



Peace & Security Council Report

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Election of new members: is the PSC at a crossroads?

The African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will elect 10 new members for a two-year term in February 2020. The stakes are high, given that this represents two-thirds of the membership of the 15-member body. This could reconfigure the PSC in a way that might have far-reaching implications for its decisions over the next two years.

2020 is also, in principle, the deadline for achieving one of the AU's Agenda 2063 flagship programmes: Silencing the Guns. The PSC should ideally have played a critical role in the implementation of the Master Roadmap for Silencing the Guns in Africa, which was drawn up in 2016.

Knowing that the 2020 deadline will not be met and that the continent will probably have to review the roadmap, the next two years will be pivotal in breathing new life into the initiative. The PSC's role in this regard will be crucial.

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In addition, given the current state of insecurity and the various, often-protracted threats and crises facing the continent, the PSC, as the main pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture, will be called upon to provide answers to these challenges.

PSC's relevance at stake

The PSC is arguably at a crossroads because it has to show tangible impact on improving peace and security on the continent, particularly with regard to Silencing the Guns, or it risks becoming irrelevant.

The PSC's handling of Sudan's situation this year indicates that it does have the potential to be responsive and act as the key actor in conflict prevention on the continent.

The PSC will have to demonstrate innovation and efficacy in contending with the deadly and expanding terrorist menace in the Sahelo-Saharan region and elsewhere on the continent, climate-induced conflicts, instability caused and/or exacerbated by governance deficits, and the protracted conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan, Libya and the Central African Republic, to name a few.

Continuing and outgoing PSC members in 2020

Five PSC members elected in 2019 for a three-year term will remain on the council, namely Nigeria, Kenya, Burundi, Lesotho and Algeria. Of these,

Current PSC Chairperson

His Excellency Francisco Josa Da Cruz, ambassador to Ethiopia and permanent representative of Angola to the African Union.

PSC members

Angola, Djibouti, Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Togo, Lesotho, Zimbabwe

Algeria, Nigeria, Lesotho and Kenya were inaugurating members of the PSC in 2004. Algeria and Nigeria have since served on the council for three two-year and two three-year terms and one two-year and four three-year terms, respectively.

The 10 outgoing members are Equatorial Guinea and Gabon for the Central African region; Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo for West Africa; Djibouti and Rwanda for East Africa; Angola and Zimbabwe for Southern Africa; and Morocco for North Africa.

The recurring membership of some countries seems to indicate the importance that many AU member states attach to the council

Of the outgoing members, only Morocco and Liberia were serving on the PSC for the first time. Morocco is a first-time member of the PSC because it only recently re-joined the AU after leaving the Organization of African Unity in 1984 over differences on Western Sahara. Liberia's absence from the PSC could be attributed to its priorities being internal, particularly rebuilding the country from the ashes of war.

Overall, the recurring membership of some countries on the PSC seems to indicate the importance – strategic and otherwise – that many AU member states attach to the council. This is confirmed by how competitive the process to get on the PSC has become over recent years.

More competitive process to join the PSC

Discussions and negotiations over new PSC members typically begin in the months preceding the January/February AU summit, where new members are elected and confirmed. This process takes place in each of the five regions and varies from one region to another.

Historically, the selection would take place through a negotiated and consensual arrangement inside each region before candidates would officially submit their candidacy to the AU's Legal Counsel Office for votes by the AU Executive Council and validation by the Assembly of Heads of States and Government at the ordinary summit. Often the nominations for the regions were uncontested.

What appears to be the trend now is that the selection process within regions has become more competitive and negotiations tougher. This is, for instance, evidenced by that fact that as of late November 2019 it still was not clear which countries were contesting for seats in each region.

Another complicating factor for 'negotiated memberships' is the fact that the five AU regions used for the PSC elections do not correspond to the more formal yet often overlapping eight regional economic communities and mechanisms recognised by the AU. The five regions have had to create their own forums and mechanisms to decide on PSC memberships.

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NEW PSC MEMBERS TO
BE ELECTED

A possible silver lining is that members that are elected by the Executive Council and not part of a negotiated arrangement within a region might be more independent and not beholden to the consensus of that region.

Criteria for membership

One big challenge the PSC continues to grapple with has to do with taking into account the criteria for AU members to contest for a seat on the council, as set out in the PSC Protocol.

These include contributing to the promotion and maintenance of peace and security in Africa; participating in conflict resolution, peacemaking and peacebuilding at regional and continental levels; showing the willing and ability to take up responsibility for regional and continental conflict resolution initiatives; contributing to the Peace Fund and/or Special Fund; respecting constitutional governance, the rule of law and human rights; and abiding by the AU's financial obligations.

One big challenge the PSC continues to grapple with has to do with the criteria for AU members to contest for a seat on the council

The principle underpinning these criteria is that a country will be less likely to perform as a PSC member if it is experiencing its own security and governance challenges and is not abiding by the shared values of the AU. These are outlined in instruments such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

Ultimately, who sits on the PSC for the next two years will determine in which direction the continent will move in term of 'silencing the guns' beyond 2020 and creating a more peaceful and prosperous Africa, as envisioned by the AU.

