



## Concept Note

### **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the African Union Peace and Security Council: Time for re-positioning the AU for the changing peace and security and global context**

On the occasion of the official launch of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) on Africa Day in 2004, African Heads of State and Government proclaimed that the PSC's inauguration 'marks an historic watershed in Africa's progress towards resolving its conflicts and the building of a durable peace and security order.' As the PSC marks 20 years next month since the writing of these words promising *pax Africana*, one cannot deny how the PSC in its two decades of existence have sought to give practical expression to 'the progress towards resolving conflicts and building durable peace and security order'.

In response to conflicts and crises across the continent, the PSC has played a critical role, as documented in the [PSC Handbook](#), through the use of various tools including the authorisation of peace support operations, the undertaking of field visits, the deployment of diplomatic initiatives and mediation, the institution of sanctions to respond to the occurrence of unconstitutional changes of government (UCG) and the use of preventive diplomacy, in addition to the dedication of meetings to closely follow-up and remain actively engaged on conflicts and crisis situations. The PSC has also institutionalised and regularised the convening of sessions on a number of thematic issues covering emerging issues such as cybersecurity and climate change and those catering for the role of specific category of people such as women, peace and security (WPS), youth, peace and security (YPS) and children affected by armed conflicts (CAAC).

Chief among the major consequences of these efforts of the PSC, beyond contributing to maintenance of peace and security in Africa, is the emergence of the PSC as the leading continental peace and security actor that states, regional organizations and other international actors look up to. Through its various peace and security efforts, the PSC has come to exert significant influence on national political and peace and security situation of states, intra-African international relations and AU's position in global affairs including its relationship with multilateral bodies such as the UN Security Council.

Today, the PSC finds itself in a time that is completely different from the hopeful time of its establishment and its effective activation during the decade and half since its launch in 2004. Not only that the peace and security situation of the continent has become increasingly worrisome, but also PSC's standing and role continues to face challenges. In his [opening address to the 37<sup>th</sup> AU summit](#) held last February, AU Commission Chairperson rang the alarm bell that 'the recurring decisions of the PSC, ignored and violated, have become unimportant, without impact.' Today the PSC also operates in a less hospitable and supportive international environment than at any time of its launch.



Unlike the early 2000s that was still largely characterised by what Boutros Boutros Ghali's 1992 *An Agenda for Peace* called 'the manifest desire of the membership [of the Security Council] to work together (as) a new source of strength in our common endeavor,' today according to the [New Agenda for Peace](#) 'there is greater competition among major powers and a loss of trust between the global North and South.' The international order is characterised by the paralysis of the UNSC and heightening geopolitical tensions that are exacerbating political instability and conflicts, including on the African Continent. In this respect as well noting that 'the incredible complexity of the world is far from helping matters', Chairperson Faki was straightforward in noting that '[c]onflict, violence and the decline of great principles have, unfortunately, taken over humility, peace and the nobility of the founding values of human civilisation.' As a result, '[n]ot only have social inequalities widened, injustices have multiplied, but hegemony and the absurd desire to resolve our differences by brutal and vain force prevail publicly before the eyes of all.'

The foregoing suggest that both the world and Africa are at an inflection point. As Chairperson Faki's address to the 37<sup>th</sup> AU summit and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's New Agenda for Peace highlight, the prevailing conditions on the continent and globally seem to demand the re-positioning of the AU and its PSC. What are the features of the threat environment of today? What are the major shifts in the political, socio-economic and environmental context of the world that impinge on Africa's peace and security and its place in the world? What are the implications of these features of the threat environment and the changes in the global context for the assumptions and contextual considerations on which the PSC is premised? What kind of reform or changes do these features of the threat environment and the changes in the global context require for re-positioning the AU and its PSC to ensure their effective functioning?

It is against the background of the foregoing and to offer a shared forum for joint and collective reflections on these and other related issues that Amani Africa, jointly with the PSC Chairperson for the month of April, the Gambia and the PSC Secretariat convene this high-level policy dialogue forum as part of the season of reflection on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the PSC. Scheduled to take place on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa, this policy forum will bring together members of the African Union and the broader multilateral policy community. The policy forum aims to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the PSC by taking stock of the progress it has made in the course of 20 years while providing the opportunity to reflect on:

- What has worked in the past and should be consolidated or enhanced? What lessons and best practices can be drawn from the 20 years' journey of the PSC?
- What are the critical challenges and gaps that currently confront the PSC?
- What needs to be done to enhance support for and collaboration with the PSC for realizing the objectives and principles of the PSC protocol and the Constitutive Act of the AU?
- How should the PSC re-position itself in the face of changing and increasingly challenging peace and security dynamics? What changes are needed to enable the AU and its PSC to enhance its role in global affairs in the context of the reform of the multilateral system?