026 at its 48th Ordinary session, in line with the power vested in it pursuant to Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.106 (VI) of the Sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly. The outcome of the election was endorsed by the Assembly during its 39th ordinary session on 14 and 15 February. The result of the election produced a significant change in the composition of the PSC, bringing to the PSC more than 1/3 new members, including Morocco and South Africa.

In a notable development, Somalia became the latest AU member state to be elected to the PSC for the first time, after three earlier unsuccessful attempts. Also notable was the large number of withdrawals between the closing of the submission of candidacy and the day of the election. The number of candidates shrank by nine (9) at the time of voting. As a result, there were only two AU regions (North Africa and Southern Africa) that had a list of candidates that was in excess of the number of seats available.

This policy brief provides an analysis of the conduct and outcome of the elections. It also highlights the key dynamics that transpired in the lead-up to and during the election, as well as the ways in which the new composition of membership would affect the PSC between rejuvenation and persisting decline in effectiveness and impact.

CANDIDATES: COMPETITIVE START, FOLLOWED BY A LARGE NUMBER OF DROPOUTS

Out of the five AU regions, only the Central Africa region presented the same number of candidates as the number of seats available when the list of candidates was compiled following the response from member states to the invitation from the AU to submit candidacy for the election. The list of candidates received by the deadline of 17 November 2025 from the other regions was far beyond available seats, with some of the regions having candidates twice or three times more than available seats. East, West and North Africa had number of candidates twice more than the number of seats available.¹



Map 1: PSC Candidates based on the list from the AU Office of the Legal Council

Four (4) of the candidates were current members of the PSC running for re-election. Two (2) of these were from West

¹ See Amani Africa's 'The 2026 Elections of the Ten Members of the Peace and Security Council: The Dynamics Process and Candidates,' available on <https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/The-2026-Elections-of-the-Ten-Members-of-the-Peace-and-Security-Council-The-Dynamics-Process-and-Candidates.pdf>

Africa (Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone), and the others from Central (DRC) and East Africa (Uganda). Of the candidates from the North and Southern regions, none was seeking re-election.

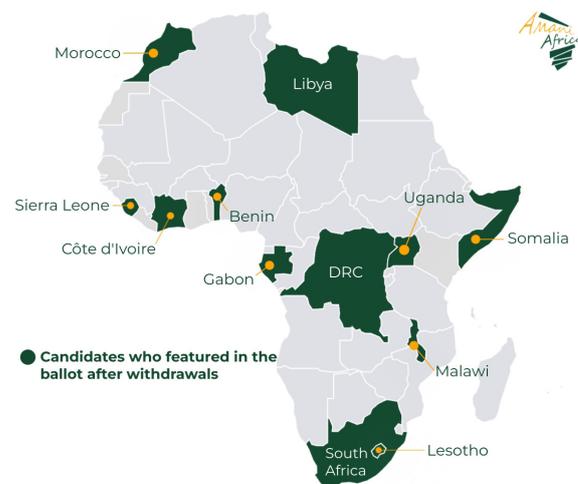
Three of the candidates in the original list (Comoros, Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and Somalia) were running for being members of the PSC for the first time.

While the list of candidates received by the Legal Counsel on the deadline of 17 November 2025 represented more than one-third of the AU membership, there was a major shift between the number of states listed as candidates and the number of states that remained candidates at the time of balloting. Thus, although the list of candidates signalled the 2026 elections to be one of the most competitive (as highlighted in the pre-election analysis), the large number of dropouts of candidates meant that the elections for all five regions did not require more than one round of voting. Candidates withdrew from all the regions with a higher number of candidates than available seats, except Southern Africa.

In the run-up to the election, at least four candidates from three regions withdrew from the race: Rwanda (East), Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (North), Comoros (East) and Senegal (West). This was followed by further dropouts from the East and West Africa regions.

For East Africa, initially, the region had six (6) candidates – Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia and Uganda. With no coordination among the members of the region and cognisant of the outcome of the February 2025 elections, Rwanda became the first country from the region

to send notification of its withdrawal. It was followed by Kenya, which withdrew its candidacy just a week before the election. Comoros announced its withdrawal when the East Africa region met on 7 February. As the election for East Africa was about to kick off, Djibouti's Foreign Affairs Minister announced his country's withdrawal in favour of Somalia. As a result, only two candidates were left at the time of balloting: Somalia and Uganda.