Table 1: Africa's five regions represented on the PSC

	Continuing members	Outgoing 2020
West Africa	Nigeria	Togo
		Sierra Leone
		Liberia
East Africa	Kenya	Djibouti
		Rwanda
Central Africa	Burundi	Gabon
		Equatorial Guinea
Southern Africa	Lesotho	Zimbabwe
		Angola
North Africa	Algeria	Morocco

Silencing
the Guns
THE AU THEME FOR 2020

The PSC should do more to respond to conflicts in 2020

Looking back at 2019, it is clear that the PSC discussed and responded to a number of conflicts in Africa over the course of the year. These include Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Libya and the Central African Republic (CAR). The PSC also discussed peace and security priorities in specific regions such as the Sahel and threats such as climate change, foreign military presence, and terrorist networks in Africa.

The PSC demonstrated its potential in resolving some conflicts through mediation efforts, as witnessed in Sudan. However, by and large, the PSC remained silent on key sensitive issues such as the conflict in northern Cameroon, ethnic-based clashes in Ethiopia and the situation in northern Mozambique.

Rather than being proactive in undertaking early response measures, the council allowed situations to escalate, such as the protests in Sudan, before addressing them. The lack of effective and timely responses to potential and actual conflicts violates the trust that the AU Assembly and African citizens place in the council.

'Silencing the Guns' an opportunity to take stock

The AU theme of the year for 2020, 'Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development', presents an opportunity for the PSC to undertake an internal review and deliberate on the successes and challenges in preventing and responding to conflicts.

In this regard, the PSC should review to what extent it has made use of early warning information from the AU Continental Early Warning System, one of the key components of the African Peace and Security Architecture, and from regional economic communities (RECs), in responding to disputes in time.

Most importantly, the PSC should address the lack of political commitment from member states to use this early warning information and put emerging conflicts on the council's agenda.

Responding to intra-state conflicts

As per the PSC's mandate to resolve conflicts and undertake peacebuilding in Africa, the council discussed major protracted intra-state conflicts. The discussions focused on situational updates and the progress made in the implementation of political

agreements, reviews of the AU's responsibilities as guarantor of a number of these agreements, and the technical support in these countries.

The PSC also reviewed the achievements of AU peace support operations in the CAR and Central Africa (MISAC), and the mandate and gradual drawdown of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and the United Nations – African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), as well as resource mobilisation for future AU-led missions.

Despite major initiatives, the escalating 'anglophone' crisis in Cameroon has been overlooked by the PSC since the armed insurrection broke out in 2017.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) discussed the crisis informally in May 2019, because African non-permanent members of the UNSC – South Africa and Equatorial Guinea – voted against attempts to bring the anglophone crisis up for formal discussion at the UNSC.

As per its mandate to resolve conflicts and undertake peacebuilding, the council discussed protracted intra-state conflicts

Although the AU Commission (AUC) chairperson visited Cameroon in late November 2019, the inability of the 15 PSC members to discuss the deteriorating situation in the country despite obvious early warning signs and reports from the AU's Early Warning Unit, for instance, raises questions about the extent to which the PSC makes use of the AU's own structures for conflict prevention. The Central African states of Burundi, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea serve on the PSC, with the latter serving on both the PSC and the UNSC.

The inability of RECs in such regions to robustly engage on a situation such as that in Cameroon also signals shortcomings in the use of the principle of subsidiarity,

which places the initial responsibility of addressing conflicts on RECs. The central African REC, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), has never discussed Cameroon, nor did it refer the situation to the PSC.

Inter-state disputes

During its discussions in March 2019 on the nexus between maritime security, safety and development of a sustainable Blue Economy in Africa, the PSC encouraged member states to find peaceful solutions to the use of shared water bodies and the demarcation of their borders.

It also 'encouraged Member States to prioritize the use of bilateral and regional mechanisms in resolving maritime disputes and challenges within the context of African solutions to African problems'. The council expanded the domain of the Blue Economy to include inland water bodies such as rivers, dams and lakes.

Accordingly, in September the PSC discussed the dispute between Kenya and Somalia over their maritime boundary. The PSC asked the AUC chairperson to regularly report on the situation and appoint a special envoy, if necessary, to mediate between the two countries.

In September the PSC discussed the dispute between Kenya and Somalia over their maritime boundary

In the same vein, the PSC could have discussed the tension between Ethiopia and Egypt over the use of Nile waters. However, the United States ended up mediating between the two countries, which are yet to resolve their dispute.

It would seem that the timing of PSC discussions tends to undermine its contribution in addressing inter-state disputes. The PSC discussed the dispute between Kenya and Somalia after Kenya, a PSC member, had asked the PSC to do so. However, the case had already been referred to the International Court of Justice, and thus the PSC had little to contribute in resolving the conflict.

Similarly, the PSC discussed the tension between Rwanda and Uganda in August, to applaud the signing

of a Memorandum of Understanding by the two countries, which had been facilitated by Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Congo (as chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region).

Thus, while the PSC ignored some inter-state tensions, those it did choose to discuss in 2019 were either already being addressed or had been resolved by a different actor.

Thematic discussions

In addition to specific conflicts, the PSC had thematic discussions on issues such as protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, sexual violence in armed conflicts, elections, foreign military presence in Africa, the Common African Defence and Security Policy, climate change, maritime security and the Blue Economy, cybersecurity, popular uprisings and organised transnational crime.

Thematic discussions allow the PSC to focus on transnational threats. Such discussions also help to remind member states of the need to sign, ratify and domesticate legal instruments on these issues.

Yet while thematic discussions provide an overview of threats and the consequences of issues under discussion, there is no reference to specific countries where these issues are prevalent and should be addressed. These meetings also lack concrete and action-oriented decisions and recommendations that must be taken up by specific member states or other actors that can be held accountable for implementation and follow-up.

