AFRICA IN A NEW ERA OF INSECURITY AND INSTABILITY: THE 2024 REVIEW OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

AMANI AFRICA

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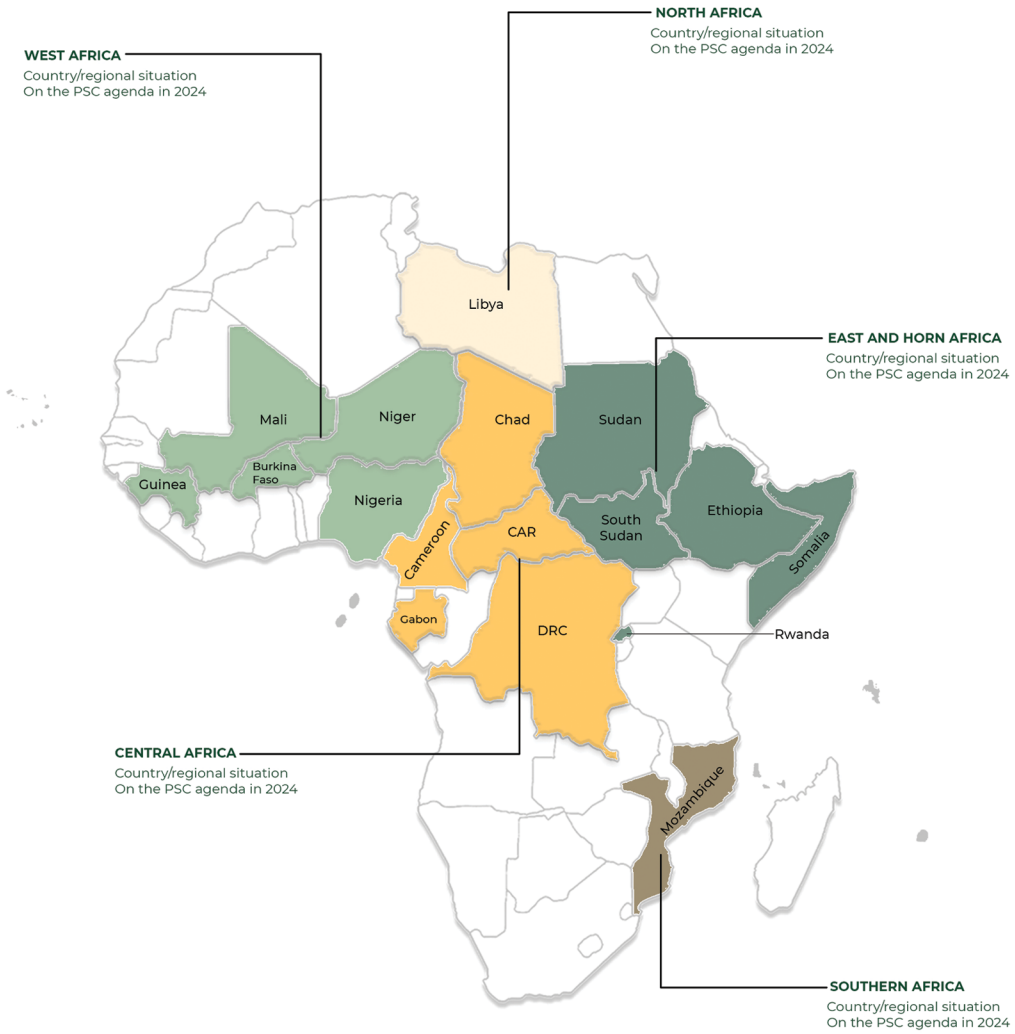

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'The prevalence of conflicts and the declining of democratic practices on the continent call for an urgent need to go back to the drawing board, re-think, re-calculate and renew our commitment to building a democratic, united, peaceful and prosperous Africa.'

Amb. Miguel Ntuntumu Evuna Andeme, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and Chair of the PSC for February 2025, during a high-level panel discussion on Sudan, 11 February 2025, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

I. WHAT THIS REVIEW IS ABOUT AND WHY IT MATTERS

The year 2024 has particular significance in the journey of the continental multilateral organization, the African Union (AU). It marked the 20th anniversary of the inauguration and subsequent official launch of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council.[1] It is also in 2024 that the first ten-year pursuit of AU's Agenda 2063 peace and security flagship project of Silencing the Guns came to an end and the second ten-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 commenced. The year 2024 was also the last year Moussa Faki Mahamat's 8-year term at the helm of the AU Commission, the secretariat and administrative arm of the Union. **Most significantly, with many concerning peace and security trends of the continent becoming prominent and stark, further accentuated by additional continental and global developments in 2024, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the continent is entering a new era of insecurity and instability.**

As in previous years, Amani Africa presents this annual review to critically assess the PSC's activities over the past year. As such, the review examines how the PSC allocated its time and resources in addressing peace and security challenges, what trends emerged in its priorities, key highlights of its activities, any shifts in its working methods, and areas where progress was made or where expected action fell short based on the commitments outlined in its Protocol. It also looks into the extent to which the PSC's work was informed by the requirements of the security and governance conditions of the continent and whether the PSC dedicated the level of attention commensurate with the gravity of each situation and whether it mobilized the kind of conflict prevention, management, resolution and peacebuilding responses the circumstances warrant.

From an institutional perspective, the review's value lies in systematically documenting the work of the PSC during the year and providing data and analysis-driven picture of the peace and security performance of the AU. It also

1 *The PSC became operational in March 2004. Its official launch was on 25 May 2004. For more details on the operationalization and launch of the PSC, See, Amani Africa (2024), The African Union Peace and Security Council Handbook, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-handbook-2024/*

contributes to identifying lessons from what transpired in 2024 that could be instructive for enhancing the effective functioning of the PSC in the execution of its mandate. Strategically, it draws out the geopolitical dynamics, threats and macro-level developments signifying the shifts affecting both the peace and security landscape and the functioning of the AU and its peace and security work, characterised by the various attributes of the emergence of a new era of insecurity and instability.

Further to providing insights into and analysis of the performance of this premier continental peace and security decision-making body within the foregoing context, the review thus discusses the major dynamics and trends that can be discerned from the various peace and security and political events of 2024, thereby contextualizing the analysis within the framework of the challenges and changes of the peace and security situation of Africa. The analysis of the major strategic and geopolitical developments shaping the peace and security landscape of the continent helps investigate whether and how the AU's peace and security system is coming to grips with and positioning itself vis-à-vis these challenges and changes. For the review, Amani Africa draws on its year-long data collection and research, situating the PSC's activities within the broader peace and security landscape in which it operated.

II. NEW ERA OF INSECURITY AND INSTABILITY

Our major research work on Silencing the Guns released in October 2024 painted a bleak picture of the peace and security trends of the continent.[2] A major conclusion of the research is while the number and complexity of conflicts is rising in Africa with changing dynamics, the expanding gulf between the demand for effective response to these conflicts and the reality of the provision of responses continue to deplete the credibility of the AU and its PSC. The analysis of these conflict trends and dynamics on the continent and developments during 2024 suggest that a new era of insecurity and instability is unfolding on the continent. This section accordingly presents the major features of this new era of insecurity and instability. As can be discerned from the succeeding paragraphs, these features have been in the making during the past years, although they have become more prominent and starker in 2024.

2.1. Emergence of the threat of redrawing of the map of Africa

No doubt that the security landscape of the continent is characterized by the persistence of conventional security threats including intra-state conflicts such as civil wars and insurgencies and the recent increasingly dominating conflicts involving terrorist groups. However, the changing power alignments in different

2 *See Amani Africa, Memo to the new AU Commission leadership from the roaring guns on AU's first decade of Silencing the Guns, Special Research Report 23, October 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/memo-to-the-new-au-commission-leadership-from-the-roaring-guns-on-aus-first-decade-of-silencing-the-guns/*

parts of the continent and the growing influence in and rivalry over various parts of the continent seem to be enabling the emergence of tendencies for the redrawing of maps on the continent.

The region where this threat of the redrawing of map of Africa has become particularly notable is the Horn of Africa. The raging war that broke out in Sudan has once again deepened the regional and ethnic fault lines, leading to talk of another partition as an option. As a recent report on the conflict in Sudan observed '[f]or some from the Nile regions, separation is seen as a way to avoid the violence and instability that they view as having spread with the RSF's advance, while protecting their political and military interests.'[3]

The long dormant situation threatening the breakup of Somalia involving the breakaway self-proclaimed independent region of Somaliland has become active during 2024. This followed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali and Somaliland's President in January 2024 granting seat access to Ethiopia, including establishment of a naval base, reportedly in exchange for recognition. The fierce opposition and tension that this situation has triggered prompted the PSC to convene an emergency session on 17 January 2024, which expressed 'deep concern over the tension between Ethiopia and Somalia and its potential adverse impact on peace, security and stability of the region.' Additionally, the PSC reaffirmed its strong commitment and support for preserving the unity, territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of all Member States in accordance with Article 4 of the Constitutive Act and Article 4 of the PSC Protocol as well as the UN Charter.[4] Despite the de-escalation of tension between Addis Ababa and Mogadishu under the Türkiye mediation along with the stalling of the implementation of the MoU, the de jure recognition of Somaliland has gained renewed impetus with the election of Donald Trump as President of the U.S whose administration include people with longstanding support for Somaliland recognition which may also allow the U.S to gain new foothold along the Horn of Africa coast in addition to its base in Djibouti.

The other region that is feared to have the threat of the redrawing of the map of Africa is the Great Lakes Region, as one of the keen observers of the region pointed out in an article titled 'The Eastern DRC war could reshape the region.'[5] He notes, among others, that 'AFC-M23 control in eastern DRC could push the FDLR 400km further away and Kigali would have a real sphere of influence at last.'[6] While on the one had the loss by Kinshasa of large territories in Eastern DRC to the M23 and the deepening of M23's grip in the region including with the establishment of new administrative structures marginalizing those established under the constitutional system of DRC reflects the fragmentation of DRC's territory as highlighted below, it can also represent a threat of the

3 *Crisis Group, Sudan's Calamitous War: Finding a Path toward Peace, Africa Briefing N°204, 21 January 2025, p.5, available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/b204-sudans-calamitous-war-finding-path-toward-peace*

4 *PSC, Press statement on the situation between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Federal Republic of Somalia, 1192nd session of the PSC (17 January 2024).*

5 *The Continent magazine, Issue 189, 9 February 2025, pp.15-17.*

6 *Ibid, 17.*

redrawing of the map in this region.[7]

2.2. Increase in the number and complexity of conflicts, with the emergence of parts of the continent as epicenter of terrorism globally deepening

Both the 23 situations that the PSC has been seized with, involving 17 countries and the data from global conflict datasets, as discussed in our special report,[8] show that the number and complexity of conflicts on the continent has grown. The impact and geographic spread of these conflicts have also surged. One of the major factors for this increase in the number and geographic spread of conflicts is the rise and rise of conflicts involving terrorism.[9] Reports indicate that terrorist incidents and related fatalities in Africa reached unprecedented levels in 2024, highlighting the persistence escalation of conflicts involving terrorist groups. Civilians continued to bear the brunt of the violence in 2024, accounting for 67% of all fatalities.

The report of the AU Commission on combating terrorism in Africa, which was submitted to the PSC's 1237th session on 23 October 2024, identified the Sahel, West, East and Central Africa as the most affected regions, with Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Cameroon being the most severely affected nations.[10] Together, these countries accounted for over 79% of all attacks and 80% of terrorism-related deaths. Notably, Cameroon replaced Nigeria on the list compared to last year. Al-Shabaab, operating in the Horn of Africa, and Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), or the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM), operating in the Sahel, continued to dominate the continent's terrorism landscape.

Of significance is the changing regional and geopolitical alignments that accompany and reinforce the persisting threat of terrorism in the Sahel and the entanglement of the threat with other complicating dynamics.[11] Apart from the rapture of the old relations of the Sahelian countries with the severing of ties with France and the departure of western security presence and cooperation, these changes are characterized by the establishment of new allies and entrance of new actors, including the Wagner Group, now operating under the name Africa Corps. A briefing by the AU Counter Terrorism Centre (AUCTC) to the PSC during its 1247th session on 27

7 *The Economist, 'Rwanda's reckless plan to redraw the map of Africa: The fall of Goma could trigger another Congo conflict,' 27 January 2025, available at:https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2025/01/27/rwandas-reckless-plan-to-redraw-the-map-of-africa?giftId=e22a3960-40aa-409f-86b1-8cf4dcb113f3&utm_campaign=gifted_article*

8 *See Amani Africa, Memo to the new AU Commission leadership from the roaring guns on AU's first decade of Silencing the Guns, Special Research Report 23 (October 2024).*

9 *See Amani Africa, The growing threat of terrorism: A product of misdiagnosis and faulty policy response?, Special Research Report 13 (May 2022).*

10 *Report of the AU Commission on Combatting Terrorism in the Continent (PSC/PR/RPT.1237 (2024)), available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1237-Report-EN.pdf*

11 *The complicating dynamics include the increasing use of drones and other sophisticated technologies by terrorist groups, fragmentation and proliferation of actors, governance deficit and weak state capacities, dangerous links between terrorism and transnational criminal networks, proliferation of illicit arms, and the use of illegal exploitation of natural resources.*

November 2024, highlighted the evolving dynamics in the region, including the growing presence of mercenaries, private security companies (PMCs), and ethnic-based self-defense groups.[12] The activities of ethnic-based self-defenses also risk deepening ethnic divides and escalating inter-communal violence.[13]

The persisting threat of conflicts involving terrorist groups while prominent in the Sahel is not confined to the Sahel. The spillover from the escalation in Central Sahel countries is increasingly impacting coastal West Africa in 2024, notably Benin and Togo experiencing a 40% increase in attacks compared to the first quarter of 2024.[14] The advance of JNIM operations in these countries presents, as ACLED rightly observed, a 'deliberate and strategic expansion rather than mere spillover.'[15]

The Lake Chad Basin remains another terrorism hotspot, with attacks rising by 15% between April and September 2024. Civilian casualties surged by a staggering 92% compared to the period from January to March 2024, according to data from AUCTC.