Map 2: Candidates who featured in the ballot after other candidates' withdrawals

In West Africa, the region initially had seven (7) candidates – Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Senegal withdrew in response to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Ministerial Meeting held on 7 February for harmonising positions on candidacy for the PSC. There was no further change to the list of candidates on the eve of the elections for the West Africa region. Further consultations of ECOWAS Ministers of Foreign Affairs just ahead of and as the elections went underway on election day produced further withdrawals. As a result, ahead of the election for the West Africa region, the ECOWAS Chairperson of the Council of Ministers, Sierra Leone, announced the

withdrawal of Ghana, Liberia and Togo. This left the region with a clean slate of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone as candidates for the three seats for the West Africa region.

North Africa initially had three (3) candidates for the one available seat for the region. SADR's withdrawal left the contestation between Libya and Morocco.

Thus, by the time of the elections, nine member states dropped their candidacy, thus reducing the number of regions with the number of candidates higher than the number of available seats to two: North and Southern Africa. For Southern Africa, despite initial discussions that were meant to pave the way for a clean slate for Lesotho and South Africa, they did not materialise. As a result, all three candidates, including Malawi, remained on the ballot.

As a result of the withdrawals highlighted above from the three regions, there were only twelve (12) candidates at the time of balloting for the ten (10) seats up for grabs. Accordingly, when the elections for the different regions were held on 11 February, the candidates from Central, East and West Africa standing for election entered the election with a clean slate.

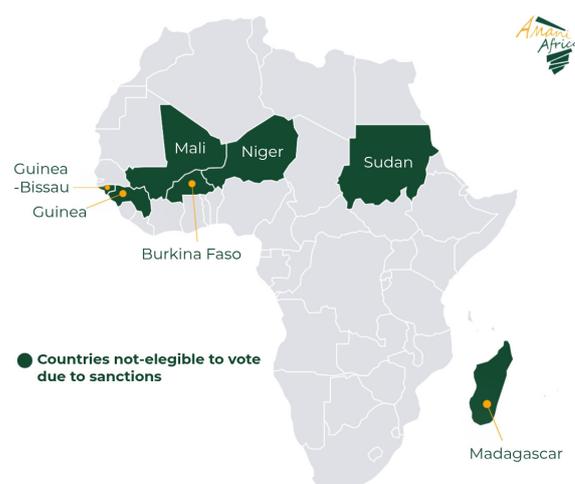
ELECTIONS CONDUCTED MANUALLY, WITH ONLY 48 MEMBERS ELIGIBLE FOR VOTING

The election of PSC members is regulated by the PSC Protocol and the 'modalities for the election of members of the Peace and Security Council'. Accordingly, the Executive Council elects PSC members by secret ballot, and candidates shall receive

a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote among member states eligible to vote pursuant to the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council.

The 2026 PSC elections were held manually. This followed technical glitches in electronic balloting experienced during the 2025 AU elections and concerns of confidence raised as a result of such glitches by member states. The deans of the five regions served as election observers.

Of the 55 AU member states, six member states that were suspended by the AU for unconstitutional changes of government (Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Niger and Sudan) and one other member state (Guinea) under comprehensive sanction for failure to pay its assessed contributions for membership in the AU, were not eligible to vote. The number of AU member states eligible for voting was accordingly forty-eight (48). As a result, the 2/3rd majority required for being elected into the PSC during the election was a minimum of 32 votes.



Map 3: Countries not eligible to vote due to sanctions

When the number of candidates submitted is equal to the seats allocated

to the region, the balloting continues until each candidate meets the required threshold for membership. In the event that the candidate is not able to get the 2/3 majority at the third balloting, then the election shall be suspended, leading to the differing of the election. This is not a common occurrence. It happened only once in February 2025 in relation to the election for the North Africa region.² In a situation where there are more candidates than the allocated seats, the candidate with fewer votes shall withdraw after three rounds, while the rest proceed to the next rounds of voting to secure the required 2/3 votes. Due to the large number of withdrawals, such a scenario did not materialise during the 2026 elections.

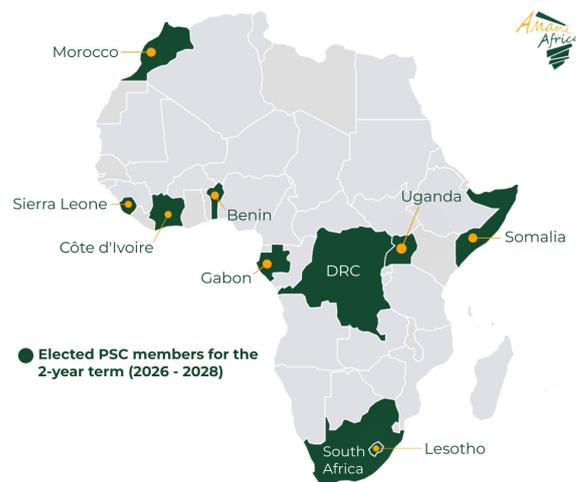
ELECTIONS THAT CONCLUDED WITH ONLY ONE ROUND OF BALLOTING

The conduct of the election followed the regional allocation of the seats of the PSC. According to the Modalities for the Election of Members of the PSC, the regional representation of the 10 members of the PSC is organised based on the five regions of the AU, with the following distribution of the seats: Central (2), East (2), North (1), South (2) and West (3). The Office of the Legal Counsel administers the elections for each of the five regions one by one in that alphabetical order.