Election disputes

For the PSC and the AU the year kicked off with a major challenge, given the disagreements between the AU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) over the election results in the DRC. In the end, SADC prevailed and Etienne Tshisekedi was confirmed as president, but the issue highlighted the shortcomings in the relationship between RECs and the AU in dealing with conflict, especially related to electoral processes.

As such, in August the PSC discussed elections in Africa held from January to December 2019, based on the report from the AUC chairperson. It also specifically discussed upcoming elections in the CAR, Somalia and

Guinea-Bissau. The council highlighted potential risks and urged actors to ensure elections were free, fair, credible and peaceful. It also warned that it would take punitive measures, including sanctions, against those who obstructed peaceful elections in CAR.

In addition to the CAR, Somalia and Guinea-Bissau, other member states are also expected to organise elections at the end of 2019 and in 2020, e.g. Algeria, Togo, Burundi, Ethiopia, Guinea, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, where elections are expected to be highly contested, with a risk of election-related violence. The PSC is yet to discuss potential responses, including in countries that will organise elections as early as January–March 2020, such as Guinea and Cameroon.

Protests and unconstitutional change of government

In 2019 the PSC addressed one attempted coup d'état in Gabon in January and a successful coup d'état in Sudan in April, which followed protests that lasted for months.

After designating the coup in Sudan an unconstitutional change of government, the PSC in June suspended the country from all AU activities. Since then the PSC has discussed Sudan nine times. The council also appointed a special envoy who engaged stakeholders alongside other partners, and successfully mediated the transition to a civilian government. Once this was achieved the PSC reinstated Sudan and directed the AUC chairperson to 'issue a new mandate on Sudan peace negotiations'.

Meanwhile in Algeria, months-long protests led to the overthrow of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, in a similar manner to that of Omar al-Bashir in Sudan. The only difference was that the military forced Bouteflika to hand in his resignation rather than announcing a takeover, as the military did in Sudan.

However, the PSC did not designate the ouster of Bouteflika as an unconstitutional change of government. Nor has it discussed the continued public protests, which have the potential to significantly destabilise the country.

The PSC has also ignored protests that could escalate and even lead to unconstitutional changes of government in Guinea, Togo, Burundi, Egypt and Uganda. The protests are all related to incumbents amending the constitution in a bid to extend term limits and/or expand their powers, and run for re-election.

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance states that 'illegal means of accessing or maintaining power constitute an unconstitutional change of government and shall draw appropriate sanctions by the Union'. The illegal means include 'the use of any amendment or revision of the constitution or legal instruments, which is an infringement on the principles of democratic change of government'.

The PSC did not designate the ouster of Bouteflika as an unconstitutional change of government

Yet the PSC has not discussed instances of constitutional amendments that might constitute an unconstitutional change of government and that have led to protests that could give rise to military coups, as witnessed in Sudan and elsewhere.

PSC response in 2020

The peace and security situation in Africa in 2020 might not change much. The PSC is therefore going to have to deal with the same or similar issues. If the trend in discussions and decisions in 2019 is anything to go by, the council will need major changes in the responses of member states regarding its role and their sovereignty.

At the moment, when the PSC tables potential and actual conflicts for deliberation, it is perceived as a direct attack on the sovereignty of a country, or an attempt to undermine the ability of RECs to respond to conflicts. What is needed is a major shift in perception of what it means to table certain issues and countries for discussion at the PSC. Clearly, the current situation results in self-censorship of PSC members, whereby certain issues and countries are not put on the PSC agenda for discussion. Following the 2015 reversal by the heads of state of a PSC decision on Burundi, such a change is necessary to enable the PSC to operate within its mandate in tabling inter- and intra-state conflicts for discussion.

The PSC should also focus on better understanding of conflict situations through regular visits and collaboration with experts within the AU Peace and Security Department and independent think tanks and civil society organisations. This will help the AU in developing rapid and appropriate interventions that respond to the security needs of Africans.

How to rationalise Africa's many partnerships?

The scramble to join the long list of Africa's partners continues. In October this year Russia became the latest partner when President Vladimir Putin hosted over 40 heads of state or government at the first Russia–Africa summit at Sochi, the Black Sea resort.

The AU recognises nine partnerships – with the League of Arab States; the European Union (EU); South America; India; South Korea; Turkey; China (through the Forum for China–Africa Cooperation [FOCAC]); the United States (US); and Japan (through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development [TICAD]). Not mentioned officially by AU ministers at a meeting on this issue earlier this year, but clearly difficult to ignore, are France, which has been holding summits with Africa since 1973 and will hold its next one in June next year in Bordeaux, and now Russia.

In 2017 Israel almost joined the club with an inaugural summit in Togo before Togo 'postponed' at the last moment because of continental pressure.

Partnerships unfit for purpose

The AU has long felt that the continent's partnerships have become unfit for purpose; they are unwieldy, too numerous, often redundant and mostly geared more towards the interests of the partners rather than Africa's.

The AU left the door open for all leaders to attend summits such as FOCAC and TICAD

In addition, many in the AU feel that it is undignified for all 54 or 55 of the continent's leaders to be 'summoned' to Beijing, Tokyo, Istanbul, Seoul or wherever to meet just one foreign leader. Diplomats recall that the late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi refused to attend TICAD and FOCAC for this reason.

As far back as 2006 in The Gambia, the AU adopted the Banjul formula, whereby the AU itself would choose 15 African leaders, including the heads of the continent's 5 regions, to attend such summits.