In East and the Horn of Africa, Al-Shabaab remains the dominant terrorist group, intensifying its activities with a 90% increase in attacks in Somalia between April and July 2024.[16]The security situation in Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region has also worsened during the review period. Violence in eastern DRC escalated by 147% between April and July 2024, primarily driven by the activities of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).[17]

In addition to conflicts involving terrorist groups, the other factors for the surge in conflict situations relate to the persistence of and escalation of some of the protracted conflicts such as those in Somalia and the eruption of new conflicts and crises. While the descent of Ethiopia and Somalia into a heated diplomatic and geopolitical tug of war following the MoU that Ethiopia signed with the self-proclaimed independent region of Somaliland was the only major new situation that the PSC was seized with, the new conflict situations that emerged during 2023 and earlier including Sudan and Eastern DRC continued to rage on and escalate into alarming levels as further highlighted by the analysis in some of the sections in this part of the review.

2.3. The resurgence of inter-state tensions

Despite a decline in inter-state conflicts over the past two decades and the dominance of non-state actors in Africa's security landscape since the end of the Cold War, recent developments highlight the persistence of inter-state tensions as a significant challenge.

12 The Continental Early Warning and Security outlook by AU Counter-Terrorism Centre (PSC/PR/BN.1.1247 (2024)), a briefing note submitted to the Peace and Security Council, 27 November 2024.

13 Ibid, p.6.

14 Report of the AU Commission on Combatting Terrorism in the Continent submitted to the PSC's 1237th session (PSC/PR/RPT.1237 (2024)), 23 October 2024, p.6.

15 ACLED, 'Conflict Watchlist 2025: The Sahel and Coastal West Africa,' 12 December 2024, available at: https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2025/sahel-and-coastal-west-africa/ ACLED, 'Conflict Watchlist 2025'

16 Report of the AU Commission on Combatting Terrorism in the Continent submitted to the PSC's 1237th sessionIbid, p.4

17 Ibid, p.5

In the Great Lakes region of Africa, the resurgence of the M23 and its territorial advances in Eastern DRC in 2024 has heighted regional tension and rivalry to a point not seen in over a decade. The conflict involving the M23 stocked tension not only between DRC and Rwanda but also poisoned relations between Rwanda and Burundi. In January 2024, Burundi took the decision to close its border with Rwanda, citing allegations of Rwandan support for armed groups operating in Burundi. The escalation and expansion of fighting following the collapse of the Luanda process in mid-December 2024 has increased risks of a wider regionalisation of the conflict in Eastern DRC.

Further to these regional tensions in the Great Lakes, a new inter-state conflict erupted in the Horn of Africa at the start of 2024 and escalated significantly throughout the year. On 1 January 2024, Ethiopia and Somaliland—a self-declared breakaway region of Somalia—signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) granting Ethiopia access to the sea in exchange for potential recognition of Somaliland as a state. Somalia condemned the agreement as a flagrant violation of its territorial sovereignty and integrity, unleashing nationalist uproar and intensifying tensions in the region.

The tension has transformed the map of the regional alliances in the Horn of Africa. Somalia, angered by the MoU, launched engagements for advancing more closer ties with Eritrea and Egypt. Somalia further strengthened its military cooperation with Egypt, a nation already at odds with Ethiopia over the use of the Nile River. These changes have raised concerns about Somalia becoming a proxy battleground, complicating an already complicated security landscape. Following the Ankara Declaration of 11 December 2024, the tension between Somalia and Ethiopia hugely eased. Yet, the geopolitical consequences of the tension continue to unfold as highlighted by the uncertainties around the level of Ethiopia's troops to remain part of the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) and their locations and the apprehension in Addis Ababa about the agreement between Somalia and Egypt on the deployment of Egyptian troops in Somalia both within and outside AUSSOM. This issue likely to remain a critical peace and security concern to closely watch in 2025.

The tension between Chad and Sudan reached its height in 2024. The fallout between D'Njamena and Port Sudan emerged following reports of Chad becoming the conduit for supply of arms and weapons by the United Arab Emirates to the RSF. In November 2024, Sudan filed legal action against Chad to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.[18] Chad responded accusing Sudan of supporting armed groups bent on destabilising Chad.

In West Africa, tension erupted between Niger and Benin following the July 2023 coup in Niger. The two countries have been in a tug of war over the opening of the common borders of the two countries and the export of oil by Niger via Benin. Despite signs of de-escalation and reconciliation following Chinese mediation, accusations by General Abdourahamane Tiani, leader of Niger's junta, that Benin is serving as rare base for

18 Sudan Tribune, 'Sudan accuses Chad of aiding RSF in complaint to African Rights Commission,' Sudan Tribune (6 November 2024), available at: https://sudantribune.com/article292971/

terrorists and wanting destabilise Niger at the end of December prompted Benin's authorities to send letter of protest about the accusation and summon Nigerian diplomat to demand clarification.[19]

2.4. Humanitarian emergencies punctuated by atrocity crimes and conflict induced famine

The annual report of the AU on the humanitarian situation highlights the dire humanitarian consequences of conflicts and violence in Africa. It observed that the already dire humanitarian situation with 40 million people forcibly displaced 'continued to steadily rise during and at the end of the year (2024) …(reaching) over 45 million people.'[20] The conflicts in Sudan and the DRC account for the lion share of forcible displacement on the continent during 2024. The AU report accordingly pointed out that the conflict in Sudan is responsible for 45% of total new displacements followed by the one in DRC which recorded the second highest displacement figure. As our report established, the alarming level of the persisting rise in forcible displacement in recent years that continued into 2024 is a result of the increase in the number and complexity as well as expansion in the geographic spread of conflicts on the continent.[21]

Further compounding this persistently dire humanitarian situation are the tightening of the humanitarian space on account of restrictions and violations as well as shrinking resources to meet the growing humanitarian needs. Conflicts in recent years and 2024 are characterized by disregard of the rules of war and obligations for protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and the deliberate infliction of violence and other forms of harm on civilians. For example, the weaponization of food by the conflicting parties in Sudan has led to the emergence of famine in various parts of Sudan. Famine conditions have been confirmed in multiple areas, including the Zamzam, Al Salam, and Abu Shouk IDP camps in North Darfur, as well as the Western Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan. Projections indicate that by mid-2025, famine will extend to five additional regions, with 17 other areas at high risk.[22] Over 16% of households in affected zones are experiencing catastrophic food insecurity due to severe disruptions in food production and the collapse of market systems.

One of the other features of the war in Sudan is the perpetration of mass atrocities, including widespread sexual and gender-based violence.[23] While

19 Agence France Presse, 'Benin protests remarks by Niger Junta chief,' 31 December 2024, available at: https://www.barrons.com/articles/benin-protests-remarks-by-niger-junta-chief-869e5584

20 AU Commission, Report of the Commission on the humanitarian situation in Africa (January-December 2024) AU Doc EX.CL/1572 (XLVI).

21 See Amani Africa, Memo to the new AU Commission leadership from the roaring guns on AU's first decade of Silencing the Guns, Special Research Report 23 (October 2024). https://amaniafrica-et.org/memo-to-the-new-au-commission-leadership-from-the-roaring-guns-on-aus-first-decade-of-silencing-the-guns/

22 UNICEF, 'Food and nutrition crisis deepens across Sudan as famine identified in additional areas,' 24 December 2024, available at: https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/food-and-nutrition-crisis-deepens-across-sudan-famine-identified-additional-areas#:~:text=Famine%20is%20projected%20in%20five,areas%20during%20the%20same%20period.

23 United Nations (UN) Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan 23 October 2024. , available at:. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf

RSF has been reported to be engaging in some of the most atrocious violence against civilians and bears the most responsibility as its actions in El Gezira attest, both the SAF and RSF have been engaged in hostilities with little regard to international humanitarian law and international human rights law.[24] In this context, a significant development in response to the widespread violations over nearly two years of conflict has been the December 2024 U.S. government's determination that the RSF, under General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, has committed acts of genocide.

The main factor for the fact that conflicts take a heavy toll on civilians relates to the deliberate targeting of civilians and the resort of conflict parties to indiscriminate use of force. In this regard, the PSC itself expressed concern 'over the escalation of violations of international humanitarian law, including deliberate attacks against civilians, attacks on public infrastructure, camps hosting IDPs and obstacles to humanitarian access.'[25]

Yet, AU has as yet to take any concrete action beyond PSC sessions and such expressions of concern to make good on PSC's own acknowledgement that the principle of non-indifference on which the AU is founded 'requires that the organization cannot be a bystander on humanitarian crises in the Continent.' [26]

2.5. Threat of the collapse/ fragmentation of states

From the Sahel to Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region of Africa, the specter of state collapse and/or fragmentation is one of the threats that has resurfaced. For the countries in the Sahel, the threat of state collapse or fragmentation arose from both the exponential rise in conflicts involving terrorist groups and the lack of effective regional and continental response to the expanding threat. During its 1212th in May 2024 session, the major area of concern the PSC rightly raised with respect particularly to countries in the Sahel, relates to what it called 'the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region due to the activities of terrorist and insurgent groups, and the attendant dire humanitarian situation.' Notwithstanding that the persistence of conflicts involving terrorist groups is at the core of the security and institutional crises facing Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, the PSC, once again, failed to consider concrete steps for helping to address the situation. At the beginning of the year during his address during the opening session of the 37th AU summit on 17 February 2024, the AU Commission Chairperson raised the alarm about the grave dangers of the combination of the spread of conflicts involving terrorist groups and inaction on the part of the AU entails:

> How should we stop watching Terrorism ravage some of our countries, without doing anything? How can we accept just watching African countries destroyed, entire Regions engulfed by tremors and Tsunamis, without doing anything significant?[27]

24 *See Amani Africa, Prioritizing protection of civilians in peace and security diplomacy in Sudan: Challenges and options (November 2024).*

25 *Communique adopted by the PSC at its 1176th session, held on 29 September 2023, available at: https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/1176.comm-en-mod2.pdf*

26 *Ibid*

27 *Speech of H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat Chairperson of the African Union Commission Thirty Seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly*

In addition to the Horn of Africa, the risk of collapse/fragmentation accelerated in the Grate Lakes and Horn of Africa as a result of the worsening of the conflicts in Sudan and Eastern DRC. The DRC has lost its control in Eastern DRC following the fall of large swathes of territory into the hands of the M23 and associated forces. This loss is reinforced by fragmentation of the territory with the M23's deepening of its grip in these areas including through the establishment of new administrative structures sidelining the existing structures. In Sudan, the conflict dynamics including the lack of effective peace process are making the de facto division of the country into two territories controlled by the two rival warring parties, namely the RSF controlled Darfur and parts of South Kordofan and the SAF controlled areas and those remaining contested between the two.

2.6. The falling apart of regional orders

Another feature of the new era of instability and conflicts in Africa involves the fragmentation and falling apart of regional orders. A prime example of this is West Africa. More than other regions of Africa, West Africa is cited as a leading model of regional integration within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Apart from the collapse of Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S), a subregional arrangement initially composed of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, the three Sahelian states of Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali announced the formation of a security alliance in response to the threat of military action against Niger by ECOWAS in 2023. On 28 January the three countries under the newly formed Alliance of Sahel States (AES in French acronym) announced their withdrawal from ECOWAS. In December 2024, the ECOWAS Authority adopted a decision approving the withdrawal of the three countries from ECOWAS after the end of the one-year period following the announcement of the withdrawal by the three countries. The Authority also decided to give a six-month grace period to the three countries for reconsidering their position.

Despite the announcement of the three countries for visa free entry and residency for ECOWAS citizens and the announcement of the ECOWAS Commission extending recognition of ECOWAS-branded identity documents from citizens of the three countries, trade benefits under ETLS, visa-free movement and residency rights, the withdrawal that came into effect on 29 January 2025 deals the most serious and unprecedented blow to the regional integration agenda in Africa. As one analysis pointed out, this necessitates that current instruments and approaches to regional integration need to be re-evaluated to meet the changing needs of states and geopolitical dynamics in Africa.[28]

of the African Union, 17 February 2024, available at: https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20240217/speech-he-moussa-faki-mahamat-chairperson-african-union-commission-thirty#:~:text=As%20an%20illustration%2C%20over%20the,of%20the%20Regional%20Economic%20Communities.

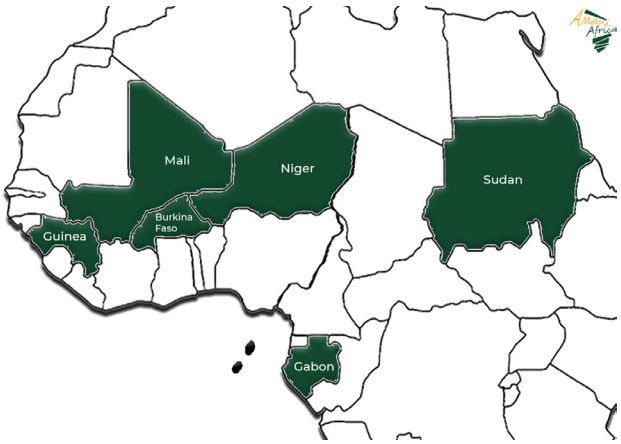
28 Festus Aboagye, Amani Africa, Ideas Indaba, 'The withdrawal of AES states from ECOWAS: An opportunity for re-evaluating existing instruments for regional integration,' 31 January 2025, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-withdrawal-of-aes-from-ecowas-an-opportunity-for-re-evaluating-existing-instruments-for-regional-integration/

Although no breakdown of regional orders similar to West Africa and the Sahel has thus far emerged in other regions, these other regions, most notably, Horn of Africa and the Great lakes region are not immune from the threat of such breakdown. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has faced signs of fragmentation in recent years. Apart from the announcement by Sudan of its suspension from IGAD, the division among IGAD member states has stifled the pursuit of effective role of IGAD in the conflicts in the region including the one in Sudan. The conflict in Eastern DRC has continued to put enormous strain on the East African Community (EAC).

One of the other factors for the threats facing regional orders is the strain that arises from the increasingly not only transnational but also transregional character of conflicts and crisis on the continent. As such, the conflicts in the Horn of Africa, Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel and Great Lakes regions, are not only regional but also cross regional. For example, the conflict that erupted in Sudan reverberates not only in the Horn of Africa region but also in North Africa and Central Africa regions as well. Similarly, the Eastern DRC conflict implicates not only the Central Africa region but also East Africa and Southern Africa. This makes the pursuit of peace making within one regional political arrangement very difficult if not totally untenable, thereby threatening fragmentation and rivalry.