A major consequence of the large

² Amani Arica's, 'Update on the AU elections for membership in the PSC from the North Africa Region,' Policy Brief (April 2025) available on <https://amaniafrica-et.org/update-on-the-au-elections-for-membership-in-the-psc-for-the-northern-region-and-the-two-remaining-au-commission-portfolios/>

number of withdrawals was the fact that at the time of the holding of the elections, there were only twelve (12) candidates for the ten (10) two-year term seats. With the exception of North and Southern Africa regions having one more candidate in excess of the available seats, for the candidates from the other three regions, the issue was about the number of votes they received, which signals the relative size of support they have in the AU.



Map 4: PSC Members elected for the 2-year term

The first election, following the English alphabetical order, was for the two seats for the Central Africa Region. DRC and Gabon were the two candidates standing for election on a clean slate. Both candidates garnered 44 votes each, ending up acquiring the required number of the two-thirds majority vote in the very first round of balloting. Following its election to the Council, this will be the second time the DRC serves in the PSC, having first been elected in 2024. Gabon, on the other hand, which was suspended by the PSC for a military coup and reinstated to the Union following the holding of elections, will join the PSC after a six-year absence. It was one of the first members of the PSC from the central region and has served the Council previously for a total of eight years. It first maintained its three-year

term for two rounds, from March 2004 to April 2010. It was absent from the PSC until its return in 2018 after 10 years, where it served for a two-year term, from April 2018 to April 2020.

In the next election for East Africa, after Rwanda, Kenya, Comoros and Djibouti were removed from the list of candidates, the voting was for Somalia and Uganda to get the required two-thirds majority vote (for Somalia) to be elected for the first time, and (for Uganda) to renew its membership to the Council, respectively. The first round of voting saw Somalia getting 46 votes, while Uganda got 45 votes. This first round led to the delivery of the required two-thirds majority for both candidates. The election of Somalia for the first time means that the East African region is the only region which will have a member state that has never served in the Council before. Conversely, Uganda has been previously elected six times and served in the PSC for a total of 13 years. This was the third consecutive time that Uganda was on the ballot for the two-year term seat.

Next in the sequence was the election for the North Africa region. The voting for the one position, between Libya and Morocco, saw the first round Morocco getting 34 votes while Libya got 12 votes, with 2 abstentions. After the second round, Morocco garnered the required two-thirds majority votes, narrowing the chances of Libya getting the North Africa region seat. Morocco, which joined the AU in 2017, on its part has served the Council previously for a total of 5 years, having finished its 3-year mandate in March 2025. It will return to the Council after one year of absence.

For the Southern Africa region, the first round of balloting saw Lesotho garnering 36 votes, South Africa 35 and Malawi 20. Lesotho has previously served in the Council for a total of 7 years, and it returns to the PSC after 4 years of absence. South Africa, on the other hand, has previously served the Council for 11 years, concluding its recent mandate in 2024 after serving a two-year term.

The last segment of the election was for the three seats for the West Africa region. In this election, the voting saw the election of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone with 42, 39 and 41 votes respectively. The latter two, whose mandate is renewed, will be joined by Benin for the two-year term in the PSC. Benin is returning to the PSC after 4 years of absence.

TABLE 1: Outgoing Members of the PSC

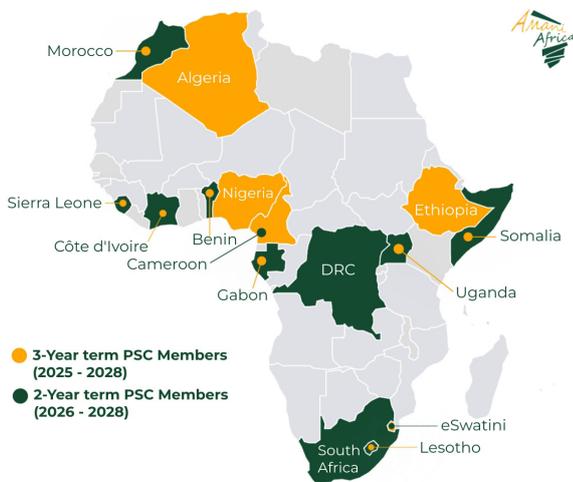
Region	Country	Status
Central Africa	DRC	Re-elected
Central Africa	Equatorial Guinea	—
East Africa	Tanzania	—
East Africa	Uganda	Re-elected
Northern Africa	Egypt	—
Southern Africa	Angola	—
Southern Africa	Botswana	—
West Africa	Côte d'Ivoire	Re-elected
West Africa	The Gambia	—
West Africa	Sierra Leone	Re-elected

THE NEW MEMBERSHIP OF THE PSC: REJUVENATION OR CONTINUING DECLINE?

