



# Peace & Security Council Report

African members stand together at the UN

Amnesty Month: the gap between rhetoric and reality

The CAR's peace deal under threat

With Bashir gone, the Horn faces a power shake-up

Can South Africa repair its image damaged by xenophobia?

Done properly, national dialogue could stabilise Cameroon

## African members stand together at the UN

At the end of September, African Union (AU) member states will be present en masse in New York for the United Nations (UN) General Assembly debates and for a ministerial meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC). Meanwhile, preparations are being made for the annual meeting between the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the PSC on 23–24 October 2019.

These meetings are a high point in the institutionalised relations between the UN and the AU. However, their relationship has not always been a smooth ride and has evolved significantly over time. Experts agree that African countries serving as non-permanent members on the UNSC can play an important role in bridging the gap between the AU and the UN.

### The A3 as bridge between the AU and the UN

The three African non-permanent members of the UNSC, the so-called A3, are elected for a two-year term upon endorsement by the AU Assembly. Usually they represent three of the five regions of the continent, according to the principle of regional rotation in the AU.

Yet the A3 do not serve on the UNSC on behalf of the AU or the PSC, but as individual members. Thus they are not legally bound to support PSC positions – one of the tricky issues that often stand in the way of greater synergy.

African countries serving on the UNSC can play an important role in bridging the gap between the AU and the UN

Divisions exist, including over decisions on African crises, which make up the bulk of the UNSC's work. The A3 often have very different foreign policy priorities and strategic partnerships with powerful countries outside the continent. Sometimes they are accused of preferring to align with former colonial powers rather than sticking to the AU position.

In the last few years the A3 have differed strongly over the issue of Western Sahara, with mainly francophone states supporting resolutions put forward by France and countries such as South Africa abstaining. This was the case in discussions around the renewal of the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) earlier this year. South Africa abstained, while Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, the two other members currently on the council, voted in favour.

The renewal of MINURSO will again be discussed next month, when South Africa chairs the UNSC.

---

### Current PSC Chairperson

**His Excellency Mohammed**

**Arrouchi**, permanent representative of Morocco 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

---

The AU Commission has therefore made an effort to increase the number of meetings between the A3 and the PSC to align positions on important crises discussed in New York.

According to officials, this is paying off. The UNSC's strong support for the AU's initiative to Silence the Guns is an example of the impact of this alignment between the A3 and the PSC.

### **Joint statement on Sudan a turning point**

The 6 June 2019 joint statement by the A3 on the imposition of sanctions on Sudan, following the coup d'état that removed former president Omar al-Bashir in April, is seen as one of the most important indications of greater synergy between the A3 to date. Permanent UNSC members China and Russia were against the suspension, but the A3 stood firm, perfectly aligned with the position taken by the PSC back in Addis Ababa on the same day.

Later in the same month, the A3 also joined forces in the decision on the extension of the mandate of the AU–UN hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Given the uncertain political situation in Sudan, it was decided to put the planned drawdown of UNAMID on hold for four months.

### **The AU Commission has made an effort to increase the number of meetings between the A3 and the PSC**

One of the contributing factors to this increasing alignment of AU and A3 positions is the growing realisation that the continent has to stand united in order to have an impact. On a practical level, the AU Office to the UN's more active role has also created greater synergy. The office is charged with acting as a liaison between the AU and the UN, beyond just the UNSC, but its impact on the A3 as a bridge between the two institutions has been notable.

### **Financing of AU peace missions the elephant in the room**

Apart from ad hoc issues such as the suspension of Sudan, the financing of AU peacekeeping through UN assessed contributions remains an issue that A3 countries have tried to raise jointly in the UNSC. Despite commitments from the past several UN secretary generals at the AU Assembly summits in Addis Ababa that the UN would ensure sustainable funding for AU peace operations, this has not happened. In the last number of years, the Trump administration in the United States has been particularly hostile against such funding by the UN.

At the end of 2018, A3 members again made a notable effort to table a resolution on this issue, but it was scuppered mid-way in the process and never reached the agenda of the council. One of the reasons for the failure was disunity among the A3 members on the strategy to follow regarding the proposed resolution. South Africa is expected to table this again during its presidency in October.

---

South Africa  
Côte d'Ivoire  
Equatorial  
Guinea

CURRENTLY MEMBERS  
OF THE UNSC

---

## Obstacles hampering the work of the A3

African members serving on the UNSC take up the two-year position in vastly different circumstances. Some embassies in New York have a lot of capacity and sophisticated diplomatic links, while others are stretched to the limit. In the first six months of 2019 there were 196 meetings for officials in New York to attend – not an easy task for small embassies.