2.7. Stalled political transitions is diverting focus, deepening security vulnerabilities

The year 2024 was anticipated to be a pivotal one for countries undergoing political transitions, with elections expected to take place in several of them. However, it came as little surprise that these elections were postponed, leaving the transitions in limbo. Military juntas currently in power have been consolidating their authority, with some signaling—and in certain cases openly expressing—their intent to remain in power, dimming prospects for a return to civilian rule anytime soon.



Map 1 : countries in political transition suspended from the AU

In Burkina Faso, the military junta that seized power in September 2022 had pledged a return to civilian rule by 1 July 2024. However, this timeline has been extended by an additional five years. Similarly, Mali's agreed timeline with ECOWAS for a February 2024 transition has been postponed indefinitely. In Niger, another member of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), no clear transition timeline has been announced, though the junta proposed a three-year period. Guinea, which had committed to organizing elections by the end of 2024 under a 24-month transition agreement with ECOWAS, also failed to meet this deadline.

In Sudan, the prospect of a return to civilian rule has become a distant luxury as the ongoing conflict plunges the country into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Meanwhile, South Sudan has once again postponed its much-anticipated elections—originally scheduled for December 2024—by another 24 months, pushing the elections to 2026.

Chad's presidential election in May 2024 created a dangerous precedent. Military leader Mahamat Idriss Déby participated in the election and assumed office as an elected president, disregarding the decision of the PSC prohibiting his candidacy.[29] As Amani Africa had repeatedly cautioned, this move sets a troubling precedent for other countries in transition. Indeed, military juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Gabon have since indicated their intentions to participate in upcoming elections.

This trend signals not only democratic backsliding on the continent but also raises serious implications for peace and security within the affected countries and the broader region.

29 Article 25 (4) of African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance prohibits the perpetrators of unconstitutional change of government from participating in elections held to restore the democratic order or hold any position of responsibility in political institutions of their State. During PSC's 996th session, held on 14 may 2021, one of the conditions set by the PSC for Chad's transitional authorities was that the 'Chairman and members of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) to abide with the avowed commitment, not to contest or take part in the upcoming national elections towards democratic rule; and in this respect, assures that the Military will be held fully accountable in this respect.'

2.8. Africa's 'Year of Elections' reflects mixed outcomes, with some deepening crises

2024 is widely regarded as Africa's 'year of elections,' with 18 elections slated across the continent. This high number of elections underscores the general acceptance of electoral processes within African political practices, regardless of the varying levels of democratic maturity among states. However, while many AU member states conduct elections regularly, free, fair, credible, and transparent polls remain a rarity.

The poor quality of elections often exacerbates political instability. As highlighted by the AU Commission Chairperson during the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly on 17 February, 'elections have become, through the extent of their irregularities, factors for deepening crises.' A striking example is Mozambique, where the October 2024 presidential elections triggered violent protests lasting over three months. Allegations of vote rigging fueled clashes between protesters and security forces, resulting in more than 300 fatalities.

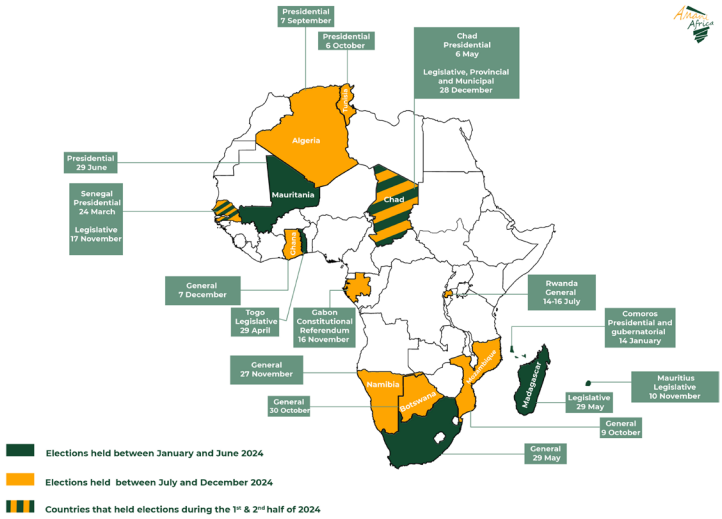
In Senegal, controversies surrounding presidential candidates and the government's decision to postpone elections also sparked widespread protests, ultimately forcing the government to reverse course.

An emerging trend during the 2024 elections was the decline of support for former liberation movements turned ruling parties in Southern Africa. In South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) lost its parliamentary majority in the May legislative elections, compelling it to form a government of national unity.

Similarly, Botswana's Democratic Party (BDP) faced its first electoral defeat in the October general elections, ending its uninterrupted rule since independence in 1966.

Even where ruling parties managed to retain power, the results were contentious. For instance, while FRELIMO was declared the winner of Mozambique's 9 October presidential and parliamentary elections, the country descended into prolonged unrest over alleged irregularities.

These developments underscore the complex dynamics surrounding elections in Africa. While the increasing number of elections reflects progress, the quality of these processes and the ability to ensure they do not become flashpoints for instability are vital to maintaining the continent's political and social cohesion.



Map 2 : Elections held in Africa 2024

2.9. Changing and heightening geopolitical rivalries

The Cold War-like geopolitical rivalry has intensified, particularly since the outbreak of the war between Russia and Ukraine, with Africa increasingly caught between rival blocs vying for influence. This competition has complicated the continent's peace and security landscape in several ways. Beyond the rivalry pitting Russia against France and US in the Sahel and Central Africa Republic and China against the US in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions, the most notable development has been the role of middle powers such as Turkey, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. These emerging actors have deepened their meddling in African conflicts, further hindering conflict resolution efforts.

One notable example is the ongoing conflict in Sudan, where widely reported UAE support for the RSF and backing from Russia and Iran for the SAF have escalated the violence, worsened its humanitarian toll, and complicated peace-making initiatives. Similarly, in the Sahel, the growing presence of the Russia-affiliated Africa Corps (formerly Wagner Group), has not changed fundamentally the conflict dynamics in favour of the military administrations in the region.

The involvement of global and regional powers has not only fuelled violence but also led to lack of support and attention for initiatives for addressing conflicts in Africa. Additionally, despite the deepening entanglement of various powers in different conflict settings on the continent, African conflicts face neglect in a world that is experiencing major wars in other parts of the world such as Gaza and Ukraine. This lack of attention has been notable in 2024 in respect to the raging war in Sudan.

Russia's veto during discussions on Sudan in November 2024 marks a troubling shift: African issues are increasingly entangled in global power rivalries. As highlighted in Amani Africa's *Ideas Indaba*, this veto of a resolution aimed at advancing civilian protection in Sudan signals that UN

Security Council deliberations on African matters are no longer shielded from such geopolitical contestation.[30] This development risks complicating efforts to resolve conflicts and could further destabilize the continent.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE PSC IN 2024

The year 2024 marked the 20th anniversary of the PSC since its operationalization in March 2004. This milestone provided an opportunity for the Council to reflect on its achievements, address its challenges, and strategize to maintain relevance amidst the continent's evolving security dynamics.

This section will evaluate how the PSC fared over the year in discharging its mandate. It will analyse the agenda items addressed by the Council, the distribution of its time across these items, and what this reveals about its focus areas. In addition, the section will highlight key outcomes of the PSC's engagements on specific agenda items and examine both changes and continuities in the working methods of the Council. Other key highlights of the year will be also discussed.

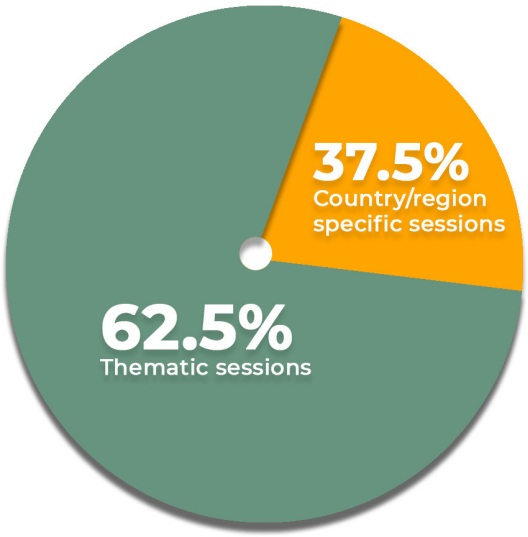
3.1. Highlights from the activities of the PSC in 2024

The PSC convened 64 sessions during the review period, addressing 81 agenda items. This represents slight increase from 2023, with three additional sessions held. Notably, the number of agenda items saw a significant surge, increasing from 64 to 81 (a 26.5% rise).

In 2024, as in previous years, thematic issues continued to dominate the PSC agenda despite its 2023 decision during the 15th retreat on working methods held in Tunis to prioritize country-specific situations.[31] Forty sessions were dedicated to thematic issues, marking a notable increase from the 32 sessions held the previous year. Additionally, 24 sessions focused on country- or region-specific situations, which is fewer by five than in 2023. Highlighting the disconnect between PSC's ambition as expressed in the Conclusions of its Tunis Retreat and the pull of the established practice of how it sets agenda and works, 2024 saw a further rise in the proportion of thematic sessions, increasing from 56% in 2023 to 62.5% in 2024. Conversely, the share of country/region-specific sessions decreased from 44% of the total in 2023 to 37.5% in 2024.

30 *Solomon Ayele Dersso and Kaleab Tadesse Sigatu, Ideas Indaba, Amani Africa, 'Can a Unified Leadership of the A3+ Help in Navigating the Geopolitical Gridlock in the UN Security Council in Relation to African Files?' 28 November 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/can-a-unified-leadership-of-the-a3-help-in-navigating-the-geopolitical-gridlock-in-the-un-security-council-in-relation-to-african-files/*

31 *Conclusions of the 15th Retreat of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on the Review of its Working Methods (PSC/Retreat.15 (2023)), 25-27 November 2023, Tunis, Tunisia, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/15th-PSC-Annual-Retreat-Conclusions-EN.pdf*



Distribution of sessions:
Country/region-specific vs. thematic sessions

In terms of implementing its activities based on the adopted PSC Annual Indicative Programme, 2024 showed some encouraging developments but highlighted that the PSC's performance still leaves a lot to be desired.[32] Of the 31 conflict situations identified in the Annual Programme, 27 (87%) were addressed. As in previous years, Somalia and Sudan received the most attention, with seven and six sessions each respectively. However, while the high number of sessions demonstrates the level of attention given to these files, it does not necessarily translate to effective resolution or meaningful impact, as evidenced by PSC's engagement on the situation in Sudan.

Most of the sessions were carried over from the previous year, with only a few new situations added to the agenda of the Council. One notable new country situation considered by the Council was the Somalia-Ethiopia tension after the singing of the MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland over access to the sea.

Compared to previous years, Mozambique received increased attention, particularly as no session in 2023 was dedicated to any situation in the Southern Africa region. In 2024, the PSC addressed the situation in Mozambique twice: first, in February, while receiving updates on SADC's deployment in the country (SAMIM), and again in September, when it considered the report of its field mission held in July. While the additional focus on Mozambique marks progress in addressing the crisis in Cabo Delgado, the PSC failed to overcome its persistent challenge of proactively preventing crises from escalating. This was evident in the electoral crisis that erupted in Mozambique following the disputed October presidential elections.

An important development in this regard was the cancellation of an emergency session initially planned for 13 November 2024, during which the PSC intended to address the post-election violence in Mozambique. The session was ultimately withdrawn, reportedly due to Mozambique's refusal to cooperate. This was not the first instance of Mozambique resisting consideration by the PSC. A similar situation occurred in May 2021, when the PSC removed a planned session on Cabo Delgado during a time of escalating terrorism in the province.

Such refusals are at odds with the PSC Protocol, particularly Articles 7(4) and 12(6), which impose a duty on Member States to cooperate with the PSC and facilitate preventive actions. Mozambique's stance highlights ongoing challenges in ensuring Member State compliance with these obligations, which are crucial for the PSC's ability to fulfill its mandate effectively.

32 See the 'Report of the PSC on its activities and the state of peace and security in Africa: January-December 2024' submitted to the 38th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly.

Regarding thematic issues, the PSC addressed 30 out of the 40 planned for 2024, achieving a 75% implementation rate. However, the Council's performance in conducting consultative meetings fell far short of achieving even 50%. Of the 12 planned consultative meetings, only 5 were held, including those with the UN Security Council, the UN Peacebuilding Commission, the EU Political and Security Committee (EU PSC), ECOWAS, and SADC.

Interestingly, the consultative meetings that did not take place as envisaged were with the APRM, ECOSOCC, RECs/RMs, ACHPR, PAP, and AGA-APSA, reflecting a tendency for the PSC to prioritize outward engagements over internal collaboration and institutional strengthening. Some of these engagements were (re)activated after long hiatus, just one or two years ago, but failed to sustain the positive momentum achieved in previous years.

On the other hand, the PSC's direct engagement with the policy organs of two of the RECs/RMs—ECOWAS and SADC—during the review period represents a positive development, highlighting efforts to strengthen collaboration with specific regional mechanisms. This approach fosters more focused and tailored discussions on issues of mutual interest to both the PSC and the respective RECs/RMs.

One significant development in 2024 was the transition of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), effective 1 January 2025. Originally, ATMIS was scheduled to conclude by the end of 2024, with the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) assuming full security responsibilities. However, as Somalia was unprepared to take on these responsibilities fully, the country requested a follow-on mission during the Somalia Security Conference held in New York on 12 December 2023.

Following extensive discussions on post-ATMIS arrangements, the PSC, at its 1225th session on 1 August 2024, endorsed the establishment of AUSSOM, which was subsequently authorized by the UN Security Council through Resolution 2767 on 27 December 2024 for an initial 12-month deployment. Despite this milestone, AUSSOM became operational on 1 January 2025 without resolving critical contentious issues, including the composition and funding of the mission.

