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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1148TH MEETING

13 APRIL 2022
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/CN.1148 (2023)

CONCEPT NOTE

CYBER SECURITY: IMPACT ON PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

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I. BACKGROUND

1. Cybersecurity is becoming increasingly important in Africa, as the continent becomes increasingly connected to the internet and digital technologies. While the benefits of this connectivity are numerous, there are also significant risks associated with cyber threats, such as cybercrime, cyber espionage, and cyber warfare. These threats can significantly undermine peace, security and development in Africa.

2. One of the most significant threats posed by cyber-attacks is to critical infrastructure. This includes things like power grids, water systems, and transportation networks. If these systems are compromised, it can lead to widespread disruption and chaos, which can have a destabilizing effect on society. For example, a cyber-attack on a power grid could cause widespread blackouts, leading to social unrest and economic disruption. Another major impact of cyber threats on peace and security in Africa is the potential for cyber espionage. This involves the theft of sensitive information, such as government secrets or military plans, which can be used to gain an advantage in political or military affairs. This type of activity can lead to heightened tensions between countries and increase the risk of conflict. The use of cyberattacks to undermine the integrity of electoral processes and systems is another threat to governance and political stability in Member States.

3. Finally, cyber warfare is a growing concern in Africa. This involves the use of digital technologies to launch attacks on other countries or organizations. Such attacks could include the disabling of military systems, the theft of classified information, cyberterrorism or the spread of disinformation. These types of attacks can be difficult to attribute to a specific actor, making it challenging to respond in an appropriate manner.

4. The African Union Commission, as a critical continental infrastructure, has not been spared from cyberattacks over the past few years. In early March 2023 the Commission has been a victim of a massive Cyberattack that has compromised a number of IT Assets in its Data Centre and which has made services and applications inaccessible. The attack has also compromised a number of user devices, both laptops and desktops, and which necessitated the shutdown of the entire campus network to forestall further damage to healthy systems and devices. Significant systems recovery progress has been made but the process is yet to be completed.

5. In this regard, Member States need to redouble their investments in enhancing their national capacities against cyber-security. They also need to raise public awareness of cyber threats. Enhanced international cooperation is also essential, as cyber threats are often transnational in nature and require coordinated efforts to combat effectively. By taking these steps, Africa can better protect itself against cyber threats and help to maintain peace and security on the Continent. In this context that the Peace and Security Council of the African Union will be convening a session on Thursday, 13 April 2023, devoted to the theme: "Cyber Security: Impact on peace and security in Africa".

II. OBJECTIVES

6. Essentially, the session will be a platform for the PSC to reflect on best means and ways of promoting cyber-security in Member States, including the role to be played by the AU Commission and other stakeholders, to this end.

7. The session will touch on key Cyber Security themes, including, the impact on Peace and Security in Africa that could be explored further:

- a) The Impact of Cybersecurity on the African Economy: Opportunities and Challenges;
- b) Cybersecurity threat landscape in Africa;
- c) The role of Public-Private Partnership in developing Cybersecurity infrastructure: A Critical Factor for Cyber Resilience in Africa;
- d) Cybersecurity Governance in Africa: Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Legal Frameworks;
- e) Innovations and Best Practices in Cybersecurity: Lessons from Africa and Beyond;
- f) Cybersecurity Capacity Building in Africa: Addressing the Skills Gap and Enhancing Collaboration; and
- g) Key recommendations towards enhancing cybersecurity and cyber resilience in Africa.

III. PARTICIPATION

8. Participation at this meeting will be limited to PSC Members. Key presenters will be drawn from the following, namely:

- a) United Nations International Telecommunications Union;
- b) Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa;
- c) AU Commission, Department of Energy and Infrastructure; and
- d) AU Office of the Legal Counsel.

IV. DATE, TIME, VENUE AND FORMAT

9. The meeting will be held physically (in-person), on Thursday, 13 April 2023, starting at 10:00 a.m., Addis Ababa local time, in the Plenary Hall of the Julius Nyerere Peace and Security Department.

V. EXPECTED OUTCOME

10. It is expected that at the end of the session, the PSC will adopt a Communique, detailing a set of practical and innovative recommendations for enhanced cyber security resilience in Africa. The recommendations may, among others include encouraging Member States to enact robust cybersecurity legislations, policies and strategies, invest in capacity-building initiatives and to develop critical infrastructure protection capacities. Furthermore, public-private partnerships and international cooperation should also be fostered, in order to address cybersecurity threats more effectively. Ultimately, the goal is to create a safe and secure cyberspace in Africa, where individuals, businesses, and governments can operate with confidence and trust and where the AU Agenda 2063 aspirations and the Africa We Want can be achieved.

2023-04-13

Communiqué of the 1148th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council, Held on 13 April 2023, on Cyber Security: Impact on Peace and Security in Africa.

Peace and Security Council

African Union Commission

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