This poses certain practical problems when it comes to decision-making on global issues that might not necessarily be on the radar of African states. They also do not have an institutional memory of how voting patterns or discussions were conducted in the past.

African members serving on the UNSC take up the two-year position in vastly different circumstances

In this regard, the spectre of Resolution 1973 that authorised a no-fly zone and the subsequent military intervention in Libya in 2011 looms large. Diplomats from some African member states have since complained that the three permanent members that are part of NATO ‘cajoled’ them into hastily approving the resolution, which ultimately led to the removal of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. The AU’s plan for a negotiated roadmap for Libya at the time was completely ignored. In the years that followed, some member states refused to support, for example, interventions in Syria, having burnt their fingers in the Libyan case.

To rectify the lack of capacity, African member states can draw on the support of civil society, academics and think tanks to bolster their knowledge and decision-making on key issues. This has been the case during the current membership by South Africa, which has seen a large number of engagements between officials of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and civil society.

## The need for greater synergy

Clearly, on many of the issues before the council the A3 is considered a very influential bloc. If they can speak with one voice when it comes to crucial and contentious issues, this would benefit the continent at large. When member states serve on both the UNSC and the PSC, as is the case currently with Equatorial Guinea, this can be an advantage for the flow of information between the two councils.

Equally, in 2020 South Africa will be chairing the AU while also serving on the UNSC. Key priorities for South Africa, such as the promotion of political dialogue to solve crises – rather than sanctions or military interventions – peacebuilding, Women, Peace and Security and the implementation of Agenda 2063 are expected to be high on the agenda for the country in both councils.

In 2020 South Africa will be joined by Niger and Tunisia on the UNSC. In a global context where multilateralism is increasingly under threat, the role of the A3 and the cooperation between them will be crucial.

---

196

UNSC MEETINGS IN  
SIX MONTHS

---

## Amnesty Month: the gap between rhetoric and reality

The AU launched Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illicit arms and light weapons in 2017, as part of the Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the year 2020. Amnesty Month, celebrated by the PSC every September, is envisaged to provide a chance for individuals to voluntarily hand over illicit arms, with a guarantee of anonymity and immunity from prosecution. In practice, member states define the level and scope of the immunity provided under amnesty programmes.

Amnesty Month has been a visible advocacy platform for the AU's Silencing the Guns campaign and at a policy level its aims are laudable. However, actual implementation of amnesty programmes across the continent remains highly controversial and continues to face considerable challenges.

Though amnesty programmes may make modest contributions to the resolution of conflicts, they ultimately do not represent durable solutions to the proliferation of arms, nor to protracted conflicts across the continent. Thus the AU should ensure greater visibility for governance interventions that address the root causes of conflicts.

Nonetheless, if Amnesty Month is to make a modest contribution to 'Silencing the Guns', it should be better anchored in concrete policy frameworks, provide tailored guidelines to member states, and be cognisant of the political boundaries set by other AU legal frameworks, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Amnesty Month initiative should also take into consideration the realities of implementing amnesty programmes on the ground.

### Amnesty programmes in Africa

Several African states have introduced amnesty laws and programmes, all of which vary in their scope, duration and function. Some provide 'blanket' or unconditional immunity for combatants, while others limit the scope of offences that are protected under amnesty provisions.

Most amnesty laws and programmes, such as the one promoted by the AU, are also conditional, requiring holders of illegal firearms to surrender their weapons and cease their involvement in insurgent or criminal activities. Amnesties have been used by member states as conflict resolution mechanisms, or as part of post-

conflict, justice and reconciliation processes. Amnesty programmes may run for a few months or several years.

The PSC expects AU member states to evaluate and report on the effectiveness of their amnesty programmes at various stages of implementation. The PSC in turn reports to the AU Assembly on the achievements and challenges recorded during the month.

The activities of member states in Amnesty Month campaigns range from media campaigns, sensitisation workshops and training to the review of national policies, legal frameworks, structures and institutions that are relevant for the success of national amnesty programmes and the voluntary collection and destruction of firearms.

Actual implementation of amnesty programmes remains highly controversial and continues to face challenges

At the level of regional economic communities, different regions report on practical disarmament projects, regional weapon collection programmes, and sensitisation campaigns undertaken among member states. The AU Commission (AUC) supports Amnesty Month by providing financial assistance and supporting experience-sharing workshops for member states.