But the AU left the door open for all leaders to attend summits such as FOCAC and TICAD. In part because

of this inconsistency – and the fact that the AU cannot impose its directives on sovereign states when it is not the one organising the summits – the Banjul formula has been widely ignored. India, for instance, first respected the formula but then abandoned it in 2015.

Moratorium on further summits

The AU recently placed a moratorium on further summits organised by the AU Commission (AUC), after requests from countries like Vietnam and Australia, until the AU had reviewed the entire nature of its partnerships.

However, Russia went ahead and organised the Sochi summit anyway, working with the current AU chair, Egypt – a close ally – rather than the AUC. And it certainly ignored the Banjul formula, inviting all heads of state except, reportedly, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic – an exclusion that the AUC would not have allowed.

Meanwhile, efforts to review and rationalise Africa's partnerships continue. In December 2017 a conference in Harare established the African Union Partnerships Coordination and Interactive Platform (AU-PCIP).

Dr Levi Uche Makuende, who heads the platform, said at the AU-PCIP's second annual conference in Ghana in November 2018 that 'the cooperation between Africa and its partners has mainly been a donor-recipient driven relationship that is skewed in favor of the donors'. In future the AU wanted strategic partnerships based on 'equality, accountability, mutual respect, efficiency, ownership and win-win cooperation'.

This would help 'promote economic transformation of the continent through robust industrialization; promote resilient health systems and ... promote social stability within the continent'.

He went on to say that, '[t]o achieve all these, we need to speak with one voice and mobilize collective thoughts to ensure focus and avoid duplication and overlap'. Africa should streamline its partnerships, engaging with fewer

to achieve more. It should engage with its partners based on their 'core competences', rather than the present practice of handing them a 'bucket list of wishes ... without any focus on priority areas'.

Principles of dignity and respect

This effort to rationalise partnerships has since become part of the AU reforms. At the 32nd AU summit in Addis Ababa in February this year, the AU Executive Council echoed Makuende's sentiments and decided to review all 'strategic partnerships' and draw up guidelines on how the continent should engage with them. This would ensure 'Africa spoke with one voice' and that that voice expressed the real needs of the continent.

AU ministers stressed in their draft decision that 'the principles of dignity and respect should guide the participation of AU member states in partnership meetings'.

Meanwhile, the AUC proposed, in what appears to have been a revival and reiteration of the Banjul formula, that in future Africa be represented at partnership meetings not by all national leaders but by the AU Troika – the current, past and incoming chairpersons of the AU – the chairpersons of the regional economic communities (RECs) and the chairperson of the NEPAD Agency.

Institutionally, the AU–EU 'continent-to-continent' partnership, which held its first summit in Cairo in 2000, is the most substantial of all of Africa's partnerships, in the AU's view. At this stage it is also the only partnership where AUC is an integral part of the planning and agenda setting.

Maximum benefit

The AU's move to reshape Africa's relations with its partners is motivated essentially by a sense that the continent is not deriving maximum benefit from these relationships. That is, in part, because many of these partnerships and summits are not directed by the AU itself and so, at least in the AUC's view, do not serve the interests of the continent as a whole.

Even in the case of the AU–EU partnership, despite its being the most structured and most directed from Addis Ababa, it has been said the 2017 summit in Abidjan was dominated by the EU's concerns about irregular migration from Africa rather than any African interests.

More broadly, it is often said that the increasing number of partnerships is driven mostly by competition among external powers for Africa's natural resources, growing market and votes in international bodies.

It may yet prove overly ambitious for the AUC to try to coordinate and rationalise relations with all these partners. The difficulties in trying to do so were illustrated by the negotiations for a future relationship with the EU after the Cotonou Agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries expires next year.

African countries first agreed, in July 2018, to allow the AUC to negotiate the new post-Cotonou agreement. The AUC proposed that Africa negotiate its own separate agreement with the EU, as the ACP framework had become obsolete and in any case excluded North Africa. This was also the preference of some EU members.

AU ministers stressed that the principles of dignity and respect should guide the participation of member states

However, divisions then emerged among AU member states. AUC chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat announced at the AU summit in February this year that an agreement had been reached on a two-track approach. The existing ACP–EU framework would remain in place, in parallel with a separate AU–EU framework, building on the existing Africa–EU partnership, including the AU–EU summit of November 2017 in Abidjan.

Far-reaching implications

The AU ministers committee working on the review of Africa's partnerships has not yet completed its work, though Makuende told the PSC Report that it would do so in time to report to the next AU summit in February next year. As construed by Makuende, the rationalising of partnerships is mainly about improving these partners' contribution to Africa's socio-economic development.

Yet the review will inevitably have far-reaching political implications. If the France–Africa partnership, for example, does not receive the official blessing of the AUC in the review process, that could lead to defiance and embarrassment for the AU. It is difficult to see how such a move would deter either Paris from holding future summits or its many African friends from attending them.

The AU's Youth, Peace and Security agenda: one year on

On 15 November the PSC held its second Open Session on Youth, Peace and Security. During the session, the first African youth ambassadors for peace were presented to the PSC. The role of the peace ambassadors – one from each of Africa's five regions – is, among others, to advocate and promote active and meaningful participation of young people at all levels of policy formulation, implementation and monitoring of peace and security decisions and agreements.

They are also supposed to facilitate coordination between youth and relevant stakeholders when it comes to the planning and evaluation of interventions to promote peace and security.