The other key highlight is the launch of PSC sub-Committee on Sanctions in June 2024, which became operational 15 years after its conception in 2009.[33] The Sub-Committee is established as a subsidiary body of the PSC with the task of supporting the work of the Council in the imposition, assessment, monitoring, evaluation, and lifting of sanction measures. [34] Held its

33 The Sub-Committee on Sanctions is established pursuant, inter alia, to Article 8 (5) of the PSC Protocol, and paragraph 1 of the communiqué of the 178th meeting of the PSC, held on 13 March 2009 and paragraph 12 of the Assembly Decision [Ext/Assembly/AU/Dec.(XVI)] adopted by the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa, on 28 May 2022, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

34 For more on the practical implication of the establishment of the Sub-Committee, see Amani Africa, Policy Brief, 'Without Purse or Sword, What is the Peace and Security Council Sanctions Sub-Committee Worth?' June 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/without-purse-or-sword-what-is-the-peace-and-security-council-sanctions-sub-committee-worth/

inaugural meeting on 12 June, the first task mandated by the PSC was to identify all external actors supporting the Sudanese warring factions, make proposals on how to contain these actors, and report back to the Council within three months from June 2024. [35]

In terms of working methods, the persistent challenge of balancing the national interests of PSC Members with the collective interests of the continent was brought into the spotlight in 2024. This issue became particularly pronounced during the chairship of certain Member States, where national interests appeared to shape the Council's agenda-setting. In response to this concerning trend, the PSC, during its 16th retreat on working methods held in Djibouti in November 2024, highlighted the need for monthly PSC Chairs to fully comply with the provisions of paragraph 12 of the Manual on Working Methods of the PSC and the Annual Indicative Programme of Work.[36] Specifically, the retreat underscored the importance of consistently 'striking a balance between their individual national self-interest and continental interests' while developing the Monthly Provisional Programme of Work.

Perhaps one of the most significant missteps by the PSC in 2024 was its decision to invite Chad to speak during its 1224th session as one of the countries that 'successfully' organized elections in the first half of the year. This invitation represented a complete disowning by the PSC of its own decision regarding the-eligibility of members of the Transitional Military Council, thereby undermining its credibility. It is to be recalled that at its 996th session, the PSC explicitly prohibited the military junta, which seized power in April 2021, from participating in upcoming elections, in line with the AU's anti-coup norms. Despite this, the Chairman of the Transitional Military Council, Mahamat Idriss Idriss Deby, contested the presidential elections and was declared the winner. Aware of the PSC's decision, the military authorities in Chad refrained from inviting the AU to observe the elections, and consequently, the Commission did not deploy election observers.

Although it is customary for the Chairperson of the Commission to acknowledge elections in Member States and congratulate the winner, the Chairperson remained notably silent regarding the 6 May presidential elections. A subsequent clarification from the Commission explained this silence. The Chairperson stated that it was 'impossible for the Chairperson of the Commission to pronounce on the results of such elections unless he were to violate the decisions of the PSC, which he is obliged to respect.'[37] Responsibility for upholding these decisions was thus deferred to the PSC. While the Chairperson of the

35 This request was made by the PSC under paragraph 19 of the communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1218th session, held at the level of Heads of State and Government, on 21 June 2024, on Consideration of the Situation in Sudan, available at: https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-1218th-meeting-of-the-psc-held-at-the-level-of-heads-of-state-and-government-on-21-june-2024-on-consideration-of-the-situation-in-sudan.

36 See the Conclusions of the 16th Retreat of the PSC on the Review of its Working Methods (PSC/Retreat.16 (2024)), held from 5 to 6 November 2024 in Djibouti, Djibouti , available at:

37 See Press Release by Ebba Kalondo, Spokesperson to the Chairperson of the Commission, 21 May 2024, available at: https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20240521/clarification.

Commission demonstrated caution and adherence to the PSC's decision in this instance, the PSC was reluctant to uphold its own decision. Not only did it invite Chad to address the 1224th session, but the communiqué adopted during the session also congratulated Chad as one of the Member States that 'successfully' organized elections in the first half of 2024.[38] This action not only undermined the PSC's earlier decisions but also appeared to endorse elections conducted in direct violation of its norms.

This failure to uphold its own decisions represents a missed opportunity for the PSC to address the original sin it committed in 2021, when it failed to characterize the military takeover in Chad as an unconstitutional change of government. This misstep will leave a notable dent in the PSC's credibility and set a dangerous precedent for other countries in political transitions. It risks encouraging regimes to stage sham elections to disguise military rule under a civilian façade, further undermining the AU's efforts to promote democratic governance and prevent unconstitutional changes of government.[39]

As the PSC transitions into 2025, the systematic follow-up of its decisions remains a critical challenge, reflecting a broader issue within the AU system. During the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly on 17 February 2024, AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat highlighted the severe lack of implementation of AU decisions, noting that 93% of decisions from 2021 to 2023 remained unimplemented.[40] He criticized the persistent gap between decision-making and political will, describing it as detrimental to the AU's credibility. This challenge also affects the PSC, which struggles to track and implement its decisions effectively.

Recognizing this challenge, the PSC addressed the matter during its retreats on working methods, including the November 2023 retreat in Tunis.[41] The retreat proposed three key measures:

1. Dedicating two sessions annually to evaluate the status of the implementation of PSC and Assembly decisions on peace and security;
2. Developing a matrix on the status of implementation of Council decisions that include an impact assessment; and
3. Attaching a matrix to session concept/briefing notes, detailing past decisions, their implementation status, and responsible actors.

38 *See paragraph 2 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1224th session held on 25 July 2024, on Considerations of the Half-Year Report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission in Elections in Africa, January to June 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1224th-PSC-Communique-on-Half-Year-Report-on-Elections-in-Africa-EN.pdf.*

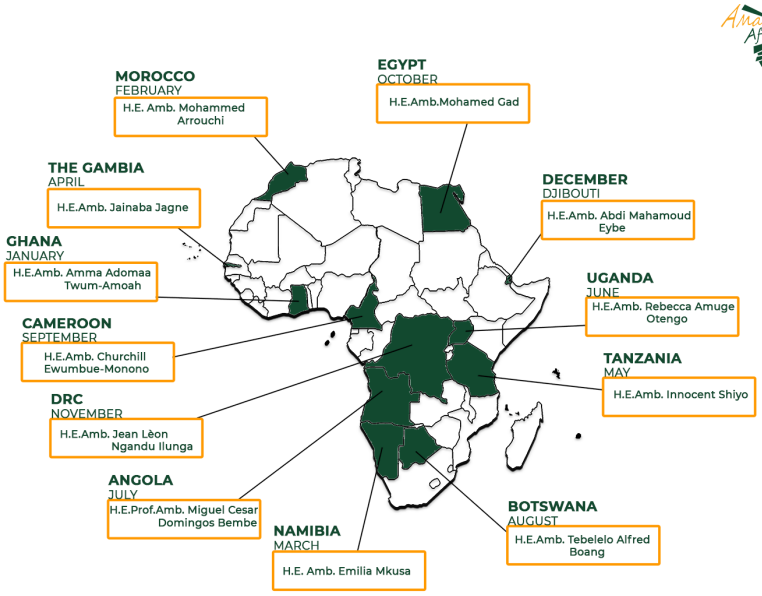
39 *See Amani Africa's Ideas Indaba, 'A Moment of Reckoning for the AU in Chad as Interim Leader Declares Candidacy for Presidential Election,' available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/a-moment-of-reckoning-for-the-au-in-chad-as-interim-leader-declares-candidacy-for-presidential-election/; and Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, July 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/July-monthly-Digest-2024.pdf.*

40 *Speech of H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat Chairperson of the African Union Commission during the Thirty Seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, 17 February 2024, available at: https://shorturl.at/fnxDR.*

41 *Conclusions of the 15th Retreat of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on the Review of its Working Methods, held in Tunis, Tunisia from 25 to 27 November 2023, available at: https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/handle/123456789/2007.*

In this context, the PSC convened its 1249th session on 5 December 2025 to review the implementation of its decisions. Despite this effort, progress in implementing the measures initiated by the Tunis retreat remained limited throughout the review year.

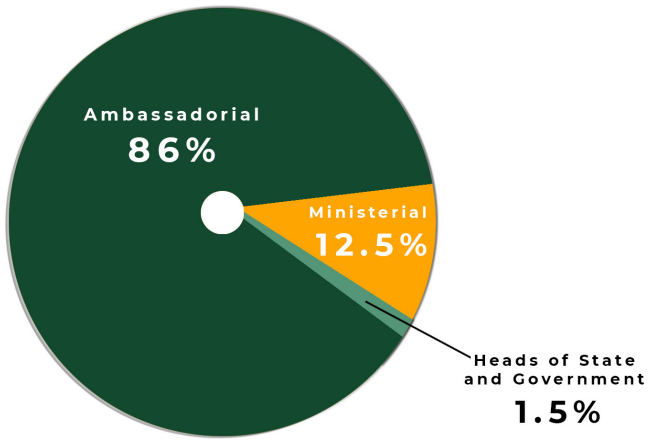
The alphabetical order for the monthly rotation of the chairing of the PSC was largely adhered to during the review year, consistent with 8(6) of the PSC Protocol and Rule 23 of the PSC Rules of Procedure. However, there were two instances of deviation from this practice. In April 2024, despite Nigeria being scheduled to chair the Council, The Gambia assumed the role of stand-in chairperson due to Nigeria's lack of ambassadorial representation. In October, Egypt also swapped its chairship with Cote d'Ivoire, which is set to chair the Council in January 2025.



Map 3 : PSC Chairpersons 2024

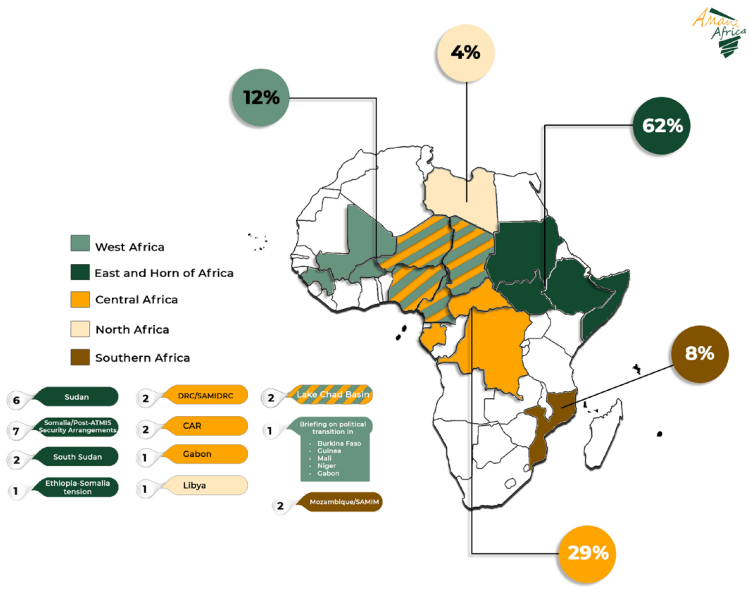
During the year, the PSC convened sessions at all three levels—ambassadorial, ministerial, and heads of state and government—as envisaged in the PSC Protocol. As in previous years, the overwhelming majority of sessions were held at the ambassadorial level, accounting for almost 86% of the total. One session was held at the heads of state and government (HoSG) level, while eight were convened at the ministerial level. Compared to 2023, the number of ministerial sessions remained unchanged, while the number of summit-level sessions decreased by one in 2024. In terms of outcome documents, the PSC adopted 51 communiqués, 8 press statements, and 3 summary records.

A concerning trend that emerged during the review period was the issue of unpublished outcome documents. The outcomes of at least five sessions were not released, namely: 1201st (peace, security and development nexus), 1232nd (civil-military relations), 1239th (briefing by the ICRC), 1245th (implementation on DDR and PCRD programmes), and 1246th (enhancing mechanisms for curbing illegal exploitation of natural resources by armed and terrorist groups in Africa).



Level of PSC meetings 2024

3.2. Engagements of the PSC on country and region specific situations



Map 4: Regional distribution of sessions 2024

Of the 24 region and country-specific sessions held in 2024, 15 (62%) focused on the East and Horn of Africa, maintaining this region's dominance on the PSC's agenda and commanding the largest share of its attention. Central Africa was the second most discussed region, with 7 sessions (29%), while West Africa and Southern Africa each accounted for three and two sessions, respectively. Notably, the number of sessions focused on West Africa declined considerably in 2024 compared to previous years, including 2023, when 7 sessions were dedicated to the region. Conversely, Southern Africa received increased attention in 2024, with two sessions dedicated to Mozambique. On the other hand, the number of sessions dedicated to North Africa did not change from 2023 to 2024. There was only one session on the single situation on the PSC's agenda dedicated to Libya.

3.2.1. East and Horn of Africa

Map 5: PSC sessions on East and Horn of Africa

As noted above, the East and Horn of Africa region continued to receive the most attention from the PSC, accounting for 62% of its country and region-specific sessions. Like 2023, Somalia/Post-ATMIS Security Arrangements and Sudan, both from this region, accounted for the largest share of PSC sessions, with seven and six sessions each dedicated to their respective situations. South Sudan also featured on the PSC's agenda twice, while one session was held to address the escalating tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia following the signing of the Ethio-Somaliland MoU in early January. The issue also received attention during the 1238th session of the PSC during which the PSC requested the AU Commission Chairperson to use his good offices to facilitate efforts for de-escalation between Ethiopia and Somalia.

Regarding Somalia, discussions on post-ATMIS security arrangements featured prominently on the Council's agenda, as ATMIS was set to conclude its mission by the end of 2024. In Sudan, the primary focus remained the ongoing conflict, which continued unabated throughout the period under review. Although 2024

was a critical year for South Sudan, with hopes of holding its first elections since independence, PSC's engagement with this issue fell short of the level of attention South Sudan deserved.

Although a field mission to Tigray region of Ethiopia was planned as part of efforts to consolidate the Pretoria Peace Agreement, it did not take place in May 2024 as envisaged in the Programme of Work. This would have increased the number of sessions on East Africa further.

Somalia: AU mission sticking around for five years, with a different name

PSC met 7 times to discuss the situation in Somalia and Post-ATMIS security arrangements. [42] The first formal session was convened on 3 April during PSC's 1205th session, following an informal consultation on 26 March requested by Somalia. During the informal consultation, the representative of Somalia briefed the Council on the government's proposal of post-ATMIS security arrangements. Subsequently, the PSC tasked the PAPS Department with providing an analytical briefing to offer insights into the proposal.