The AUC has also developed a preliminary guidance document on the technical and operational observance of Amnesty Month. In addition, it is expected to develop a compendium of African experiences and good practices in implementing disarmament programmes, but it is not clear when this is due.

### Challenges facing amnesty programmes

The AU's Amnesty Month initiative does not appear to have gained much traction among member states.

*The PSC Report* was not able to confirm any request for the AUC to support member states in implementing amnesty programmes thus far in 2019. It appears the PSC has also had difficulty accessing information from member states that might be implementing such programmes but are not reporting on them.

The major challenge facing the Amnesty Month initiative is its lack of congruence with amnesty programmes implemented by member states. This is owing to a number of issues.

Firstly, the provisions for Amnesty Month are only loosely related to the AU's Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform, its Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, its disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration programmes, and its initiatives against transnational organised crime.

Individuals who continue to hold illegal arms beyond Amnesty Month are to be prosecuted according to national legislation

Though the PSC provided a preliminary guideline document on the observance of Amnesty Month in 2018, it is not comprehensive enough to equip member states to undertake and overcome challenges they might face in implementing such programmes. The planned compendium of African experiences and good practices in amnesty programmes has also not been developed owing to financial constraints.

Secondly, it appears from the experiences of many member states that the one-month timeframe provided by the AU for Amnesty Month is insufficient. According to the 2017 Assembly decision, individuals who continue to hold illegal arms beyond Amnesty Month are to be prosecuted according to national legislation. However, this process is often linked to DDR processes and thus difficult to implement in such a short time. For example, Nigeria refers to the country's DDR programme as the 'Amnesty Programme' without any clear link to the AU guidelines.

Thirdly, the AU's Amnesty Month initiative aspires for amnesty programmes to be implemented in a manner that does not trigger further violence and division. However, 'blanket' amnesty programmes implemented in some member states have enabled combatants with a history of extrajudicial killings and other crimes against civilians to walk free.

Elite-driven, top-down processes, where victims of violence are not adequately consulted and legitimate processes for accountability and justice are bypassed, undermine civilian trust in the justice system and rule of law. This further complicates the successful reintegration of combatants in society, and incentivises or justifies crime and violence as a legitimate means to negotiate and resolve disputes with governments.

---

September

THE AU'S  
AMNESTY MONTH

---

Currently some activists are opposing the latest amnesty law in Mozambique, approved by Parliament in July 2019. They claim it could foster further violence as it protects both government forces and forces of the opposition party Renamo who allegedly committed human rights abuses between 2014 and 2016.

Fearing similar ramifications, the Ethiopian government also excluded those under investigation for allegedly committing genocide, extrajudicial killings, forced abduction, torture and physical violence when it declared an amnesty for insurgent groups in July 2018.

Fourthly, the Amnesty Month initiative proposes that member states offer incentives to encourage the voluntary surrender of weapons, without offering concrete guidelines on how this should be done. If implemented incorrectly, incentives have the potential to backfire and do more harm than good.

For example, the Nigerian government offered a monthly stipend and training to Niger Delta combatants in exchange for their handing over arms. However, in the long term this neither provided an alternative livelihood nor led to durable solutions to the underlying socio-economic and political issues that led individuals to take up arms in the first place.

Instead, it has resulted in ex-combatants re-joining armed groups and attracted new recruits to armed groups in the hope of qualifying for amnesty benefits. A major consequence has also been the escalation of arms trafficking on the black market.

In addition, the Amnesty Month initiative does not specify under which conditions the provision may be implemented successfully. For example, inculcating confidence in the integrity of amnesty programmes in countries that have not established functional legal systems may be difficult.

Finally, contrary to the AU's call for the involvement of civil society in amnesty initiatives, there is no publicly available document that informs or guides civil society participation in amnesty programmes implemented at the national level.

## **Durable solutions to silencing the guns**

Amnesty programmes are not a panacea for underlying governance and development issues that drive conflicts across the continent. In most instances they are short-term and unpredictable interventions that should not be implemented in isolation. Thus, amnesty initiatives, in addition to trying to address difficult security challenges, should be complemented by other governance, development and peacebuilding initiatives that have long-term impact on the stability and peace of a country.

Any new amnesty initiative under a reworked framework for silencing the guns in Africa beyond 2020 should also be anchored in clear policy frameworks that help member states plan effective interventions and mitigate major challenges they may face in implementing amnesty programmes. The compendium of African experiences and good practices in implementing DDR programmes, expected to be produced by the AUC, is a critical first step in this regard.

