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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1097TH MEETING

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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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CONCEPT NOTE

**EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND NEW MEDIA: IMPACT ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE
AND SECURITY IN AFRICA**

CONCEPT NOTE

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND NEW MEDIA: IMPACT ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

I. INTRODUCTION:

1. One of the major developments of recent times that continues to transform various aspects of the life of societies across the globe is the emergence of new technologies and new media. Like other areas of the life of countries across the world, new technologies and new media have a profound impact on democratic governance and security.

2. New technologies refer to artificial intelligence, biotechnology, robotics, digital platforms and the new and fast-changing communication and information technologies. These new technologies and the new media have brought about and continue to bring about major changes in enhancing the quality of life of people through trade engagements, and easy access to quality public goods and information.

3. However, new technologies and media are not without their adverse consequences. Consequently, questions are raised both about the ethical and legal boundaries of new technologies and media and how to address the adverse impacts that are associated with their rapid transformations.

II. IMPACT ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA:

4. While new technologies and media affect (both positively and negatively) nearly all areas of the life of societies in the world, for purposes of the mandate of the PSC, the focus is mainly on the impacts on democratic governance and security.

5. New technology and media including the use of information and communication platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, YouTube, etc., have facilitated access to useful information that empowers citizens and advances the accountability of those in the position of power. In doing so, they contribute positively to the process of democratic governance. Simultaneously, these platforms can be used for negative ends and magnifying and circulating harmful contents. They have made the production and propagation of hate speech, incitement of violence, racism, misogyny, bigotry, misandry and xenophobia very easy.

6. There is also the major issue of information disorder of various kinds including misinformation, disinformation and mal-information that cause not only confusion, uncertainty and insecurity but also major socio-economic and political costs to those affected by such information disorder whether they are individuals, institutions or various sectors of society.

7. The latest news that emerged from Kenya in the context of the ongoing electoral campaign is the concern expressed by Kenyan institutions about the use of Facebook for the

propagation of hate and incitement of violence. Similarly, last year reports emerged that Facebook failed to take appropriate action when its platform was used to incite violence in Ethiopia. Documents submitted in a testimony to the US Congress by a Facebook whistleblower Frances Haguen show how Facebook managers ignored employees' warnings about its usage by "problematic actors" to spread hate speech and content inciting violence in Ethiopia and other developing countries.¹

8. The use of certain algorithms by social media platforms such as Facebook tends to shape and manipulate people during election times precipitating an artificially engineered electoral outcome. The role of Cambridge Analytica in the US 2016 election is a case in point. However, the US election was not an exception. Apart from the reported incidents during the previous Kenyan elections, Cambridge Analytica officials were reported to have used a web of shell companies to disguise their activities in elections in Mexico, Malaysia and Brazil, among various countries where they have worked to sway election outcomes.²

9. New technologies are transforming the way armed conflicts are conducted. The use of drones and the related challenges of wrong intelligence, impact on civilians, and the lack of regulation in the deployment of drones in Africa by foreign actors as was seen in the Libya conflict, have become more pronounced. The use of so-called 'autonomous weapon systems' continues to pose grave risks to the international humanitarian and human rights law accountability framework. This is also vastly complicated by the increasing incidents of cybercrime due to the increasing capacities of digital technologies. According to INTERPOL's Africa's Cyberthreat Assessment Report 2021, the five top threats in Africa are online scams, digital extortion, business email compromise, ransomware and botnets (use of networks of compromised machines as a tool to automate large-scale cyberattacks).

10. The other security impact of new technologies and media relates to the use of the internet and the new media by organized criminal groups for engaging in smuggling and luring vulnerable individuals and by terrorist groups both for propagating their dangerous message, for making homemade explosive devices and for recruiting new members into their ranks.