The communiqué adopted at the 1205th session welcomed the Proposal by Somalia for a Post-ATMIS Security Arrangement in the country.[43] While taking note of Somalia's request for an 'AU-led, United Nations authorized peace support operation' to replace ATMIS from 1 January 2025, the PSC stopped short of endorsing the Proposal. Instead, the PSC requested the AU Commission to undertake a comprehensive and detailed planning based on the situation on the ground, including undertaking threat assessments, in consultation with the Government of Somalia, the ATMIS Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), and the UN, and report back to Council.

Accordingly, the PSC convened a session on 21 May to review the Report of the AU Commission on Joint Strategic Assessment for post-ATMIS security arrangements. Although the report was ready, the resistance from the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and its objection to the technical analysis of the situation on the group led to the non-consideration of the report by the PSC. Somalia did not find the assessment report to be in alignments with the image that the government sought to project. Hence, the session was turned into an informal consultation with the AU PAPS Conflict Management Directorate regarding the assessment of the situation on the ground and the preparation of the report.[44]

42 The issue of post-ATMIS security arrangements gained prominence after Somalia, at the Somalia Security Conference held in New York on 12 December 2023, requested a post-ATMIS 'limited and new multilateral mission' to replace ATMIS upon its expiry in December 2024.

43 Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1205th session held on 26 March 2024 and finalized on 3 April 2024 on the Briefing by the Federal Republic of Somalia on its Proposal for a Post-ATMIS Security Arrangement in Somalia, pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2710 (2023), available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1205.comm_.en.pdf

44 For more analysis on what transpired during the 21 May 2024 consultation, see Amani Africa's Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, May 2024, pp.8-9, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-may-2024/

On 20 June, during its 1217th session, the PSC finally considered a revised version of the report, updated to address Somalia's concerns. A major outcome of this session was the PSC's endorsement of the establishment of a new AU-led and UN-authorized mission to succeed ATMIS. Recognizing the severe funding shortfalls that plagued ATMIS throughout its mandate, the PSC called for the establishment of a 'dedicated funding mechanism, through UN-assessed contributions in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023), along with additional complementary financing sources' to ensure the mission's financial stability. This position of resolution 2719 as the only viable funding modality for the new mission was reiterated by the PSC in subsequent sessions. In addition, the PSC requested the AU Commission to submit a Concept of Operations (CONOPs) for the new mission by the end of July 2024. Troop drawdown was also a key topic during this session. Somalia requested a slowdown of Phase 3 of the drawdown, which had originally envisaged the withdrawal of 4,000 troops by June 2024. By the end of 2024, a total of 7,000 ATMIS personnel had been withdrawn, leaving 12,626 personnel, including 1,040 police officers. These remaining personnel are set to be carried over to AUSSOM until 30 June 2025, by which time the troop realignment from ATMIS to AUSSOM is expected to be completed.

The CONOPs developed by the Commission, pursuant to PSC's 1217th session and UN Security Council resolution 2741, was submitted to the PSC during its 1225th session on 1 August. In this session, the Council adopted the CONOPs and endorsed the new mission, named the 'African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM)'. As highlighted in the CONOPs, the new mission will include a total of 11,911 personnel, comprising military, policy and civilian components. The CONOPs further outlines four phases of the mission, starting with the realignment of all AU troops from ATMIS to AUSSOM in phase 1 (January-July 2025) and concluding with the mission's envisaged exit during phase 4 on 31 December 2029. A peculiar development during the session was the discussion regarding troop contribution to the new mission—a matter typically handled by the AU Commission rather than the PSC. Furthermore, the communiqué adopted at the session welcomed the offers of Egypt and Djibouti to contribute to AUSSOM. This marked a departure from precedent, as a review of previous PSC decisions authorizing AU peace support operations reveals no prior instances where such offers were explicitly reflected in outcome documents carrying deployment mandates. [45]

Meanwhile, the composition of AUSSOM took centre stage during PSC's 1238th session, held on 28 October. Somalia sent a note verbale to the PSC asserting its rights to choose the countries that would contribute troops to the mission, a request on which PSC Members were unable to agree. [46] It became an issue following the announcement by Somalia that it rejects

45 Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, August 2024, p.2, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-august-2024/

46 AU's practice over the years regarding the deployment of its peace support operations clearly indicates that it has traditionally retained the prerogative to determine the design of missions, including their composition, albeit in close consultation with the host state. This has been the standard approach of the AU.

Ethiopia's continuous participation in the AU mission and its preference to decide on the composition of AUSSOM, a matter that is under the purview of the AU Commission. Ultimately, the PSC adopted a communiqué that directed 'the AU to undertake consultations with member states that have expressed readiness to contribute troops to AUSSOM.' At the same time, the Council underlined that troop partner nations that contribute to the mission must respect the principles of the mission, including respect for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Somalia.

During its 1253rd session, which was held on 19 December at the ministerial level, the issue of financing AUSSOM featured prominently. In this session, the Council endorsed the hybrid application of the framework established under resolution 2719 as the 'only practicable solution for AUSSOM',[47] a financing option recommended by the joint AU-UN report pursuant to UN Security Council resolution 2748, which had requested the UN Secretary-General to develop a report on the overall mission design and financing options for mission.[48] As resolution 2719 caps the use of UN-assessed contributions for AU-led PSOs at 75%, the PSC also tasked the AU Commission with developing a roadmap to address the remaining 25% of AUSSOM's funding needs, including the possibility of convening a pledging conference.

Earlier, at its 1236th session held on 22 October, the PSC had engaged the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) on General Supervision and Coordination on Budgetary, Financial, and Administrative Matters (GSCBFAM). At that session, the PSC recommended the use of part of the interest accrued from the AU Peace Fund Investment (as of August 2024, the interest earned over one year is about 22.5 million USD), including the Crisis Reserve Facility (which is about 5.3 million USD), to 'substantially' contribute to the financing of AUSSOM. As noted in our analysis, this marked a significant development, as it was the first time the PSC proposed using interest from the Peace Fund, beyond the Crisis Reserve Facility (CRF), to support an AU mission at a substantial scale.[49]

The financing modality for AUSSOM proved highly contentious within the UNSC, as reflected during the 27 December 2024 UNSC discussion on the draft resolution for the successor mission to ATMIS. After intense negotiation, the UNSC adopted resolution 2767, which authorized AUSSOM effective 1 January 2025 and provided the UN Secretary-General the green light to implement the 'hybrid implementation' of the framework established under resolution 2719, starting from 1 July 2025. However, the application of this financing model was subjected to

47 See paragraph 12 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1253rd session, held on 19 December 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1253.comm-en.pdf.

48 The 'hybrid implementation' of 2719, as highlighted in the Joint AU-UN report pursuant to 2748, envisages the application of the framework to the 'AUSSOM budget with 75 per cent of assessed contributions with priority given to covering, in full, troop reimbursements at a new mission specific rate of 1,000 USD.' The remaining 25% would be mobilized by the AU and UN from the international community as extra-budgetary resources, while the AU would finance the costs of the civilian personnel in the mission.

49 Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, October 2024, p.10, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-october-2024/.

an additional layer of decision-making. Paragraph 39 of Resolution 2767 makes the 'hybrid implementation' contingent upon the UNSC confirming the Secretary-General's assessment of the framework's implementation, including the status of the 25% of AUSSOM's annual budget. This requirement for a second round of decision-making represents a significant roadblock for securing the use of Resolution 2719.[50] Given the abstention of the US when Resolution 2767 was adopted, the uncertainty around the application of Resolution 2719 has further increased following the ascent of Trump to the presidency of the US. This necessitates the resort to developing two strategies. The first is to start the ground work by engaging members of the UN Security Council, including most notably the US. This is not and should not be done as a last-minute work. Second, parallel to that the AU needs to work on plan b that caters for the scenario in which the UNSC fails to adopt a resolution on the application of 2719 to AUSSOM on the expiry of the six month period.

Sudan: High-level attention without headways

As in 2023, Sudan, along with Somalia/post-ATMIS security arrangements, dominated the PSC's agenda during the review year, with six sessions dedicated to this file. The high level of attention Sudan received is evident not only from the number of sessions convened on the situation but also from the fact that the PSC's only summit-level meeting in 2024, as well as one of its ministerial-level meetings, were dedicated to this file.

Unsurprisingly, the primary focus of the PSC's deliberations on Sudan has been the ongoing conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)—a trend that is likely to persist into 2025.

A review of the six sessions convened on Sudan reveals that the PSC's engagement with the situation can be categorized into four main areas: addressing the challenge of civilian protection including the perpetration of atrocities and the attendant humanitarian crisis, external interference in the conflict, civilian political process, and facilitating direct engagement between the leaders of the SAF and RSF.

During its first session of 2024 on Sudan, the 1209th session held on 18 April, the PSC tasked the AU Commission to 'present options for the investigation of the atrocities and accountability and report these to the Council in due course,' moving beyond mere condemnations of the atrocities committed by the warring parties.

Taking this further, the PSC, during its 1213th session, requested the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) to urgently investigate the human rights situation in El Fasher and other areas in Darfur and report back to the Council. The Council also tasked the AU High-Level Panel on Sudan to engage directly with the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adam Dieng, to develop proposals for addressing ongoing atrocities, preventing further escalation in Darfur, and formulating a plan for the protection of civilians. While this session specifically focused on the escalation of violence in Darfur, particularly in El Fasher, North Darfur, the scope of the

50 The Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1253rd session highlighted that ATMIS faced a funding deficit of 120 million USD.

mandate seemed limited to the Darfur region. However, the subsequent PSC 1218th session, held at the summit level in June, appeared to broaden the scope by requesting the AU Commission, in coordination with ACHPR, to investigate and make recommendations to the PSC on practical measures to be undertaken for the protection of civilians. Despite steps taken by the ACHPR including the establishment of the Fact-finding Mission and adoption of its terms of reference, the actual investigation has not become operational as at the end of 2024.

The other issue of a particular interest to the Council that consistently featured in the outcomes of PSC sessions on Sudan is external interference in the conflict. During its 1209th session, the PSC appealed to all actors providing military support to the belligerents to refrain from further fueling the conflict. But, PSC's 1218th session, took a more decisive approach by directing its newly launched Sub-Committee on Sanctions to 'identify all external actors supporting the warring factions militarily, financially and politically, as well as make proposals on how to contain each of them within a stipulated timeframe not exceeding three (3) months from June 2024.'[51] Although the report was due in September 2024, there is no indication that any steps were taken to act on this assignment from the PSC.

The other aspect of the PSC's focus concerned the implementation of the mandate of the AU High-Level Panel on the Resolution of the Conflict in Sudan, particularly on the convening of inter-Sudanese political dialogue. The Panel, in collaboration with the IGAD Special Envoy, convened two preparatory meetings for the Inter-Sudanese Political Dialogue in July and August. Questions remain about when and how the dialogue will take place and whether the Panel has the required political leverage to convene the dialogue amid deeply divided Sudanese civilian actors.

Yet, as peace initiatives by various actors, including the AU Panel and the Jeddah Talks make no tangible progress for securing a negotiated settlement between the conflicting parties, the AU, during its 1218th session, agreed to establish a PSC Presidential Ad Hoc Committee on Sudan.[52] This committee was tasked with facilitating face-to-face engagements between the leaders of the SAF and RSF. Chaired by Uganda's President, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the Ad Hoc Committee included Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, and Nigeria, representing the five regions of the continent.

The Committee was expected to hold its inaugural meeting on 23 October in Entebbe, Uganda, but was ultimately canceled reportedly due to delayed responses from the delegations of both warring parties and some members of

51 *See paragraph 19 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC during its 1218th session held at the summit level on 21 June 2024, available at: https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-1218-hosg-communique-sudan-en.pdf.*

52 *See Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, June 2024, pp.11-13, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/June_monthly-Digest-_2024.pdf ; The AU in a race to avert the twin threats of humanitarian catastrophe and state collapse in Sudan?, Amani Africa Dispatch (21 June 2024) available on https://amaniafrica-et.org/amani-africa-dispatch-the-au-in-a-race-to-avert-the-twin-threats-of-humanitarian-catastrophe-and-state-collapse-in-sudan/*

the Ad Hoc Committee.[53] Prospects for progress remain slim, particularly given the composition of the Committee, as some member states are perceived to have taken sides in the conflict, undermining its ability to gain the trust of both parties and the wider Sudanese stakeholders.

The issue of humanitarian access was also a focus in PSC sessions, with repeated calls for the two warring parties to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access. For instance, during its 1228th session, the PSC urged both parties to open more humanitarian corridors for an indefinite period to facilitate the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. Similarly, the 1213th session called on the parties to reinstate the local truce that had temporarily spared El Fasher from fighting and to lift the siege on the town.

PSC's 1235th session of 9 October was the last session of the PSC on Sudan, convened to consider the report of a field mission to Port Sudan conducted earlier that month.

The session took an interesting turn as the issue of lifting Sudan's suspension from the AU became a central point of contention among PSC Members. This sparked debate over how the AU should address military-led seizures of power, highlighting concerns about potential favoritism and double standards, particularly given the ongoing suspension of other states in the Sahel. Some member states also feared that lifting Sudan's suspension under current conditions could deepen regional divisions.[54] While five member states reportedly supported lifting the suspension, others argued that the conditions in Sudan were not met to such a move.[55] As PSC Members could not reach a consensus on the lifting of the sanction, Sudan's suspension was upheld.[56]

The communiqué adopted at the session acknowledged the concerns raised by Sudanese authorities and stakeholders about the suspension but emphasized the need for continued engagement and dialogue.[57] In addition, the PSC decided to reopen the AU Liaison Office to Sudan in Port Sudan, relocating it from Khartoum due to the ongoing conflict.[58]

It is also worth noting that one of the key decisions of the 1218th summit-level session was the proposal to convene an extraordinary summit of the AU to consider the situation in Sudan and in this regard, requested the AU Commission to consult on the date and venue of the proposed summit. This has not come to pass as one of the decisions of the PSC that are never followed up.