---

Mozambique

Ethiopia

Nigeria

AMNESTY PROVISIONS  
CHALLENGED

---

## The CAR's peace deal under threat

Early September 2019, for at least the second time this year, the *Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice* (MLCJ) and the *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique* (FPRC) faced off in the town of Birao in the northern Central African Republic (CAR). Both groups had signed the 6 February peace agreement and the head of the MLCJ, Gilbert Toumou Deya, is now a cabinet member in charge of relations with armed groups, according to the agreement.

Clearly, six months after the peace deal was concluded between the government of the CAR and 14 armed groups, several serious challenges continue to affect the stability of the country and could cause the collapse of the peace agreement.

The upcoming presidential and legislative elections, scheduled to take place in December 2020, could also lead to further instability, as opposition leaders and parties are already gearing up to face off with incumbent President Faustin-Archange Touadera. There are fears that a breakdown of the peace agreement, in this context, will reverse the progress made so far in stabilising the country.

The African Union (AU), as guarantor of the 6 February agreement, should implement the clauses that sanction spoilers and make sure that those armed groups still on board remain compliant.

### Challenges to the peace agreement

Since February 2019 dozens of violations of the peace agreement have taken place each week. Following negotiations in Addis Ababa in March, Sidiki Abass (also known as Bi Sidi Souleymane), leader of *Retour Réconciliation Réhabilitation* (3R), was appointed military advisor to Prime Minister Firmin Ngrebada. He was put in charge of the mixed special security unit – composed of government forces and armed group members – in the Ouham Pendé region, which his group already controlled. This was part of the AU's attempt to iron out differences over the post-Khartoum national unity government and salvage the February peace agreement.

However, the 3R group was subsequently responsible for the massacre of 46 civilians in Paoua, Ouham Pendé in May 2019.

Two other rebel leaders, Ali Darassa and Mahamat Al Khatim, had entered the government at the same time as Abass. Both were also made military advisers in charge of mixed special security units, also in areas they controlled before their appointments. The decision to appoint rebel leaders to lead regions already under their control was bound to create challenges for the peace agreement.

Subsequently both Abass and Al Khatim resigned from the government over unclear roles and differences with the prime minister. This means they have officially reneged on the February peace deal and gone back to the bush.

This has helped to preserve the prevailing power balance and has failed to create incentives for armed groups to commit to the agreement

Meanwhile, on 30 July 2019 another rebel leader, Abdoulaye Miskine, called on Touadera to resign, short of which he would be 'removed by all means necessary'. Miskine had also been a signatory to the Khartoum peace agreement and was appointed to the government, but declined to take up the position, although his group is represented in cabinet. Miskine has now formed an alliance with the *Parti du Rassemblement de la Nation Centrafricaine*, a rebel group created in June 2019.

This raises questions about the commitment of armed groups to implement the peace agreement they signed. The opportunity they have been given to remain in charge of areas they already controlled has clearly shown its drawbacks. This decision has helped to preserve the prevailing power balance and has failed



to create strong incentives for armed groups to fully commit to the implementation of the agreement, while legitimising their control over those areas.

## Illegal weapons

Compounding the above challenges, the United Nations Panel of Experts on the CAR reports that weapons are still flowing into the country. Several armed groups have shown reluctance to comply with the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process, scheduled to end in January 2020.

The tri-border area – between Chad, Sudan and the CAR – has always been a hotbed of various kinds of trafficking and has fuelled instability in all three countries. The current instability in Sudan and the situation in Chad contribute to fragility in the CAR.

## CAR's internal politics and external actors

Meanwhile the CAR also has to contend with a proxy battle between Russia and France.

Historically a preserve of France, the CAR authorities have built strong ties with Russia since 2017. The Russian presence and France's pushback are creating unnecessary distractions and are likely to intensify, especially in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election.

In October 2018 then Speaker of the National Assembly Abdul Karim Meckassoua was removed from office, allegedly due to Russian interference. Meckassoua has benefited from the support of Western countries, particularly France, where he is a regular visitor. He intends to appeal to the constitutional court to overturn the decision that dismissed him.

In addition, France also supports the CAR government in its quest to set up army barracks in strategic areas of the country to cover and protect the entire territory, especially high-risk areas. This while Russian, French and European Union programmes have been providing training to different contingents of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA).