The progress made on recommendations from last year's PSC open session, in November 2018, was also presented to PSC members. This includes two PSC-mandated documents: the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security and the Study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth towards Peace and Security in Africa. The two documents still await adoption by the PSC.

While the convening of an annual PSC session on Youth, Peace and Security signals the political will of member states to enhance the role of the youth in peace and security, much more can be done. Notably, the PSC should make sure the momentum is sustained and that it facilitates the participation of youth in peace and security issues in the months leading up to November 2020, the next Africa Youth Month.

It is also important that the youth ambassadors take their message to their various regions. Synergy between the AU and regional economic communities (RECs) and regional mechanisms (RMs) is crucial in this regard.

How to effectively include the youth?

For over a decade the AU has rolled out several strategies to promote youth inclusion and participation in governance, peace and security on the continent. This is in response to accusations of exclusion by young people, who form up to 65% of Africa's population.

The Africa Youth Charter, adopted in 2006, provides a policy framework for the development of national programmes and strategic plans for youth empowerment by AU member states, civil society and international partners.

The charter encourages the participation of youth in peace and security processes.

Notably, Article 17 of the charter calls for member state action in ensuring inclusion and fostering participation of youth in the pursuit of peace and security. This article resonates with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. The resolution recognises that young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. In addition, UNSCR 2419 looks at increasing the role of youth in negotiating and implementing peace agreements.

Youth for Peace Africa

As part of the AU's efforts to promote its flagship project – Silencing the Guns by 2020 – the AU's Peace and Security Department launched the Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa programme in September 2018.

It was clear that in order for progress to be made on the AU's youth, peace and security agenda, unity among PSC members is required

Y4P Africa has arguably shown good progress in its first year of existence. Among other initiatives, a study requested by the PSC was carried out in collaboration with the commission's Youth Division, the Office of the Youth Envoy and RECs/RMs. This collaboration included the organisation of five regional consultations with youth group representatives to probe their roles in and contributions to peace and security in their regions; and field visits to at least 15 member states were conducted.

Additionally, the programme, in collaboration with the African Governance Architecture Secretariat, the Youth Division in the Human Resources, Science and Technology Department and the Office of the Youth Envoy, with input from youth representatives, validated the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security, mentioned above.

Action needed by the PSC

With both mandated documents validated, the next step was to present them for consideration and eventual adoption by the PSC. To those present at the PSC open session last month, it was clear that in order for progress to be made on the AU's youth, peace and security agenda, unity among PSC members is required.

Inputs from member states highlighting the plight of their youth, and that of RECs/RMs showcasing youth programmes in their region, revealed that there is meaningful political will for youth inclusion.

With that in mind, it is evident that the PSC, which has aided the creation of an AU youth, peace and security agenda, can also cause progress to stall. Another open session in 2020 is around the corner, and it is in the interest of the council to record more progress for the good of Africa's peace and stability.

As 2020 approaches, the AU will review its progress in the Silencing the Guns initiative. The focus will be on addressing the shortcomings experienced since 2013. From a youth perspective, one of the key gaps thus far in the AU's peace and security agenda has been the exclusion of the majority population of the continent – the youth. Now that the AU has created space for youth inclusion, it will be wise to ensure that throughout next year, the role of youth in silencing the guns is prioritised and mapped out.

AU-RECs relationship key for implementation

The five youth ambassadors for peace – selected through a rigorous process in the second half of 2019 – are meant to ensure that young people in their regions contribute towards peacemaking efforts such as dialogue and mediation, among other civilian roles. The success of their work is partly dependent on the quality of RECs/RMs' relationship with the AU.

The AU should be able to work hand-in-hand with RECs towards further popularising the Silencing the Guns initiative. This will ensure that youth ambassadors can engage their RECs on community-level youth participation, as they will be based in their regions and not in Addis Ababa.

However, the AU and RECs/RMs need to further capacitate the youth ambassadors so they are knowledgeable about the thematic areas of the AU's peace and security agenda. These include peace support operations; post-conflict, reconstruction and development; conflict prevention, including early warning; security sector reform/disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; and crisis/conflict management and resolution.

The establishment of ambassadorial roles for young people in peace and security is a step in the right direction

This will equip them to advocate for peace and security, as intended. The PSC-mandated study on the contributions of youth towards peace and security showed that African youth knew little of the AU's peace and security agenda as well as of existing frameworks on the discourse.

The establishment of ambassadorial roles for young people in peace and security is thus a step in the right direction. More attention needs to be paid to the development of peace and security-specific normative frameworks by the AU for young people. UN frameworks complement the work of the AU, but young Africans need to be able to refer to locally contextualised frameworks and action plans that speak to their regional experiences of peace and security.

Owing to the fact that the documents referred to above still have to be adopted by the PSC, Africa's youth continue to wait for the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security and a subsequent strategy or action plan for its implementation. Clearly, what is needed more than anything is a guide for young people to beef up their existing activities in line with the expectations of policymakers at the AU level.

Can Africa weather the storm in 2020?

Hama Amadou, Niger's main opposition leader, returned to his country on 14 November 2019, after three years of exile in France. He was subsequently arrested and imprisoned on 18 November to serve the remainder of his sentence in the Filingué prison, near Niamey. He seems, de facto, excluded from the presidential race in December 2020.

Beyond Amadou's political fate, the question of the social and political climate in the run-up to elections – and the instability that often results from it – continues to arise in Africa.

Electoral disputes and violence in Africa are generally the result of fierce contestation for power and contested electoral processes. Often electoral management bodies are believed to be partial and favouring incumbents. As a result, voters do not have faith in the fairness of the process.