South Sudan: Supporting consensus as the RTGoNU opts for another extension of the transitional period

The PSC convened two sessions on South Sudan, one of which focused on considering the report from its June 2023 field mission to the country. As 2024 marks the year for South Sudan's

53 *Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, October 2024, p.4.*

54 *Ibid*

55 *Ibid*

56 *Ibid*

57 *Paragraph16 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1235th session held on 9 October 2024.*

58 *Paragraph 17 of the PSC communiqué adopted at its 1235th session.*

first elections, the PSC's engagements prioritized assessing the country's election preparations and the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), for which the AU is a guarantor.

During its 1202nd session held on 27 February, the PSC underscored the importance of expediting the deployment of the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF) to ensure a conducive environment for the elections. To this end, the PSC requested the AU Commission to airlift military equipment from the Continental Logistics Base in Douala, Cameroon, to South Sudan to facilitate the training and deployment of the NUF.[59]

On the implementation of the R-ARCSS, the PSC communiqué acknowledged 'steady' and 'commendable' progress but highlighted critical pending tasks, including the deployment of the NUF, the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, and the operationalization of the Special Reconstruction Fund (SRF) and its Board (BSRF).[60] The communiqué further urged the Trilateral Taskforce—comprising the AU, IGAD, and UN—to work collaboratively with all South Sudanese stakeholders to achieve consensus on organizing transparent and credible elections within the stipulated transitional timelines.

The PSC's 1219th session, held on 28 June 2024, was convened to consider the report of its field mission to South Sudan conducted from 23 to 26 June. While much of the communiqué reiterated previous calls to expedite the pending issues of the Revitalized Agreement, the session produced notable outcomes. These included a directive to the AU Commission to provide timely technical, material, human, and financial assistance to the RTGoNU for constitution-making and election preparations, including through the use of the AU Peace Fund. As a follow-up to this decision, the AU Commission approved the disbursement of USD 1 million to support the transition process. The session also directed the AU Commission to deploy election observers at least four months before the planned elections and to brief the Council both before and after the mission's deployment.

However, in September 2024, the parties to South Sudan's 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement extended the transitional period by another two years, pushing the timeline for the long-awaited first elections to December 2026. This marks another delay, as the transition period had already been extended in August 2022 under a roadmap that moved the deadline to February 2025. The PSC, during its 1141st session in February 2023, had explicitly rejected the possibility

59 Paragraph 18 of the Communique adopted by the PSC at its 1202th session, held on 27 February 2024.

60 Under the Revitalized Agreement, the RTGoNU, with the collaboration and support of international partners and friends of South Sudan, is mandated to establish a Special Reconstruction Fund (SRF) within the first month of the Transitional Period. The fund is to be administered by the Board of the Special Reconstruction Fund (BSRF), comprising members from the RTGoNU as well as international partners and friends of South Sudan. According to Article 3.2.8 of the Revitalized Agreement, once the SRF is established, the BSRF, in collaboration with the Chairperson of IGAD, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), and the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UNSG), is required to convene a South Sudan Pledging Conference. The purpose of this conference is to mobilize resources for the SRF and support the implementation of the agreement. However, this conference has yet to take place.

of further extensions, a stance that has evidently been disregarded by the South Sudanese parties.

While the latest postponement is unsurprising given the lack of substantial progress on critical pending issues of the Revitalized Agreement necessary for credible elections, it raises questions on whether meaningful progress can be achieved in the absence of change in the political dynamics that stifle progress in the implementation of the commitments and transitional arrangements under the R-ARCSS.

Ethiopia-Somalia Tension: Highlighting AU's failure to uphold 'African Solutions to African Problems'

On 17 January, the PSC convened its 1192nd session to address escalating tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia following the signing of an MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland on 1 January 2024. The MoU reportedly grants Ethiopia a naval base in Somaliland in exchange for recognizing Somaliland as a sovereign state.[61] In its press statement, the PSC expressed concern over the tension and its adverse impact on regional peace, security, and stability. The statement emphasized the importance of respecting the unity, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of all AU Member States, including Ethiopia and Somalia. The PSC also welcomed the deployment of the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, by the Chairperson of the AU Commission to foster dialogue between the two countries.

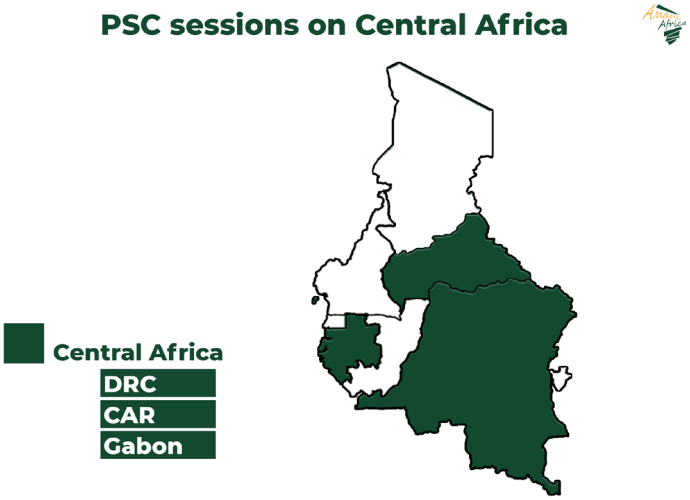
The AU's engagement in resolving the tension throughout 2024 was minimal and ineffective. Despite the assignment of Obasanjo to facilitate dialogue, Somalia rejected any dialogue with Ethiopia before the annulment of the MoU which it deemed to constitute an infringement on its sovereignty. In the meantime and with no further steps being taken by the AU, particularly the AU Commission Chairperson, who has the full authority and responsibility under Article 10 of the PSC to use his good offices, the tension was left to fester and escalate into a broader regional issue with significant implications. This became particularly detrimental for its own mission, ATMIS and the preparations for the transition of ATMIS to a new mission. During its 1238th session, 'the PSC requested the AU Commission Chairperson, in close cooperation with stakeholders to 'use all available preventive diplomacy tools to urgently find an amicable/peaceful solution to the differences between the Federal Republic of Somalia and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia based on respect for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia'.

With no follow up on this request by the PSC, the only initiative that provided a platform for engagement for de-escalating the tension came from outside the continent, from Türkiye. This peace-making process availed by Türkiye bore fruit when Türkiye's President hosted the leaders of Ethiopia and Somalia in December. A major outcome of this summit level talks was the signing of the Ankara Declaration. The two leaders, among other things, agreed to 'closely work together to finalise mutually

61 Ethiopia has never publicly acknowledged this arrangement but only to make an 'in-depth assessment towards taking a position regarding the efforts of Somaliland to gain recognition.'

advantageous commercial arrangements and sustainable access to and from the sea under the sovereign authority of the Federal Republic of Somalia.' The subsequent steps that led to the de-escalation of tension highlighted how the AU continues to cede its diplomatic leadership role despite the effort of the PSC for safeguarding such role of the AU.

3.2.2. PSC on the situations in the Central African Region



Map 6: PSC sessions on Central Africa

In 2024, the PSC's focus on Central Africa showed slight increase from the previous year, holding seven sessions compared to five in 2023. The situation in DRC remained a key concern, with three dedicated sessions, while CAR and Gabon each received two and one session(s), respectively. The PSC conducted two field missions to the region, one to CAR and the other to Gabon, both taking place September.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Inadequate engagement despite a festering wound

Three sessions were convened in 2024 on the situation in DRC, as violence involving the Rwanda-backed M23 intensified in eastern DRC. The first session, the 1203rd meeting held on 4 March, focused on the situation in eastern DRC and the deployment of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC).[62] This session was apparently convened at the request of SADC, primarily to secure diplomatic, financial, and logistical backing for the mission's deployment. [63]

The key outcome of the session was the PSC's endorsement of the SAMIDRC deployment in eastern DRC, despite strong opposition from Rwanda as indicated in a letter addressed to the Chairperson of the AU Commission ahead of the session.[64] The Council not only endorsed

62 SADC decided to deploy SAMIDRC on May 8, 2023, following a request from Kinshasa for support in combating the M23, and the mission was subsequently deployed in December 2023, replacing the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF).

63 Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, March 2024, p.5, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-march-2024/

64 In a letter addressed to AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat on 3 March 2024, Rwanda urged the AU not to authorize or fund SAMIDRC. Rwanda argued that the mission, as an 'offensive force' operating alongside the FARDC and other forces—including the FDLR, local Wazalendo militias, Burundian armed forces, European mercenaries, and private military security companies—could not serve as a substitute for a political process. The letter is available at: https://x.com/ChroniclesRW/status/1764669550019096820.

the deployment but also gave direction to the AU Commission to mobilize the necessary support, including funding from the AU Peace Fund Crisis Reserve Facility (CRF), as well as the transfer of equipment donated to SADC from the AU Continental Logistics Base in Douala, Cameroon. In line with this decision, in September, the Chairperson of the AU Commission approved USD 1 million from the CRF to support the mission.

While endorsing and directing financial and logistical support for the mission, the PSC emphasized that 'there can be no sustainable military solution to the situation in eastern DRC.' It underlined the need for a political solution to the crisis through the Nairobi and Luanda processes. Furthermore, although a quarterly briefing on SAMIDRC was initially envisaged, no such briefing occurred during the review year.

The **second instance** in which the DRC was put on the Council's agenda was during its 1212th session, where the PSC received a briefing on a coup d'état attempt that occurred on 18–19 May in the country, discussed under the 'Any Other Business' segment. In a Press Statement issued following the session, the PSC strongly condemned the attempted coup against the democratically elected government of President Felix Tshisekedi.

The **third session**, the 1222nd meeting held on 15 July, was convened during Angola's chairship of the PSC, which focused on the role of mediation and reconciliation in conflict resolution in eastern DRC. [65]

PSC reiterated that the Luanda and Nairobi Processes remain viable frameworks for reconciliation between the DRC and Rwanda to facilitate the resolution of the crisis in eastern DRC, further highlighting the importance of aligning and harmonizing initiatives to address the crisis. In this regard, the Council requested the AU Commission to roll out practical modalities for enhanced coordination and harmonization, involving the Panel of the Wise and FemWise as subsidiary and complementary mechanisms. However, as noted in our monthly digest, it remains unclear in what way the involvement of the Panel of the Wise and FemWise would contribute to harmonise the two reconciliation and mediation processes.[66] Importantly, it raises a reasonable question on whether the addition of another layer to the existing framework will actually add further dimension to the challenge of coordination. [67]

After a series of talks, the Luanda Process seem to have achieved some progress on 30 July with the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the DRC and Rwanda, which came into effect in August alongside a monitoring mechanism. However, the ceasefire quickly unraveled as the M23 resumed offensive operations around October. By December, the situation further deteriorated when a planned face-to-face meeting between Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame was canceled at the last minute due to disagreement over the inclusion of the M23 into the agreement being worked

65 Angola's President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, who serves as the AU Champion for Peace and Reconciliation in Africa, is also mediating between the DRC and Rwanda through the Luanda Process.

66 Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, July 2024, p.7, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-july-2024/

67 Ibid.

out under the Luanda process. This has led to a major intensification of the fighting, with the M23 expanding its offensive and territorial gains.[68]

Central African Republic (CAR): PSC's long-standing call for lifting the arms embargo yields result

On 11 July, the PSC convened its 1221st session to discuss the situation in CAR. One of the main focuses of the session was the status of the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR (PAPR-CAR). While noting progress, particularly in the DDR process, which has reintegrated over 2,800 ex-combatants,[69] the PSC also took due not of the continuing challenge posed to CAR's peace process as a result of ongoing hostilities perpetrated by the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC).

In this session, the Council also reiterated its call for the full lifting of the arms embargo against CAR, established under UNSC resolution 2127 (2013). This call received a positive response on 30 July, when the UNSC adopted resolution 2745 (2024), lifting the arms embargo.

During its 1241st session, held on 30 October, the PSC also considered the report of the PSC field mission to Bangui and the commemoration of the third edition of the Africa Amnesty Month conducted respectively from 9 to 10 September 2024. The field mission and the commemoration of Africa Amnesty Month were held in CAR pursuant to the decision of the Council at its 1221st session. In the communiqué adopted at the 1241st session, the PSC welcomed UNSC Resolution 2745, highlighting that lifting the arms embargo would significantly enhance the CAR government's capacity to address security challenges.

The year 2025 will be a critical period for CAR as the country prepares for general elections, including presidential, legislative, and local elections. Notably, local elections—repeatedly postponed by the government—will be held for the first time in over three decades. The PSC is expected to closely monitor developments to ensure that the electoral process remains inclusive and does not undermine the progress made in implementing the PAPR-CAR.

Gabon: PSC going easy on Gabon's transitional authorities?

The PSC considered the situation in Gabon during its 1241st session on 30 October, where it considered the report of its field mission to the country conducted from 12 to 14 September 2024. Gabon was also discussed during the PSC's 1212th session as part of a broader deliberation on countries undergoing political transitions, including Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Guinea.

As extensively analyzed in our Monthly Digest,[70] the visit to Libreville highlighted

68 January 2025 witnessed a significant escalation in offensive attacks by the M23, resulting in substantial territorial gains in North and South Kivu in eastern DRC. This offensive culminated in the fall of Goma, the largest city in eastern DRC and the provincial capital of North Kivu, on 26 January. The operation was reportedly carried out with active support from Rwanda.

69 According to the Report of the PSC on its activities and the state of peace and security in Africa for the reporting period January-December 2024, the APPR-CAR has witnessed 9 out of the 14 armed groups join the DDR process while negotiations are ongoing for others to embrace the DDR initiative.

70 Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, September 2024,

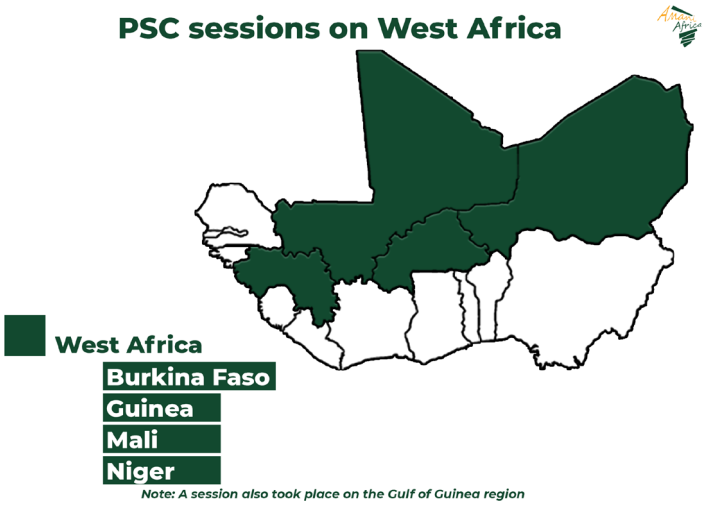
concerns about inconsistencies in the PSC's approach to coups, exposing a pattern of treating some cases differently than others and raising questions about double standards. (A more detailed discussion of the field mission follows in a later section.)