Another political complication in the run-up to 2020 is that, at the end of May 2019, civil society and opposition parties set up a platform called the 'United Front for the Defence of the Nation' or *E Zingo Biani*. It blames the government for

appointing armed group leaders to government in what it calls a bad compromise.

*E Zingo Biani* places itself in radical opposition to Touadera's rule, which is bound to contribute to a tense political climate. In the past violence has erupted before elections to prevent them from taking place or to highlight the government's incapacity to stem insecurity.

Too many diverging interests, both among Central African leaders themselves and among external powers, make the Central African quagmire even more intractable.

## Using existing tools and reviewing current approaches

The AU, with its partners, should now trigger the clauses in the agreement that hold spoilers accountable. All hands must be on deck to keep those armed groups that are still abiding by the agreement compliant.

The guarantors and partners should also review the implementation of the agreement and the very real challenges it has faced thus far. One possibility is reversing the balance of power, which remains overwhelmingly favourable to armed groups. They should also look at whether mixed special security units are appropriate in the current context and what strong coercive and mitigating measures can be taken against spoilers. All of this must be done within a clear timeframe.

The AU, with its partners, should now trigger the clauses in the agreement that hold spoilers accountable

The AU also has to ensure it is responsive to the demands of its role as guarantor, including ensuring the timely allocation of resources to implement and monitor the agreement.

The diverging interests of external powers and those within the CAR domestically, as well as the instability in neighbouring Sudan and Chad, will continue to pose a major challenge to peace and stability in the country.

## With Bashir gone, the Horn faces a power shake-up

Sudan's new government has its hands full. Following long-time leader Omar al-Bashir's removal on 11 April, a transitional authority was formed after an agreement in August between the leaders of the protest movement that forced al-Bashir from power, and the military elements that assumed power.

The transitional authority was tasked with running the country for the next three years. Abdalla Hamdok was chosen as prime minister, and his cabinet was sworn in on 6 September. Now the new government must address Sudan's domestic problems, and try to reverse some of al-Bashir's more ruinous policies. It must revive a moribund economy and reposition the country globally to attract much needed foreign direct investment.

Another priority is peace with Sudan's various armed groups, many of which remain outside the current civilian-military arrangement. Yet while domestic considerations led to al-Bashir's fall and will probably preoccupy the new government, the implications of the end of al-Bashir's 30-year regime for the Horn of Africa must also be considered. A recent Institute for Security Studies report examines this very question.

The new government must address Sudan's domestic problems, and try to reverse some of al-Bashir's more ruinous policies

### Challenges to the regional status quo

For better or worse, al-Bashir was a powerful and active force in the region, balancing episodes of external meddling with bouts of peacemaking, when it suited his interests. For this reason, his departure is a shock for a region that's been undergoing significant and rapid transformation for the past two years.

But it isn't just al-Bashir's departure that challenges the regional status quo. Those around him also played a significant role in both Sudan's meddling and peacemaking. While there is a pertinent question as to whether al-Bashir's removal also means the removal of his 'deep state', certain regional relationships will certainly be disrupted.

South Sudan is a good example. When it comes to external relationships, the best and worst of the al-Bashir regime have been on display in South Sudan. This ranges from the conflict over Heglig in 2012 after its independence, to the role Sudan played in getting to the Revitalized Agreement on the

---

11 April  
2019

THE REMOVAL OF  
OMAR AL-BASHIR

---

Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to address the civil war in 2018.

In the latter, Sudan hosted the discussions and exerted pressure on the various parties to obtain concessions leading up to the agreement. Sudan and Uganda also serve as guarantors for the agreement. The transition in Sudan comes at a fragile time for South Sudan's revitalised agreement. The end of the pre-transitional period was delayed from May to November this year, while progress on key aspects like cantonment and internal state boundaries remains slow.

### A new mediator in South Sudan?

Sudan is now in flux during a pivotal period for its neighbour, and may have lost some ability to pressure South Sudanese parties to implement the agreement. Khartoum did however recently help facilitate a face-to-face meeting between South Sudan opposition leader Riek Machar and President Salva Kiir Mayardit in Juba.

The potential vacuum left by Sudan would leave Uganda – which has shown a preference for the Kiir administration in the past – as the remaining guarantor. It also provides an opening for others, with Kenya recently making moves to possibly fill the gap.

Al-Bashir's removal, while potentially reducing Sudan's role in regional peacemaking in the short term, does however provide an opportunity to move on from some of his failed relationships. Sudan's ties with Eritrea is a key example.

