

EU-African Union relations: joint communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council and the EU Political and Security Committee

On 25 October 2016, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) and the European Union Political and Security Committee (EU PSC) held their **9th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting** in Brussels, Belgium, as part of their regular dialogue within the framework of the Africa - EU partnership. The meeting was co-chaired by Ambassador Catherine Muigai Mwangi (Kenya), Chairperson of the AU PSC for the month of October 2016, and Ambassador Walter Stevens, Permanent Chair of the EU PSC. The Joint Meeting brought together the Ambassadors of EU PSC and AU PSC Member States, Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, the Deputy Secretary General of the EU External Action Service, Ambassador Jean-Christophe Belliard, the Deputy Director General of the EU Commission (DEVCO) as well as Senior Officials from the AU Commission, the EU External Action Service, the EU Commission and the EU Council Secretariat.

The Joint Consultative Meeting was preceded by an **informal Joint Retreat** of the AU PSC and the EU PSC, held on 24 October 2016, which provided a platform for an informal exchange on countering terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism, as well as on migration.

Both meetings took place in a constructive atmosphere, facilitating substantial exchange and the convergence of approaches on different topics. The discussion during the Joint Consultative Meeting focused on conflict and crisis situations in Africa namely, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Somalia, Sahel/Mali, South Sudan, Burundi and Guinea Bissau, as well as the enhancement of AU and EU cooperation on peace and security issues and the support to AU activities in these areas.

On the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, where both the AU and the EU are members of the support Group to the facilitation of Dialogue, the AU PSC and the EU PSC agreed on the need to avoid recurrence of violence. They acknowledged progress made with the Agreement signed on 18 October 2016 resulting from the Dialogue facilitated by Mr. Edem KODJO, the AU Facilitator for the National Dialogue in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This Agreement should pave the way to a more inclusive process with the Congolese political stakeholders who did not participate in the Dialogue, in order to broaden support for a peaceful roadmap towards elections in the country. The AU PSC and EU PSC stressed that the elections should be inclusive and transparent and that respect for the Constitution must be ensured, taking into account the provisions of the Agreement. They further called on the leadership and the opposition to seek necessary compromise for the peace, stability and democratic consolidation in the DRC as well as drew attention to the persistent insecurity in the east of the country.

On the **Central African Republic** the AU PSC and the EU PSC, while acknowledging the impressive progress made by the Government in post-conflict stabilisation during the last three years underlined that the situation remains fragile. They agreed on the need for substantial reforms in CAR, in particular in the fields of Security Sector Reforms (SSR), Disarmament, Demobilization, the creation of integrated national army, DDRR, reconciliation, as well as on the continued need for assistance from its neighbours and international partners. To this end, the upcoming Brussels Conference on CAR on 17 November 2016, co-chaired by HRVP Mogherini and CAR President Touadera, will be a key event in CAR's attempt to secure stronger international support. The AU PSC and EU PSC welcomed the outcome of the 9th International Contact Group on CAR (ICG-CAR) held on 25 August 2016, which transformed the ICG-CAR into an International Support Group for the CAR and underlined the need for close coordination of efforts on the ground between the AU, EU and the UN.

On **Somalia**, the AU PSC and the EU PSC agreed that a continued strong engagement to support the political process leading to democratisation and federalisation, and the fight against Al Shabaab, will remain the priorities for the AU and the EU. They also agreed on the need for the Somali leadership to adhere to the agreed electoral timelines and, equally important, to observe standards for a credible and legitimate process, including respecting the quota reserved for women. The electoral process should be a milestone towards a more democratic and federal state. The AU PSC and the EU PSC also stressed the need to progress on the security sector and to build sustainable national security architecture with balanced federal and regional forces that would allow AMISOM transition as agreed. They emphasized the need for timely support these efforts and in particular also the financial support to AMISOM. They also underlined the importance of visible peace dividends for the population of the liberated areas.

On the **Sahel/Mali**, the AU PSC and the EU PSC expressed their deep concern with the increase in terrorist activities, in particular the spreading of terrorist attacks and violent extremism to the centre and south of Mali, as well as in the Sahel region as a whole, with a potential spill-over effect on the whole sub-region. They reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the implementation of the peace agreement and called on all the stakeholders, particularly the Mali Government and armed groups to ensure its effective implementation. Moreover, they agreed on the need to strengthen cooperation with the G5. The AU PSC and EU PSC underscored the importance of the Nouakchott Process, as a key platform for information sharing and coordination in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel. The AU PSC and the EU PSC commended the progress made by the Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF) in combating the Boko Haram terrorist group and expressed their willingness to continue working closely together in further supporting the MNJTF in its efforts in combating terrorism in the Sahel. They also stressed the need to address the root causes of terrorism as well the tremendous humanitarian needs in the region. They took note of the proposal by the Sahel countries to mobilise a regional force to combat terrorism.

On **South Sudan**, the AU PSC and the EU PSC expressed alarm at the deep crisis that the country continues to face on many fronts namely, security, humanitarian, political, economic and developmental. They reaffirmed their continued engagement in order to avoid an outbreak of renewed violence, especially at the end of the rainy season. To this end, the Transitional Government of National Unity should facilitate the immediate deployment of the Regional Protection Force, lift restrictions on operations of United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and all sides should ensure unhindered humanitarian access and respect international humanitarian law. The AU PSC and the EU PSC called for a more inclusive political process in the country. They were pleased that the AU Commission has started work on the Hybrid Court, transitional justice and reconciliation and healing, and stressed the importance of establishing other institutions for the promotion of healing, reconciliation and nation building as provided for in Chapter V of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, while reiterating the urgency of establishing this institution without delay. They welcomed the work of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission.

On **Burundi**, while noting the AU PSC assessment during its visit to the country in June 2016, that the security situation has improved in the country, the AU PSC and the EU PSC expressed their continued preoccupation with the security situation in the country and encouraged efforts to continue improving it. They agreed to remain seized with the matter. They also agreed that the East African Community (EAC) facilitation needs to succeed on the understanding that only an inclusive dialogue can bring a viable solution. The AU PSC and EU PSC commended the mediation efforts deployed by President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, the EAC Mediator and former President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, EAC Facilitator in the Inter-Burundian Dialogue. They expressed hope that the report of former President Mkapa, to the recent EAC Summit, and the response of Heads of State, can accelerate the process. They called on Government and opposition to engage genuinely in the Dialogue. Moreover, they agreed on the need for the full deployment of AU observers in the field, both civilian and military.

On **Guinea-Bissau**, the AU PSC and the EU PSC welcomed the recent agreement on a consensual solution to the political impasse the country, and underscored the key role played by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on this achievement. They stressed the need for all political actors in Guinea Bissau to engage in good faith to implement and take forward the agreement, including the installation of an inclusive government, in order to ensure stability, functioning institutions and economic recovery.

And finally, **on enhancing EU-AU cooperation on peace and security issues**, the AU PSC and EU PSC renewed their commitments to enhance cooperation between both continents, with a view to consolidating peace where it has been restored. They underscored their determination to further deepen the existing partnership that aims at promoting peace and security and at preventing crises and conflicts, as well as providing support to peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts on both continents.

The joint consultative meeting concluded with a debrief by the AU PSC on the AU Peace Fund and the outcome of the Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union on Maritime Security and Safety and Development held in Lomé, Togo on 15 October 2016. They also received an update from the EU PSC on the Portuguese Presidency of the G7++ Friends of Gulf of Guinea Group with respect to maritime security issues.

The AU PSC and EU PSC agreed to meet again in 2017 in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia and to undertake a new joint field trip in the region.

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