Beyond concerns over the working methods of the PSC towards military coups, a more pressing issue is the omission of any reference to the AU's normative framework, which explicitly prohibits coup leaders from contesting elections aimed at restoring constitutional order. Instead, the focus has been on ensuring that the transition follows the agreed timelines for the return to civilian rule.

Notably, there is no indication from the visit report that the PSC used its field mission as an opportunity to engage the military authorities on adhering to AU principles, particularly the prohibition against coup perpetrators running in elections. The subsequent communiqué adopted at the 1241st session, which adopted the field mission report, also failed to reaffirm this critical principle. This omission is especially concerning given growing indications that General Brice Oligui Nguema, the military leader, may contest the presidential election scheduled for April 2025. A similar approach was taken by the PSC earlier during its 1212th session, where the primary focus remained on ensuring that the transition adheres to the 12-month timeline, without highlighting the non-eligibility of coup perpetrators in the electoral process.[71]

During the field mission, civil society representatives expressed concerns that the upcoming elections could cement General Nguema's position as Gabon's new 'strongman,' thereby undermining prospects for a genuine democratic transition. Despite these warnings, both the field mission report and the PSC communiqué appear to adopt an overly optimistic view of Gabon's transition, overlooking fundamental risks to the AU's own principles on unconstitutional changes of government. One of the major issues that will confront the PSC during 2025 in respect to Gabon is how to deal with the scenario in which General Brice Oligui Nguema would run for presidential elections that will be organised for restoring constitutional order in Gabon.

3.2.3. PSC on the situations in West Africa



Map 7: PSC sessions on West Africa

During the review year, the PSC convened only three sessions dedicated to West Africa, a stark contrast to previous years. This represents a significant decline in

pp.8-9, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-september-2024/

71 See paragraph 16 of the Communique adopted by the PSC at its 1212th session, held on 20 May 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1212.comm_en-political-transition-in-Burkina-Faso-Gabon-Guinea-Mali-and-Niger.pdf

focus compared to the seven sessions held in 2023 and the 14 sessions in 2022. The level of attention given to the region in 2024 does not correspond to the gravity of its peace and security challenges, which include protracted or stalled political transitions, the escalating spread of terrorism and violent extremism, and the impacts of climate change. These challenges are further compounded by the breakdown of regional order following the withdrawal of the three Central Sahel countries from ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel. Given these developments, the PSC's reduced engagement is unjustified.

While the PSC's field mission covered all other regions of the continent, West Africa was the only exception despite that the annual indicative programme of activities of the PSC for 2024 envisaged field missions to Lake Chad Basin, Sahel, and Guinea Bissau.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and an updated briefing on political transitions in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Gabon (from Central Africa), each received one dedicated session, while the situation in Lake Chad Basin (MNJTF), which spans both West and Central Africa, was discussed in two instances.[72]

Maritime Security in Gulf of Guinea

During its 1209th session on 18 April, the PSC received a briefing on the security situation in the Gulf of Guinea, focusing on the response mechanisms against maritime insecurity and piracy in the region. The session highlighted concerns over the multiplicity of initiatives and actors involved in addressing these challenges. While commending efforts such as multinational exercises by regional countries and their partners, the EU-Coordinated Maritime Presence (EU-CMP), and the Combined Maritime Task Force (CMTF), the Yaoundé Maritime Security Architecture, the PSC stressed the need for unified and complementary approaches to enhance maritime security across the Gulf of Guinea.[73]

The session also provided an opportunity for the Council to follow up on previous decisions, including expediting the activation of the Committee of the Heads of African Navies and Coastguards (CHANS), convening its inaugural meeting, establishing a Group of Experts or Task Force, setting up a coordination and/or unit on Maritime Security within the AU Commission, and organizing AMANI AFRICA under the ASF framework to bolster ASF's readiness and capability in addressing maritime security threats in the continent.

Political Transition in Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, and Niger: PSC's engagement in these countries leaves a lot to be desired

On 20 May, the PSC convened its 1212th session to receive an updated briefing on political transitions in Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, and Niger—countries suspended from activities of the AU in relation to unconstitutional change of

72 As the Lake Chad Basin spans both West and Central Africa, the two PSC sessions dedicated to the region were divided between these two regional blocs in the distribution of PSC sessions.

73 Paragraph 9 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1209th session, held on 18 April 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1209.comm_enGulf-of-Guinea.pdf.

governments (UCG).[74] It is recalled that in 2023, the PSC introduced informal consultations with countries undergoing political transitions into its repertoire of working methods, following a decision during the 14th Retreat on working methods, held in November 2022. The informal consultations were established to facilitate direct engagement with representatives of suspended countries.

The deliberations and outcome of the session focused on several issues concerning countries in transition, both generally and in relation to specific cases. A major issue, particularly in the Sahel, was the worsening security situation driven by terrorist and insurgent activities, which has led to a severe humanitarian crisis. Despite the fact that persistent conflicts with terrorist groups are at the heart of the security and institutional crises in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali, the PSC once again failed to propose concrete measures to address the situation. Its response was limited to expressions of concern, without outlining actionable steps—further reinforcing the pattern of meetings that are largely 'performative,' as highlighted in our Monthly Digest. [75]

Another critical issue addressed during the session was the potential participation of those responsible for unconstitutional changes of government in upcoming elections. The PSC reaffirmed its position that members of Transitional Authorities should be ineligible to contest elections marking the end of transition periods, in line with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (ACDEG). Despite this reaffirmation, the PSC has failed to enforce its own principles and decisions regarding the exclusion of perpetrators of UCG from elections. This is particularly evident in its inaction toward Chad, which has set a dangerous precedent for other military juntas in politically transitioning countries. Signs of this concerning trend is already emerging, with military juntas in these countries, some tacitly and others openly, expressing their intent to participate in upcoming elections.

The other area of concern was the duration of the transition period. It is worth recalling that 2024 was the year in which Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea were expected to hold elections to conclude their transitions. However, transitional authorities in all three countries have postponed these elections, indicating that elections are not currently a priority. During the session, the PSC urged transitional authorities to ensure 'strict implementation' of their respective transition roadmaps, within the agreed timelines. With respect to Niger, the PSC tasked the AU Commission to '[e]xpeditiously take requisite steps in ensuring the deployment of a high-level mediation mission to Niger, to engage with the Transitional Authorities, with a view to establishing a transition roadmap in line with national and regional

74 For more detailed discussion on PSC's 1212th session on countries in political transition, see Amani Africa's Monthly Digest for the month of May 2024, pp.5-7. For a critical analysis on the shortcomings of AU's engagement in addressing the situation in these countries, see Solomon Dersso's Ideas Indaba article, Amani Africa, 'Is the African Union failing countries in complex political transitions? Insights from the Peace and Security Council's recent session', 16 September 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/is-the-african-union-failing-countries-in-complex-political-transition-insights-from-the-peace-and-security-councils-recent-session/

75 Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, May 2024, p.5, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-may-2024/

dispositions.'[76] On Mali, the PSC requested the Commission 'to urgently organise a fact-finding mission to Mali to discuss the conclusions of the inter-Malian dialogue, and work with the transitional authorities to identify opportunities for collaboration and implementation.'[77]

The PSC also raised concerns about 'the shrinking political and civic spaces within some countries in political transition, especially the ban on the activities of political parties, associations, civil society organisations and repression of media activities.' In this respect, the PSC encouraged the authorities in Burkina Faso 'to create favourable conditions for political and democratic discourses towards promoting inclusivity', called on Guinean authorities 'to pursue inclusive dialogue with the participation of all political, socio-economic and civil society stakeholders,' and Malian authorities to reconsider their decision to suspend political parties and activities of political associations.

The decision by the three central Sahelian states to withdraw from ECOWAS also poses a serious threat to the regional order in West Africa, but the engagement of the PSC on this matter remains inadequate. Beyond merely expressing concern and urging these countries to reconsider their decision, the PSC called for the resumption of dialogue and mediation between ECOWAS and Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. However, the failure of the AU Commission to take the PSC's cue and take concrete steps for facilitating such dialogue and mediation reflects a lack of urgency and a limited appreciation of the gravity of the situation and the potential consequences of a regional breakdown.

In relation to establishing a mechanism to effectively engage transitional authorities, the PSC reiterated its request for the AU Commission 'to appoint a High-Level Facilitator at the level of sitting or former Head of State to engage with the Transitional Authorities.' Additionally, taking note of 'the leadership vacuum within the African Union Mission for Mali and Sahel (MISAHEL),' the PSC requested 'the Chairperson of the AU Commission to ensure the nomination of a High Representative, which remains a crucial interface in ensuring collective oversight between the Commission, Council, and the Countries in transition.' Once again, the AU Commission did not act on these decisions of the PSC, thereby leaving major vacuum in terms of AU's engagement in the situation in the Sahel beyond the issuance of statements and convening of PSC meetings.

Lake Chad Basin

Map 8: MNJTF Area of Operation

During the review year, the PSC convened two sessions on the Lake Chad Basin region. The 1197th session, held on 30 January, focused on the report of the

76 *Paragraph 10 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC during its 1212th session.*

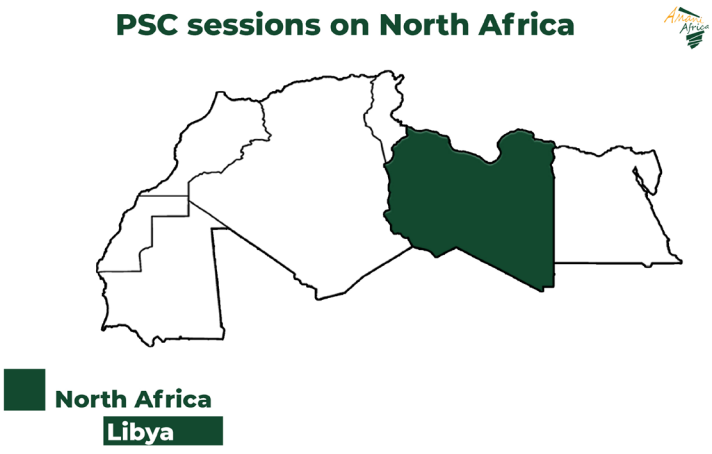
77 *Paragraph 24 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC during its 1212th session.*

AU Commission Chairperson on the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram and the renewal of its mandate, which the PSC extended for one year until 1 February 2025.

The second session, held on 8 April at the PSC's 1207th meeting, examined the situation in the Lake Chad Basin, the operations of the MNJTF, and the implementation of the Regional Stabilization Strategy, Recovery, and Resilience (RS-SRR). As noted in our Monthly Digest, the communiqué adopted during the session was largely lacking in substantive content, with no reference to the security situation in MNJTF's operational areas.[78] Notably absent was any discussion of the implications of the July 2023 coup in Niger on the MNJTF's effectiveness.

One key outcome of the session was the PSC's decision to conduct a solidarity field visit to the Lake Chad Basin during the first half of 2024, but this did not take place as envisaged.

3.2.4. PSC on the situation in the North Africa region



Map 9: PSC sessions on North Africa

Similar to previous years, North Africa received limited attention from the PSC in 2024, with only one session dedicated to the region, focusing on Libya. The field mission to Libya, envisaged in the PSC's annual indicative programme, did not take place in the review year, just as it did not in 2023.

Libya: Marching on the same ground

The PSC convened its 1244th session on 12 November to consider the situation in Libya. The session took place against the backdrop of a high-level visit in October by a delegation comprising Mauritanian President and AU Chairperson for 2024, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, and Congo's Foreign Minister Jean-Claude Gakosso. The visit aimed to revive efforts to convene Libya's long-delayed national reconciliation conference, which was initially scheduled for April 2024 but did not take place. Given the AU's efforts to champion and facilitate Libya's reconciliation process, the session placed particular emphasis on advancing the national reconciliation conference. In this regard, the PSC commended both Libyan actors and the AU for their efforts and underscored the importance of 'a comprehensive and inclusive transitional justice program to address human rights violations, within the framework of the reconciliation process, including incorporating local and traditional successful approaches.'

Another key focus of the session was the long-overdue withdrawal of foreign forces, foreign fighters, and mercenaries. The PSC stressed the need for their 'incremental and sequential withdrawal,' which remains a major shortcoming in

78 *Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, April 2024, p.5.*

the implementation of the October 2020 Ceasefire Agreement. The Agreement envisages the departure of all foreign fighters from Libya within 90 days after the signing of the ceasefire.
Regarding the outstanding issue of Libya's long-delayed elections, the PSC emphasized the importance of 'holding simultaneous national elections for both the Legislative and Executive branches of government, thereby granting the Libyan people a clear and direct say in the elections of their representatives.'

The session and its communiqué provided little indication of progress on relocating the AU office to Libya, as directed by the AU Assembly at its 35th Ordinary Session, held in February 2022. According to the PSC's activity report, discussions between the AU Commission and the Libyan government on finalizing the Country Host Agreement have progressed well, with the agreement expected to be signed in the near future to facilitate the official relocation.

3.2.5. PSC on the situation in the Southern Africa region

Map 10: PSC sessions on Southern Africa

Southern Africa received more attention compared to 2023, with two dedicated sessions focusing on Mozambique. The first session was convened to receive an updated briefing on the SADC mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), while the second session considered the report of the PSC on its field mission conducted in July 2024.

Mozambique: SAMIM's fast-tracked end before the achievement of its end state

The 1203rd session of the PSC, held on 4 March, received a briefing on the operations of SAMIM. The session took place in the context of the decision of the SADC 43rd Ordinary Summit, held on 17 August 2023, which endorsed the decision of the Organ Troika Summit of 16 August 2023 to extend SAMIM's mandate by 12 months, setting the new end date as 15 July 2024. In addition to the extension, the Summit instructed the leadership of SAMIM to initiate a step-by-step drawdown starting from 15 December 2023, with the complete withdrawal to be finalized by 15 July 2024.