Relations with Eritrea had soured before al-Bashir's fall, just as Eritrea's relationship with Ethiopia was improving

While characterised by historically complex dynamics, relations with Eritrea had soured before al-Bashir's fall, just as Eritrea's relationship with Ethiopia was improving. Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia began initial discussions over greater integration in the Horn of Africa while Eritrea's border with Sudan was closed.

Relations between Eritrea and Sudan have since improved. A number of high-level visits between Asmara and Khartoum have ensued, punctuated by Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki's symbolic visit to Khartoum last

weekend, leading to hopes that the border between the two will be fully normalised soon.

Al-Bashir's exit also allows for greater penetration of Sudan by external actors, given that al-Bashir himself provided a check on some of this influence. Al-Bashir famously balanced both sides of the Gulf Cooperation Council dispute since 2017, to the extent that previous allies may have become fed up in the moments leading to his departure.

### A greater role for the region

Regional changes brought about by al-Bashir's exit are twofold. Under its new civilian-military government, Sudan's influence beyond its borders is likely to diminish. At the same time, the region and beyond are now more able to play a role in Sudan.

Sudan's neighbours have expressed the desire to use their relationships with armed groups to foster peacebuilding

This has been shown through the engagement of Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in Sudan since al-Bashir's fall. And Sudan's neighbours have also expressed the desire to use their relationships with armed groups to foster peacebuilding in Sudan.

In a stunning role reversal, South Sudan's Kiir is now positioning his country to serve as the convener of dialogue efforts between Sudan's new government and remaining armed groups. This marks a new dynamic in the post-al-Bashir environment, symbolising how the flow of regional influence is less likely for now to be an export from Sudan, but an import into it.

The end of al-Bashir's tenure in Sudan occurred because of his inability to provide viable solutions to pressing domestic issues. Yet given his regional stature, al-Bashir's removal is also a major shock for a region undergoing rapid transformation.

These dynamics need to be acknowledged. The region can then maximise the opportunities offered by al-Bashir's exit, while minimising potential problems in the interests of peace and security in the Horn.

## Can South Africa repair its image damaged by xenophobia?

Televised footage earlier this month showed hundreds of Nigerians queuing in Johannesburg to be evacuated to their home country. It illustrated the impact of the latest wave of xenophobic attacks targeting African foreign nationals in South Africa – on victims and on the country's relations with the rest of Africa.

In the past, Southern African countries such as Malawi and Mozambique sent buses to evacuate their citizens and leaders condemned xenophobia in South Africa. But this is the first time African countries, especially Nigeria, have reacted so decisively.

On a diplomatic level, South Africa's image on the continent was dealt another blow. Recent statements by South African diplomats and high-ranking officials such as international relations minister Naledi Pandor and the head of public diplomacy in her department show that African governments' strong reactions may have been a wake-up call.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa also announced that a team of special envoys had been sent to Nigeria, Niger, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. They will brief governments in these countries 'about the steps that the South African government is taking to bring a stop to the attacks and to hold the perpetrators to account'.

### The ambassador addresses the PSC

There seems to be a greater willingness to engage with the rest of Africa. For years this has been a significant blind spot in the country's foreign policy approaches. The government simply failed to acknowledge the impact xenophobia and scenes of violence had on how the country was viewed in Africa, and how damaging this could be for diplomacy, and South Africa's standing on the continent and the world stage.

But will this new willingness be enough to salvage the country's reputation, especially since it is chairing the AU in 2020? South Africa also currently serves as a non-permanent member on the United Nations (UN) Security Council, mandated by the AU Assembly.

On 11 September, the PSC held an unscheduled meeting in Addis Ababa to discuss the attacks. This is no routine affair. For crises on the continent to reach the

15-member PSC's agenda, the AU must consider it a sufficient threat to Africa's peace and security.

In his statement at the debate, South African ambassador Ndumiso Ntshinga condemned the xenophobic violence, saying 'no matter what the grievances, such actions cannot be justified; no matter the frustrations, the loss of even a single life cannot be condoned'.

This is the first time African countries, especially Nigeria, have reacted so decisively

Ntshinga assured the PSC that the government was taking all necessary steps to address the problem and to deal with the influx of refugees and economic migrants to South Africa in an organised manner. But it needed the support of fellow African countries for it to succeed.

'South Africa has absolutely no capacity to deal with this situation on her own. It is for this reason we once again call on the countries of origin, transit countries, regional and international organisations to work with South Africa to find a permanent solution,' he said.