In Cameroon, following controversial presidential elections in October 2018, legislative elections were postponed to 2020

In 2020 Africa will again hold a number of elections, many of which will undoubtedly have an impact on continental peace and stability. In addition, some areas of the continent will remain hotspots in need of attention.

Elections in 2019 showed mixed results

As expected, elections were peaceful in South Africa and minimally tense in Senegal in early 2019, with Cyril Ramaphosa and Macky Sall remaining in power. In Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz kept his promise not to amend the constitution in order to run for a third term and in Nigeria's polls in February experienced a major hiccup when, in a surprise move, the Independent National Electoral Commission postponed the elections. Election-related violence reportedly claimed the lives of 50 people.

In Cameroon legislative elections were postponed to 2020 owing to a volatile political climate.

Guinea also postponed its legislative elections after the Parliament's term of office expired in February 2019. This took place in a tense context around speculation that President Alpha Conde (81) intends to amend the constitution in order to run for a third term. These last weeks in particular have been marked by protests.

Meanwhile, in Guinea-Bissau elections were held at the end of November amid a prolonged political crisis. There was some glimmer of hope – incumbent Jose Mario Vaz, the first president in 25 years to finish a term

December
2020

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
IN NIGER

without being overthrown and/or killed, failed to secure a spot in the second round.

This is a rare occurrence on a continent where the incumbent usually benefits from huge advantages during elections.

Popular protests

Benin has undergone perhaps the most troubling political developments in 2019, since the country was in the past considered one of the relatively successful electoral democracies on the continent.

President Patrice Talon amended a number of laws in a move that the opposition decried as exclusionary and aimed at cementing his power. Public protests ensued and former president Thomas Boni Yayi was placed under house arrest before fleeing the country. The opposition boycotted legislative elections, and the Economic Community of West African States has since been trying to mediate the crisis.

Algeria and Sudan saw their respective incumbents forced out as a result of sustained popular protests. In both cases the military got involved to secure the departure of the incumbents. In Sudan agreement on a transitional arrangement was reached between the military junta and civil society representatives. The situation in Algeria remained unclear at the end of 2019, as protesters refuse to agree to presidential elections in which most of the old guard from the Bouteflika era is represented.

Algeria and Sudan saw their respective incumbents forced out as a result of sustained popular protests

All this indicates that issues around elections or political change on the continent remain volatile and have the potential to trigger or aggravate political crises, with the possibility of tipping over into violent conflict.

Likely election-related violence in 2020

In 2020 volatility and violence are expected to mark a number of elections on the continent. Presidential elections are scheduled in Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Togo, as are general elections in Ethiopia.

The security situation in Burkina Faso and Niger has been severely affected by violent extremism, with a worrisome increase in attacks in the latter. Although Burkina Faso's political climate seems relatively calm, the government is under mounting pressure regarding its failure to counter the growing terrorism threat.

The same complaint is made about Niger, although this is compounded by a more contested political space, given the manoeuvrings to sideline opposition parties.

Meanwhile, since the post-electoral crisis of 2010–2011, Côte d'Ivoire has had a difficult time in its process of peacebuilding and democratic consolidation. What is brewing in the lead-up to the 2020 presidential elections has the potential to end up being another major crisis.

Togo will also go to the presidential polls, following major protests against the regime in 2017. Legislative elections in late 2018 were boycotted by the opposition and ensured an overwhelming victory for incumbent Faure Gnassingbé's ruling party.

Since 2015 Burundi has also faced a crisis punctuated by episodes of violence and a deteriorating socio-political climate. Incumbent Pierre Nkurunziza is allowed to seek re-election after he amended the constitution in May 2018. He could stay in power until 2032. However, Nkurunziza says he will not run in next year's presidential polls.

Upcoming elections in the CAR and Ethiopia leading to tension

The CAR, in severe crisis since the end of 2012, will hold its second presidential and legislative elections in a difficult context, since the election of Faustin-Archange Touadera in March 2016. The peace agreement of 6 February 2019 between the government and 14 armed groups seems at serious risk, and elections will undoubtedly usher in a period of increased tensions, or even destabilisation.

Ethiopia, led by Prime Minister and 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner Abiy Ahmed, faces several crises in the context of its ethnic federalist model being challenged by various groups within the federation. The divisions within the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front coalition, in addition to polarisation along ethnic lines accompanied by demands for more autonomy or regional statehood, place the country at risk

of a potentially debilitating balkanisation. Abiy must respond to these challenges in the run-up to the general elections, scheduled for May 2020.

All in all, given current trends and the social, political (and security) and economic climates in the above countries, it is expected that even in the best-case scenarios, the pre-, mid- and post-election periods will be characterised by some level of violence.

The question is really how much violence will ensue, as well as its intensity, duration and repercussions for the peace and stability of those countries.

The Sahel, DRC and Sudan will remain hotspots

Other hotbeds of tension, crisis and conflict will continue to be of concern. The Sahel, where violent extremism has been occurring with renewed intensity, is an area that will require the whole of Africa to be fully involved in the search for and implementation of a holistic and durable solution.

Ethiopia, led by Prime Minister and 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner Abiy Ahmed Ali, faces several crises

The terrorist problem is all the more worrying because it is spreading like a trail of gunpowder across the continent, now affecting northern Mozambique and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), occupying spaces where states are absent, and taking advantage of the social and economic misery of an often youthful and idle population that is without prospects for the future.

