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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
MINISTERIAL HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR

23 MARCH 2024
SWAKOPMUND, NAMIBIA

PSC/MIN/CN.INAUGURAL (2024)

CONCEPT NOTE

**MINISTERIAL HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN
UNION ON THE THEME:**
*Commemorating 20 years of the PSC by taking Stock of Women's Participation and Leadership in
Peace Processes in Africa*

MINISTERIAL HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION ON THE THEME: *Commemorating 20 years of the PSC by taking Stock of Women's Participation and Leadership in Peace Processes in Africa*

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) became operational in 2004 following the adoption of the Protocol Relating to its establishment on 9 July 2002. As such, 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of the PSC. Since its inception, the PSC has taken major strides in promoting inclusive, sustainable peace and security in Africa, by ensuring that marginalised groups, especially women and youth, play a central role in leading and contributing to conflict prevention, resolution and post conflict reconstruction efforts across the continent.

2. For instance, in recognition of the important role that women play in peace-making and peace-building, in 2010, the PSC decided to have a session on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) as a standing session every year, in order to take annual stock of the implementation and domestication of this important agenda across the continent. This was an important decision towards ensuring that a gender-sensitive approach to peace and security in Africa is fully integrated, in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR) and the AU's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, commonly known as Maputo Protocol. These important frameworks affirmed the critical role that women play in the prevention of conflict and in sustaining peace, and called for increased women's leadership and participation in peace and security processes.

3. Since 2010, the PSC has taken important decisions on this issue, including through: the endorsement for the establishment of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) in 2017, with the objective to upscale the meaningful role and participation of women in mediation and peace processes; the adoption of Continental Results Framework (CRF) on WPS in 2018 which tracks the continental performance on WPS; and the Councils support for the revitalization of the African First Ladies Peace Mission (AFLPM) in 2023.

4. These efforts are progressively making gains in enhancing women's role and leadership in mediation and preventive diplomacy, by utilizing Members of the Panel of the Wise (which observes gender parity) and deploying FemWise-Africa and AWLN members to AU-led mediation and preventive diplomacy missions. Including in the AU High-Level Mediation Panels for Ethiopia (in 2022), Sudan (in 2023) and the 2023 AU-ECOWAS led Sierra Leone mediation dialogue process which was led by a woman. Additionally, in 2023, for the first time, female members of the Panel of the Wise / Co-Chairs of FemWise-Africa led Track 1 Preventive Diplomacy Missions (PDM) in support of electoral contexts in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Further, FemWise-Africa members have continuously been deployed to provide technical support to AU-led peace processes, and to the long-term implementation of peace agreements where the AU is a guarantor.

5. Regardless of these nominal positive trends, significantly more still needs to be done, to upscale and ensure women's meaningful participation and leadership in negotiation, and in track 1 peace tables on the continent. Data received through the CRF reporting shows that while African states have taken policy measures to domesticate its provisions including by ratification of the Maputo protocol by over 44 African states and adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 by 34 African states as of December 2023, women's participation in formal (Track 1) peace processes, as peace negotiators, envoys, mediators, and peacekeepers, has remained a challenge.

6. For instance, in 2021, only 19% of women participated in UN (co)-led peace processes as negotiators or observers.¹ Furthermore, according to the 2022 peace talks report, women in Africa were persistently absent from negotiation processes that took place in 2020, 2021 and 2022². In the Central African Republic, for instance, women were scarcely involved in decision-making and in political negotiations and processes, with only three (3) of the 29 members of the national dialogue's organising committee being women. Additionally, during the Democratic Republic of the Congo peace consultations in Nairobi in April 2022, women were glaringly absent. Likewise, in the Chad peace talks in Doha in 2022, there was only one woman among the over 50 participants³ present. In the current Sudan crisis, although women have mobilised and raised their voice, their absence in the ongoing talks is glaring.

7. Irrespective of their absence in formal peace processes, women movements and peace builders have continued to demand equal and meaningful participation in peace processes while engaging in many local peacebuilding initiatives. The Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security, together with the FemWise-Africa co-chairs, and the AU Gender, Peace and Security Programme, with support from partners have continuously engaged with women in affected countries to enhance their voice and advocate for their inclusion and protection in search for lasting peace, security and development. In 2022 and 2023 convening of the Africa forum on WPS, women peacebuilders and leaders across the continent called for the AU to adopt a policy framework to enhance women's leadership in peace processes.

8. In reaffirming its commitment to advance the WPS agenda, the PSC, in its 1187th meeting held in November 2023, requested the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, with the support of the AU Commission, to undertake a comprehensive review of the status of involvement of women in peace processes and report back to the Council with recommendations on areas for further improvement.

9. In light of the foregoing and as the PSC commemorates 20 years of its existence and the International Women's Day, a High-Level Seminar is being convened to consider policy options for enhancing women's participation in formal peace processes in Africa.

II. OBJECTIVES

10. Under the Chairmanship of the Republic of Namibia, the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of March 2024, the seminar is organized with the following objectives:

- i. To advocate for women's meaningful participation and representation in all aspects of peacemaking, and in particular, in the formal peace processes in Africa;
- ii. To explore policy options for enhancing women's participation in peace processes; and
- iii. To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Council as well as the international women's day 2024.

¹2022 Women and peace and security Report of the Secretary-General

² Peace Talks in Focus 2022. Report on Trends and Scenarios accessed at [Peace Talks in Focus 2022: Report on Trends and Scenarios - World | ReliefWeb](#)

³ 2022 Women and peace and security Report of the Secretary-General

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

11. The meeting is expected to achieve the following:
- i. AU, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and Member States commit to scale up measures that promote women’s participation in governance and peace processes; and
 - ii. Endorsement by the Council for the AU Commission to develop implementable and binding minimum targets to enhance women’s participation and leadership in peace processes in Africa.

IV. FORMAT AND PARTICIPATION

12. The meeting will be held at the Ministerial level. Participants will comprise PSC Members, AU Member states, RECs/RMs, Women peacebuilders, development partners, civil society organizations, think-tanks and other relevant stakeholders.

V. DATE AND VENUE

13. The meeting will be held on 23 March 2024. It will be conducted in the AU official languages, English and French.

2024-03-23

Conclusions of the Inaugural Ministerial High-Level Seminar on Women, Peace and Security held on 23 March 2024, Swakopmund, Namibia.

Peace and Security Council

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