In response, the PSC condemned the attacks and called on South Africa's government to protect targeted foreign nationals and their property. The PSC spoke of addressing the root causes of conflict and drivers of migration, and to work closely with South Africa's government. The meeting came after a statement issued by AU Commission chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat condemning the attacks and expressing the AU's willingness to support South Africa in dealing with the issue.

### Dialogue with African partners

This olive branch from the AU and its PSC, as well as South Africa's call for help, is a positive development. Dialogue can go a long way to start looking at solutions to this issue.

South Africa doesn't usually ask for help from its African partners. Instead, since 1994, it was the one helping war-torn African countries through peace talks and mediating in places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, and more recently Lesotho, Madagascar and South Sudan.

Ntshinga also noted a planned conference convened jointly by the African Peer Review Mechanism and the International Organization for Migration to discuss xenophobia and migration in South Africa. Moving away from the denialism that has characterised South Africa's responses so far is a welcome first step and will help reassure other African governments. But it's also important, in discussing migration challenges, to avoid falling into the politics of blaming migrants for South Africa's problems.

## Chairing the AU in 2020

This is particularly urgent since as chair, South Africa's role will be to represent the AU on the world stage, set the agenda and preside over various AU meetings throughout 2020. The chair's role is to find consensus among the 55 member states in an organisation characterised by strong diversity on an economic and political level, and diverging views on several issues.

If South Africa wants to implement changes such as the revitalisation of Agenda 2063, work more closely with the private sector and ensure peace and security on the continent, it needs the support of other member states. This is not an easy task, even under the best circumstances.

This olive branch from the AU and its PSC, as well as South Africa's call for help, is a positive development

Many in the diplomatic community in Addis Ababa feel that South Africa's government hasn't done enough to protect African foreign nationals. They believe some government officials have at times stoked feelings of hatred towards Africans as scapegoating and political currency used by politicians across party lines.

South Africa will have to take urgent steps to repair its image in the African community. It can do this by ensuring that African nationals are protected. Steps must be taken to re-enforce the rule of law and improve public order policing.

The government will have to show that it is tackling the root causes of the xenophobia, such as unemployment and inequality, and speak out clearly against xenophobic violence, at home and abroad. It also needs to deal with the issue of economic migrants in a structured and organised way.

This is critical if South Africa wants to regain the credibility it needs for a successful tenure at the AU and at other international forums where it represents the continent.

---

11 September  
2019

THE PSC MEETING  
ON XENOPHOBIA

---

## Done properly, national dialogue could stabilise Cameroon

Cameroon's recently announced national dialogue to solve the crisis that has engulfed its English-speaking North-West and South-West Regions, among other issues, has largely been welcomed. While some analysts see it as a political move, national stakeholders and international partners alike have emphasised the need for dialogue.

The Anglophone crisis is a mere symptom of much broader governance challenges. Cameroon will only find stability if the dialogue addresses its multiple crises and ushers in a gradual, irreversible institutional overhaul.

For decades Cameroon enjoyed relative political and social stability compared to its neighbours – Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Republic of the Congo – who faced intractable violent conflicts and political upheaval.

But in the past eight years this stability has been shaken by three phenomena: the spillover of the Boko Haram insurgency from Nigeria to the northern regions of Cameroon in 2014; the flare-up of federalist and secessionist movements in the English-speaking regions in 2016; and increased organised crime in the eastern regions due to CAR's ongoing conflict.

### A flawed democratisation process

The 2018 presidential elections also triggered a political crisis resulting in the detention of opposition figure Maurice Kamto, who was charged by a military court for sedition, insurrection and inciting violence.

In recent years, international media headlines have focused on violent repression by government forces in the North-West and South-West regions. The harsh actions of both government forces and increasingly rogue secessionist armed groups have created significant humanitarian problems.

Cameroonians in English-speaking regions are caught between the often indiscriminate reprisals by security forces and harassment by armed groups. According to United Nations figures, about 520 000 people – mostly women and children – have been forced to flee their homes to already overpopulated urban centres. Another estimated 32 000 people are refugees in neighbouring Nigeria.

This crisis is partly due to the flawed 1990s democratisation process that merely recycled authoritarian forms of governance by ceding only on the most symbolic aspects of democracy. These included elections, a highly regulated free press and some degree of civil and political liberties. In reality, under the guise of fighting terrorism, the government has reinstated a much tighter control of civil liberties.