The political transition in Sudan, the conflict situation in South Sudan, and the prognosis for Ethiopia in 2020 make the Horn of Africa another region that risks increasing instability.

Security, political, social and economic crises will certainly be aggravated by climate change, which caused death and destruction on the continent this year. Extreme weather events destroy communities, disrupt farming and cause food insecurity, while African governments (and populations) remain unprepared to deal with this threat.

The need for continental action

One of the most divisive issues among political actors around elections is the impartiality or lack thereof of election management bodies and their siding with incumbent regimes. However, the AU's electoral observer missions have not managed to lend more credibility to electoral outcomes or improve electoral processes.

The AU has to devise ways to help level the electoral playing field beyond simple electoral observation. This has to be combined with

May 2020

ELECTIONS IN ETHIOPIA

continuing efforts to entrench its shared values of good governance for better development outcomes.

If the continent is to achieve its promise of 'a prosperous and integrated Africa', it will have to continue working resolutely to tackle challenges head on.

Table 2: Elections in Africa in 2020

Country	Election	
Burkina Faso	President and National Assembly	Nov 2020
Burundi	President	20 May 2020
	National Assembly, local, Collines Senate (indirect)	June 2020
Cameroon	National Assembly, Senate and local	Postponed to Feb 2020 from Oct 2019 and late 2018
Comoros	Union Assembly	Jan 2020
Egypt	House of Representatives	Apr–May 2020
Ethiopia	House of People's Representatives and Regional State Councils	May 2020
Gabon	Senate	Late 2020 or early 2021
Ghana	President and National Assembly	7 Dec 2020
Guinea (Conakry)	National Assembly	16 February 2020
Côte d'Ivoire	President	Oct 2020
Mali	National Assembly	May 2020
Mauritius	Municipal	2020
Namibia	Regional Councils and local	Nov 2020
	National Council (indirect by Regional Councils)	2020
Niger	Local and President	Nov and Dec 2020
Tanzania	President, National Assembly, Zanzibar House of Representatives and Zanzibar President and local	Oct 2020
Seychelles	President	Oct–Dec 2020
Somalia	House of the People	Oct 2020
Sudan	Council of States, National Assembly, State Legislatures, State Governors and local	2020
Togo	President	Apr 2020

PSC Interview: Egypt's key achievements as AU chair in 2019

At the 33rd AU summit in February 2020, Egypt will complete its term as chair of the AU and hand over the baton to South Africa. The *PSC Report* spoke to Egypt's Ambassador Osama Abdelkhalek on the achievements and challenges during the year.

Egypt announced three major areas of focus as chair of the AU at the beginning of 2019. To what extent have these been realised?

Egypt's chairing of the AU in 2019 came 20 years since the last time Egypt had the honour to preside over our organisation. During these years, various changes have taken place in the landscape of the African continent, and challenges have emerged on all fronts, be it in the peace and security arena or in the development domain.

Cognisant of these facts, Egypt embarked on an extensive and inclusive process of consultation throughout 2018, with all stakeholders on the local, regional and global level. This was with the aim of coming up with a set of priorities that not only address the main challenges and concerns of the African continent but also fulfil the aspirations of African citizens and enable Africa to stand on equal footing in international fora with global players.

Egypt embarked on an extensive and inclusive process of consultation throughout 2018

To this end, a number of priorities were selected for the Egyptian chairmanship of the AU to ensure the necessary momentum was created and concrete outcomes achieved: a) the African Continental Free Trade Area as an accelerator of continental integration; b) infrastructure as basis for supporting the regional integration process; and c) post-conflict reconstruction and development within the peace and security arena as an effective tool to improve resilience in countries emerging from conflict. In addition, Egypt also chose to focus on increasing the efficiency and improving the methods of work of the union to further reinforce the reform process.

One of the most important objectives of the Egyptian chairmanship of the AU was to make 2019 'The Year of

Africa in Egypt' and 'The Year of Egypt in the AU' in a manner that solidifies Egypt's contribution to the AU agenda of continental integration.

What were Egypt's major achievements as chair of the AU in 2019?

The historic announcement of the entry into force of the continental free trade area and the launch of its operational tools are highlights. Egypt deposited the instrument of ratification of the agreement on 8 April 2019, and the momentum is being sustained to assert the importance of focusing on the technical aspects of the agreement in order to ensure its full and effective implementation, through cooperation with international partners, with emphasis on capacity building.

Another milestone on the road to continental integration was the convening of the first edition of the mid-year coordination meeting between the regional economic communities [RECs] and the AU on 8 July 2019 in Niamey. It was agreed to further refine the foundational documents, including the division of labour matrix and the revised protocol on relations between the AU and RECs to be adopted at the upcoming February 2020 summit. All this is done with a view to create a sustainable and productive relationship between the AU and the regional arrangements in favour of implementing Agenda 2063.

Concerning the dimension of infrastructure, Cairo hosted in November 2019 the PIDA [Programme for Infrastructure Development] Week, which discussed in detail the criteria for selecting the list of projects that will be implemented within the framework of the second phase of the AU Infrastructure Programme (2021–2030). This programme carries the ambition of Africans towards solid and viable continental integration and connectivity.

In the area of peace and security, post-conflict reconstruction and development has not been given the required attention, despite its critical importance in preventing relapse into conflict. With this in mind,

Egypt has finalised, in coordination with the AU Commission, the proposed structure of the AU Center for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development hosted in Cairo. The host country agreement was signed on 11 December 2019, on the margins of the Aswan forum for sustainable peace and development. The center, in Cairo, will present a remarkable added value to conflict prevention in Africa.