The new composition of the PSC shows that four of the ten members of the newly reconstituted PSC that will start on 1 April 2026 are re-elected members of the PSC. The re-election of DRC, Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone to the PSC,

together with the five three-year term members of the PSC, means that there will be more continuity than change in the PSC.

Six are newly elected members. Of these, Somalia never served in the PSC. Somalia ran for a three-year term seat in the PSC during the February 2025³ and the February 2022⁴ elections of the PSC, and for the two-year term seats during the February 2020 elections of the PSC.



Map 5: New Composition of the PSC as of 1 April 2026

While Somalia's ascent to PSC membership would mean that there will be a PSC member that is serving in the UN Security Council, it may reinforce the influence that Somalia exerted on the AU's engagement in and decision-making

³ See Amani Africa's, 'The 2025 Elections of the African Union Peace and Security Council: The Process, Candidates and Dynamics,' available on <https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/The-2025-Elections-of-the-African-Union-Peace-and-Security-Council-The-Process-Candidates-and-Dynamics.pdf>

⁴ See Amani Africa's, 'The 2022 PSC Election of the PSC: Overview of the process and list of candidates,' Policy Brief, available on <https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-PSC-elections-overview-of-the-process-and-list-of-candidates.pdf>

on the situation in Somalia and the AU Mission, AUSSOM. As the contestation that arose following Somalia's rejection of the inclusion of Somalia and AMISOM into the agenda of the annual consultative meeting between the PSC and the UNSC in 2025 highlighted, this can undermine principled and dispassionate PSC engagement on this agenda.

It is anticipated that the return of the two tier 1 contributors to the AU regular budget, namely Morocco and South Africa, will inject new dynamics into the PSC. It will do so in different ways. In terms of specific conflict situations, South Africa is expected to play a more active role in how the PSC engages the situations in South Sudan and Eastern DRC, given its role as Chairperson of the Committee of Five (C5) on South Sudan and its engagement in the DRC.

While the balance in numerical terms is in favour of continuity rather than change in the dynamics in the PSC, with nine out of the 15 PSC members remaining the same, the arrival of six new members representing more than 1/3 of the PSC membership will not be without significant consequences. It is expected to lead to increased attention to some issues and agenda items of the PSC. At the same time, the new composition may mean that the work of the PSC and the treatment of some agenda items may fall victim to the faultlines in the Council. However, there is no indication to suggest that how the PSC deals with the conflict situations on the continent would fundamentally change. This entails the persistence of the decline in PSC's agency and effectiveness.

However, rather than the composition of the PSC, what would be consequential

in terms of the effectiveness of the PSC is what the PSC does in a) addressing non-implementation of its decisions and b) its resolve to invest its diplomatic and institutional resources exclusively to the resolution of conflicts on its agenda, by prioritising and intensifying political and diplomatic efforts.

Among the measures that Amani Africa's review of the PSC for 2025⁵ recommended that are worthy of serious consideration, two stand out. First, 'the agenda setting of the PSC and the policy deliberation of the PSC should prioritise and deploy the limited diplomatic institutional resources exclusively for addressing existing conflicts and preventing the eruption of new ones.' Second, building on the Amani Africa Annual Review's proposal for addressing the peace and security deterioration with emergency measures under a state of emergency, 'the PSC should designate as **a standing agenda** the most critical conflict situations (Sudan, South Sudan, the Sahel and DRC) for regular engagement at least, on a quarterly if not on a monthly basis.' In the interest of optimising its very finite resources and ensuring sustained engagement on addressing these priority conflict situations with resolve and impact, the PSC should also adopt a moratorium on having thematic issues on its agenda.

⁵ See Amani Africa's 'The 2025 Review of the Peace and Security Council: African Union Floating Adrift as a New Era of Insecurity Entrenches in Africa, and Anarchy is Loosed upon the World' available on <https://amaniafrica-et.org/african-union-floating-adrift-as-a-new-era-of-insecurity-entrenches-in-africa-anarchy-is-loosed-upon-the-world-the-2025-review-of-the-peace-and-security-council/>



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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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