### An overly centralised state

Another major structural issue that prevents public service efficiency – and is at the root of the Anglophone and other crises – is the overly centralised and inefficient governance system that fails to deliver basic public goods to citizens. The Anglophone crisis has resulted partly from this reluctance by generations of civil servants to consider citizens' needs.

Under the guise of fighting terrorism, Cameroon has reinstated tight controls of civil liberties

Broken state-society relations have led to a weak civil society that struggles to define itself or coexist with the dominant ruling party and insignificant opposition parties. Neither the people nor the government have been able to overcome ethnic divides. This has led to a growing disconnect between an (ageing) political class comprising mainly civil servants and the rest of society, especially the youth. The middle class and the Cameroonian diaspora also feel misrepresented by this political class.

It is still unclear who will attend the dialogue and whether its conclusions will be enforceable. But a useful outcome would be acknowledgement of the failure of the current governance architecture, and to design new structures that are centred around the efficient delivery of services.

It has been 23 years since the government made constitutional provisions for decentralisation. But it's never seemed in a hurry to implement it. For some years, government and the ruling party have refused to engage in discussions on state structure. They would consider such discussions an unacceptable concession to secessionists.

## A lively debate about federalism

Federalism and secession have been defined as taboo topics. Paradoxically, government's dogmatic stance has ignited a lively debate about federalism. While this discussion has been driven mainly by Anglophone groups who request the return to the two-state federation of 1961, some new voices, mainly Francophone, have emerged that propose a federal system alongside 10 existing regions or new regional compositions.

The dialogue's conclusions must be binding and enforced in a way that recreates trust in national institutions

The national dialogue offers an opportunity to overhaul current institutions, rethink state form and improve state-citizen relations. However the organisation of national dialogues can often turn into self-serving exercises by exhausted regimes to force various constitutional changes for the benefit of sitting presidents. They barely improve the governance of these countries.

So while the announcement of such a forum is a positive development in Cameroon, much must be done to ensure it meets its objectives and to avoid a continued slide into instability. The dialogue's conclusions must be binding and enforced in a way that recreates trust in national institutions and creates a sense of a new social contract.

The government could also seek the involvement of an AU facilitator. The facilitator would have the dual function of supporting the prime minister in his capacity as head of the national dialogue, and providing the international guarantee of neutrality requested by some parties.

Ideally the AU facilitator shouldn't be a former head of state, but rather a respected political figure endowed with sound diplomatic skills and experience in managing diversity. The involvement of extra-African facilitation is not needed.

More than ever, Cameroon needs a real and inclusive national dialogue where no subject is considered taboo. Over the past three years, the polarisation resulting from the Anglophone crisis and the last presidential election have led to a worrying trend of ethnic-based slurs in the public space at the expense of real exchanges on how to fix the country. Cameroon cannot afford to miss this opportunity and the AU should help the country avoid greater instability.

---

10

REGIONS IN CAMEROON

---

### About the PSC Report

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.

### About the ISS

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) partners to build knowledge and skills that secure Africa's future. Our goal is to enhance human security as a means to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity. Using its networks and influence, the ISS provides timely and credible analysis, practical training and technical assistance to governments and civil society.

### Contributors to this issue

Mohamed Diatta, ISS Addis Ababa researcher  
Liesl Louw-Vaudran, ISS senior research consultant  
Andrews Attah-Asamoah, ISS senior research fellow  
Shewit Woldemichael, ISS Addis Ababa researcher  
Omar Mahmoud, ISS Addis Ababa senior researcher  
Paul-Simon Handy, ISS Dakar, senior regional advisor

### Contact

#### Liesl Louw-Vaudran

Consultant to the *PSC Report*

ISS Pretoria

Email: [llouw@issafrica.org](mailto:llouw@issafrica.org)

### Acknowledgements



The publication of the PSC Report is made possible through support from the Government of the Netherlands, the Government of Denmark and the Hanns Seidel Foundation. The ISS is also grateful for the support of the following members of the ISS Partnership Forum: the Hanns Seidel Foundation, the European Union and the governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

---

© 2019, Institute for Security Studies

Copyright in the volume as a whole is vested in the Institute for Security Studies and the authors, and no part may be reproduced in whole or in part without the express permission, in writing, of both the authors and the publishers.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the ISS, its trustees, members of the Advisory Council or donors. Authors contribute to ISS publications in their personal capacity.

---

ISSN 2075-6232