Within the same context, Egypt hosted two high-level consultative summits on Sudan and Libya on 23 April and the ministerial follow-up meeting on Sudan on 20 June 2019. This was in addition to supporting the work of the AU regarding the peace process in the CAR [Central African Republic], South Sudan and other African hotspots as theoretical implementation of our commitment to finding 'African solutions to African problems'.

Egypt hosted two high-level consultative summits on Sudan and Libya and a ministerial follow-up meeting on Sudan

What have been the major challenges during Egypt's term as chair?

Since assuming the position last February, Egypt has noted strong demands by member states to improve the AU Commission's working methods and to impose a higher level of discipline and a greater degree of transparency. Several steps have been taken in this regard, including:

- Implementing the legal review of the decisions taken by the AU summits for the first time by the Office of the Legal Counsel and the Bureau of the Assembly with the aim of ensuring that they do not violate previous decisions and preventing the existence of legal fallacies
- Re-instating the drafting committee to ensure the accurate reflection of the content of the decisions with the content of the deliberations, and to enhance the degree of efficiency and the quality of our drafting
- Putting in place strict directives for submission of reports within specific time limits (60 days prior to the summit) to allow member states to review and comment on the reports and then adopt and translate them into the four working languages
- Reviving cooperation and coordination between the Peace and Security Council and the Permanent Representatives Committee [PRC] by inviting the chairs of the month to hold periodic briefings regarding their activities

What are the lessons that the coming chair for 2020, South Africa, can learn from Egypt's term in office? What are the key issues the next chair should prioritise in 2020?

Within the framework of coordination between the current Egyptian chairmanship and the incoming chairmanship of South Africa, starting from 9 February 2020, a number of coordination meetings were held at the ambassadorial and working level to ensure smooth transition and unity of purpose.

Sudan
Libya

DISCUSSED AT
HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS

During these meetings it was noted that both chairmanships share a number of common priorities. These priorities reflect the deep understanding both countries have of the mechanisms of work within the AU and the topics and issues that need extensive attention.

All consecutive chairmanships have to ensure the sustainability of the reforms that were initiated at the AU, particularly those related to raising the level of efficiency, improving coordination and methods of work, and reinforcing financial and administrative discipline, in addition to the files placed high on the African common agenda.

How has Egypt carried forward the AU reform agenda initiated in 2016?

Egypt, throughout its chairmanship, has been committed to implementing the reform agenda stemming from a genuine belief in the necessity of the reforms and the possibility of upgrading the capabilities of our union to better serve Africa's goals and ambitions.

The Egyptian chairmanship has been in close and continuous coordination and consultation with the reform unit [based in the office of the AU Commission chairperson] on different cross-cutting topics. These include issues relating to the Peace Fund and the ongoing efforts to finalise the consultations regarding the new scale of assessment, the way to manage the fund and how to ensure its sustainability.

The Egyptian chairmanship has been in close and continuous coordination and consultation with the reform unit on different cross-cutting topics. These include issues relating to the Peace Fund

An enlarged retreat including the Peace Fund Board of trustees, the bureau of the PRC and relevant stakeholders will take place soon to deliberate on all these matters to allow the fund's operationalisation in the upcoming summit.

Tireless efforts were exerted by the PRC subcommittee on structures and the PRC subcommittee on budgetary matters, in coordination with the reform unit, to come up with a refined proposal for the new departmental structure of the AU Commission, to be adopted by the upcoming summit. This proposal has been finalised and reviewed by the PRC in a series of sessions to ensure that the new structure reflects the essence of the reform through a lean and results-oriented structure.

The Egyptian chairmanship is of the view that reforming the AU is a continuous and evolving process that needs the concerted efforts of all member states, with a view to ensuring its sustainability and mainstreaming it at all levels and areas of work.

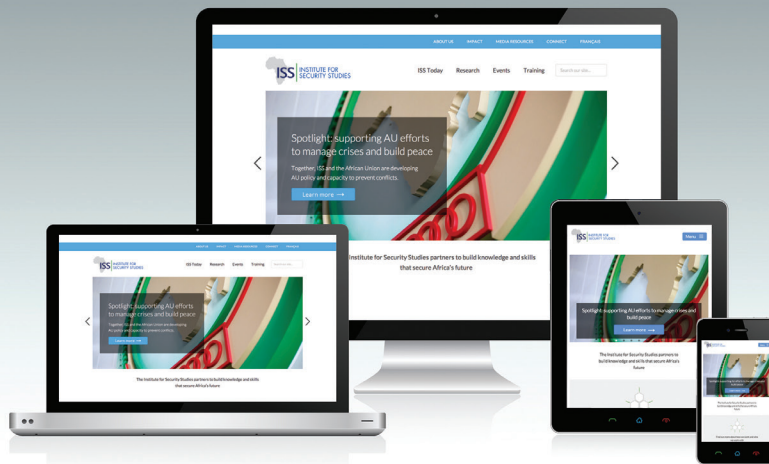
Egypt, as a founding member of the organisation, is committed to continue supporting the reform efforts after the end of its term as chair.

The Peace Fund

DISCUSSED DURING A
SPECIAL RETREAT

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The Peace and Security Council Report analyses developments and decisions at the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC). The monthly publication is the only one of its kind dedicated to providing current analysis of the PSC's work. It is written by a team of ISS analysts in Addis Ababa.

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