II. PREVIOUS PSC ENGAGEMENTS:

a) On Democratic Governance and Social Cohesion:

11. At its 589th session, the PSC emphasised 'the important role that the media, in general, and social media, in particular, can play in the promotion of democracy, including the holding of peaceful elections and stressed the need to ensure that social media is not abused to disrupt or undermine the credibility of election processes.' Acknowledging the positive role of new media, the PSC at its 791st session similarly stressed 'the importance of professional and responsible media in the process of deepening and consolidating democratic governance in Africa and urged African media houses to desist from circulating fake news and encouraged

¹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/10/25/business/ethiopia-violence-facebook-papers-cmd-intl/index.html>

² <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-cambridge-analytica-kenya-idUSKBN1GV300>

them to enhance their capacity to articulate democratic governance issues as key stakeholders in Africa's democratisation process.' Reiterating these points, the PSC at its 1062nd session stressed 'the important role of responsible media, both print and electronic, in electoral processes and encouraged these entities to always contribute more positively towards promoting the integrity and credibility of elections and maintenance of peace and stability in the Member States, especially by promoting civic education and accurate public information, as well as refraining from inflammatory reporting and miscommunication that may incite violence.'

12. On the other hand, at its 653rd session, the PSC noted 'with concern that whilst the media plays a significant role in supporting electoral processes in Africa, media space has been prone to abuse by some political actors, thereby undermining their independence and credibility during elections, particularly in situations where the stakes are very high and the election is very competitive and results are highly contested. And in this context, Council urged the Member States to ensure that all basic freedoms are assured during elections, including freedom of the press and media.' Similarly, at its 761st session focusing on hate crimes and genocide, the PSC expressed 'deep concern over the negative consequences that may arise from the misuse of media, particularly social media, which has the potential of escalating the ideology of hate and genocide in the society and underscores that, although social media can contribute to consolidate cohesion within and between communities, it, however, has the potential to disrupt national unity and peace. In this regard, Council urged the Member States to develop mechanisms for monitoring the use of media, to ensure that media are not misused to propagate the ideology of hate, genocide and hate crimes.' Along the same lines, 'While noting the positive contribution of social media in socio-economic development and deepening of democracy,' the PSC at its 836th session 'expressed deep concern at the negative use of social media that contributes to amplifying hate speech, hate crimes, the ideology of genocide that constitute the critical steps to the crime of genocide.'

b) On Security

13. The PSC at the 850th session underscored key points relating to cyberspace 'including the importance of a safe and secure cyberspace for reaping the dividends of digital transformation of Africa and the world, and for promoting a positive impact of ICTs on human and economic development throughout the Continent.'

14. On the other hand, in the Communique of its 627th session, the PSC emphasised key issues including 'the need for an African Dialogue aimed at combating terrorism online and securing cyberspace; the need for member States to urgently scale up efforts to effectively combat all kinds of malicious use of ICTs and internet in the African cyberspace and the fact that cybersecurity concerns are broader than national security and that they can become a planetary emergency with the potential of amplifying the traditional security threats that include terrorism and violent extremism.'

15. On terrorism, in several outcome documents, the PSC highlighted how the internet and social media are used for radicalization, and luring recruits into the ranks of terrorist groups. In the Press Statement of its 711th session, Council emphasized 'the need to take appropriate measures to control and monitor the use of the internet, particularly the use of social media, as a platform commonly used for radicalization. Furthermore, Council stressed the importance of engaging a broad range of actors in the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization, such as religious and traditional leaders, school authorities, civil society groups, the media and internet service providers, as well as youths and women.'

III. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING:

16. The objective of this meeting is to provide the PSC with an opportunity to have some extensive reflections on the benefits of emerging technologies and the new media to society, as well as the impact, implication and challenges on democratic governance, peace and security in Africa.

IV. FORMAT:

17. To achieve the intended aims and objectives, following the opening remarks by the PSC Chairperson and the Statement of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the PSC will receive presentations from the following:

- a) The Director of the AU Department of Infrastructure and Energy;
- b) The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM);
- c) Dr. Thompson Chengeta- Associate Professor of International Law and Ethics of Artificial Intelligence at the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria;
- d) The Institute for Security Studies (ISS); and
- e) AMANI Africa

V. EXPECTED OUTCOME:

18. It is expected that at the end of the meeting, the PSC will adopt a Communique detailing practical steps for maximising the net benefits of emerging technologies and new media while minimising the negative impacts on democratic governance, peace and security in Africa.

VI. DATE, VENUE AND TIME:

19. The meeting will be held virtually, using the ZOOM Online Platform, on Thursday, 4 August 2022, starting at 10:00 a.m. Addis Ababa local time.

2022-08-04

Communiqué of the 1097th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) held on 4 August 2022, on Emerging Technologies and New Media: Impact on Democratic Governance, Peace and Security in Africa.

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