Against this backdrop, the PSC's primary concern was the impact of SAMIM's withdrawal on the gains made in countering terrorism in Mozambique's Northern Province. The Council underscored the importance of preventing a security vacuum and emphasized the need for the Government to maintain control over all liberated areas while implementing socio-economic initiatives in the region.

While acknowledging SADC's decision on SAMIM's withdrawal, the PSC specifically requested the AU Commission to conduct a study assessing the Government of Mozambique's capacity to fill the security gap left by SAMIM and its overall readiness to stabilize the country.[79] Additionally,

79 *Paragraph 13 of the Communiqué adopted*

it called on the SADC Secretariat to share experiences and lessons learned with the PSC, particularly regarding the nature, scope, challenges, and key recommendations to inform future engagements.[80]

On the other hand, during its 1231st session, convened on 17 September, the PSC adopted its report on the field mission conducted in Mozambique from 28 to 31 July 2024. The mission was undertaken in the context of SAMIM's withdrawal in mid-July, with the aim to gather first-hand information on the progress and impact of the mission, as well as the broader political, security, and humanitarian situation in Cabo Delgado province. It also provided an opportunity for the Council to assess preparations for the general elections scheduled for October, which later turned violent.

Regarding SAMIM's withdrawal, the field mission report indicates that the positions vacated by the mission have been taken over by the Armed Forces of Mozambique (FADM), with support from Rwandan forces.[81] Despite SAMIM's withdrawal, Tanzanian and South African forces, which were part of the mission, remain in Cabo Delgado under bilateral agreements with the Government of Mozambique.

It is important to note that the PSC's engagement on Mozambique was largely mediated through the deployment of SAMIM. As highlighted elsewhere in this annual review, Mozambique consistently resisted PSC's efforts to consider the situation in the country, engaging only within the framework of SAMIM. However, given the prevailing security and political dynamics, the withdrawal of the mission should not signal the end of the PSC's involvement in Mozambique. [82]

3.3. PSC's work on thematic and other issues

In 2024, consistent with previous years, thematic issues continued to dominate the PSC agenda, despite its 2023 decision during the Tunis retreat to prioritize country-specific situations. Forty sessions were dedicated to thematic issues, a significant increase from the 32 held in the preceding year. The ratio of thematic to country/region-specific sessions in the review year stands at 40:24. While most sessions addressed standing agenda items, several new topics were introduced or reintroduced after years of absences.

The year also saw increased attention to the continental early warning system, with three dedicated engagements. Notably, the Council successfully convened a session on civil-military relations for the first time in September under Cameroon's chairship, following two unsuccessful attempts in May 2022 and September 2023. Discussions on

by the PSC at its 1203rd session, held on 4 March 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1203.comm_.samim-en.pdf.

80 Paragraph 12 of the Communique adopted by the PSC at its 1203rd session.

81 Report of the field mission of the PSC to the Republic of Mozambique, conducted from 28 to 31 July 2024 (PSC/PR/FIELD MISSION/RPT.2 (2024)), available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1231.Field-Mission-Report-Mozambique-EN.pdf.

82 See Tefesehet Hailu, Amani Africa's Ideas Indaba, 'How does the withdrawal of SAMIM affect AU's engagement in the conflict in Northern Mozambique,' 15 July 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/how-does-the-withdrawal-of-samim-affect-aus-engagement-in-the-conflict-in-northern-mozambique/

health security and the illegal exploitation of natural resources, though not new to the Council's agenda, resurfaced in 2024 after some years of absence. The ministerial level session on new security threats was also an important convening, as the PSC faces new wave of security challenges while older threats re-emerge with renewed intensity two decades after the operationalization of the Council.

African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Tools and Pillars

Ten sessions were convened during the year focusing on various APSA tools and pillars, including three dedicated to the early warning system and one informal consultation between the PSC and the Commissioner for PAPS on early warning. This growing attention to early warning reflects the Council's recognition of the significant challenges it faces in implementing its conflict prevention mandate, particularly in bridging the gap between early warning and early response.[83]

The first session, held on 16 April at the 1208th meeting, featured a joint briefing by the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), and the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL) under the theme 'Unblocking Obstacles to an Effective Continental Early Warning System (CEWS).' As the theme suggests, the session focused on identifying strategies to overcome challenges hindering the effective functioning of CEWS.

Recognizing the importance of a robust and fully operational CEWS to effectively anticipate and mitigate conflicts, the Council requested the AU Commission to undertake several measures and report back before the end of 2024. These measures include expediting ongoing AU Commission institutional reforms to enhance the integration of CEWS in PSC decision-making processes, leveraging technological advancements to enhance CEWS capabilities, ensuring the timely dissemination of daily, weekly, and monthly early warning reports to member states, and optimizing the use of the Panel of the Wise and I-RECHE to bridge the gap between early warning, response, and timely action.[84]

The PSC's 1211th session, held on 15 May, was an open session reflecting on its performance over the past two decades in implementing its Protocol. The discussion, part of the PSC's 20th-anniversary commemoration, involved think tanks, including Amani Africa, but did not result in an outcome document. A

83 For further details on the limitation in the implementation of PSC's conflict prevention mandate, as well as the various institutional, political and technical challenges that early warning and early response facing, see Amani Africa, Insights on the PSC, 'Unblocking the obstacles to effective Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), 15 April 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/unblocking-the-obstacles-to-effective-continental-early-warning-system-cews/; Amani Afirca, Special Research Report, 'The African Union Peace and Security Council at 20: From a promising past and a challenged present to a less certain future,' available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-at-20-from-a-promising-past-and-a-challenged-present-to-a-less-certain-future/

84 See paragraph 11 of the Communique adopted by the PSC at its 1208th session, held on 16 April 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1208.comm_en.pdf.

key focus was the need to strengthen the PSC's preventive mandate. Challenges highlighted included funding constraints, difficulties in mobilizing resources, and the stalled operationalization of the AU Peace Fund due to disagreements over its replenishment. While most member states agreed that the Protocol remains adequate and requires better implementation rather than amendment, North African states proposed reforms to ensure more equitable membership. Overall, the session emphasized refining specific provisions rather than conducting a major overhaul of the Protocol.[85]

PSC's 1247th session, held on 27 November, featured a briefing by CISSA, the AU Counterterrorism Centre (AUCTC), and AFRIPOL on the continental early warning system and security outlook, which is a standing agenda item. The session underscored several measures to address persistent security challenges, including addressing structural root causes and drivers of conflicts, as well as strengthening both continental and national early warning systems. One of the key outcomes of this session was the recognition of the rise of ethnic-based self-defense groups, which have emerged in response to security gaps. The Council acknowledged their role in exacerbating ethnic tensions and complicating state-led counterterrorism efforts. Concerning the use of ICTs and emerging technologies by terrorist groups, the session urged AUCTC, CISSA, AFRIPOL, and other specialized AU agencies, along with Member States, to collaborate in establishing a joint Cybersecurity Task Force.

At its 1251st session on 17 December, the PSC received two important updates: one on enhancing the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and another on the review of the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) and the Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies (CSVMS). The first discussion was based on a policy paper developed by the AUC Department of PAPS, with support from the UN, which reviewed CEWS and assessed the institutional gaps created by the AU reforms.[86] It is recalled that the institutional reforms led to the removal of a dedicated CEWS structure within PAPS—widely regarded as a major institutional setback that contradicts Article 12 of the PSC Protocol. In response, the communiqué adopted at the session emphasized the need for 'CEWS visibility and prominence in the PAPS new proposed structure' in line with Article 12 of the PSC Protocol, marking a step forward in addressing the institutional setback.

Regarding CSVRA/CSVMS, a briefing note was circulated on the review of these tools. [87]The PSC expressed concern

85 For details on what transpired during the 1211th stocktaking session, see Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, May 2024, pp.3-5, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-may-2024/

86 See the Executive Summary of the Policy Paper on enhancing the African Union Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and the implementation of early action, available at: https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2243/1251%20AU%20CEWS%20Policy%20Paper%20-%20EN.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y.

87 Briefing note to the PSC's 1251st meeting, 'Review of the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) and Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies (CSVMS) (PSC/PR/BN.1251 (2024)), 17 December 2024, available at: https://papsrepository.africa-union.

over the limited accession of Member States, noting that, nine years after their adoption, only four countries—Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia, and Malawi—have acceded to these processes. The Council also took steps to clarify the relationship between CSVRA/CSVMS and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).[88] While reaffirming both the CSVRA/CSVMS and the APRM country review processes as strategic early warning mechanisms for identifying and addressing structural vulnerabilities, the Council underscored the importance of ensuring complementarity between CSVRA/CSVMS and the APRM.[89]

On 13 March, at its 1204th session, the PSC also received a briefing by the Panel of the Wise (PoW) on its activities and those of its subsidiary bodies. Convened in line with the PSC's 665th session, the session provided an update on the Panel's work, institutional arrangements, and operational methods.

One of the key outcomes was the PSC's call for a follow-up and re-engagement plan to sustain attention on countries the Panel previously visited for conflict prevention. The PSC also expanded the Panel's role, urging it to support peace agreement implementation, AU High-Level Panel mediation efforts, and transitions in Mali, Gabon, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, Sudan, South Sudan, and Chad.[90]

The discussion as well as the outcome of this session reflects ongoing ambiguity about the Panel's role, blurring the lines between preventive diplomacy, early warning, mediation, and transitional support. As highlighted in our Monthly Digest and the 9 May 2024 edition of Amani Africa's Ideas Indaba, this expansion of the Panel's work will not enhance its effectiveness. If anything, it will divert focus from its primary responsibility—preventive diplomacy.[91]

Two sessions on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) were convened during the year, at the 1198th and 1245th meetings. During the 1198th session, held on 31 January, the Council adopted the revised

org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2243/1251%20Briefing%20Note%20%20-%20EN.pdf?sequence=10&isAllowed=y.

88 Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1251st session held on 17 December 2024, available at: https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2243/1251.comm_en.pdf?sequence=16&isAllowed=y.

89 The Communiqué adopted during PSC's 1251st session endorsed the AU Commission's proposal to integrate Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework (CSCPF) indicators into the methodology of the APRM and RECs/RMs to ensure complementarity of efforts. Furthermore, the PSC requested the Commission, in partnership with APRM, to take the necessary steps toward establishing a harmonized framework for the CSVRA/CSVMS, including integration of these tools into the APRM Questionnaire for the improvement of governance in Africa. The PSC also called for the submission of a detailed draft report on the proposed indicators, as well as the draft harmonized framework for its approval.

90 Paragraph 7&8 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1204th session, held on 13 March 2024, available at: https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/1204.comm-en.pdf.

91 Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, March 2024, pp.7-9, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-march-2024/; and Solomon Dersso and Previne Habu, Amani Africa, Ideas Indaba, 'Making the Panel of the Wise fit for purpose critical for effectively delivering on AU's preventive diplomacy role,' available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/making-the-panel-of-the-wise-fit-for-purpose-critical-for-effectively-delivering-on-aus-preventive-diplomacy-role/.

AU PCRD Policy and decided to submit it for consideration at the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly, scheduled for 17–18 February 2024. The Assembly subsequently endorsed the revised policy.[92] The revised policy expands the number of pillars from six to nine. It also reflects a conceptual shift by recognizing the non-linear nature of contemporary conflicts in Africa and integrating peace-making, conflict prevention, stabilization, and peacebuilding efforts.[93]

The PSC's 1245th session, on the other hand, was held in Kinshasa, DRC, under the theme 'Implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) and Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Programmes for Consolidation of Peace, Security, and Socio-Economic Activities in Africa: Challenges and Way Forward.' This session was convened within the framework of the AU Commission's annual PCRD Awareness Week, observed from 18 to 24 November 2024. While a draft communiqué was circulated subsequent to the session, the final communiqué had not yet been released at the time of publishing this annual review.

In the review year, the PSC also dedicated its 1215th session on 14 June to discussing UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023) on the financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs), followed by a retreat on 24 July to further examine the resolution. The session provided an opportunity to unpack the resolution and clarify its implications.[94]

Recognizing pending issues within the resolution—such as the notions of 'case-by-case,' 'AU-led,' the '75:25' funding formula, and the extent to which UN Financial Rules and Regulations apply to AU PSOs—the PSC made specific requests to the Commission, including developing a matrix outlining the sharing of responsibilities, drafting a position paper on implementation, and formulating joint guidelines for operationalizing the resolution.

The other APSA-related session is the PSC's 1227th meeting, held on 15 August. During this session, the PSC received a presentation on the report of the inaugural meeting of its Sub-Committee on Sanctions, which was launched on 12 June. In the communiqué adopted at the session, the PSC endorsed the report of the Sub-Committee's first meeting and commended its reactivation as a 'significant milestone' in addressing the resurgence of UCG in Africa.[95] The PSC also requested the AU Commission to assess the effectiveness of the AU's sanctions regime as a deterrent against UCGs—an important request given ongoing concerns about the regime's limitations, particularly in curbing the wave of coups since 2021. While the launch of the Sub-Committee is a

92 See the revised AU PCRD Policy, available at: https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2017/ENG%20Clean%20version%20of%20the%20AMENDED%20PCRD%20Policy%20REV%2005%20February%2020 2024.pdf?sequence=19&isAllowed=y

93 For more details on the revision process and key changes, see Amani Africa's Insights on the PSC, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/briefing-on-the-post-conflict-reconstruction-and-development-pcrd-activities-in-africa/ https://amaniafrica-et.org/consideration-of-the-revised-au-post-conflict-reconstruction-and-development-pcrd-policy/

94 The session did not result in formal outcome document but the PSC Secretariat has a summary record of the session.

95 See paragraph 3 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1227th session, held on 15 August 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1227comm_en.pdf.

positive step towards strengthening the AU's sanctions mechanism, its ability to effectively address the growing trend of UCGs will likely depend on factors such as its technical capacity and the level of political backing it receives from the AU.[96] As part of efforts to improve follow-up on its decisions, the PSC convened its 1249th session on 5 December to assess the implementation status of various decisions. This session followed commitments made during the Kigali and Tunis retreats, where the PSC agreed to hold two annual sessions dedicated to this purpose.

Key discussions focused on enhancing follow-up mechanisms, including the potential use of the AU Peace Fund's Crisis Reserve Facility, the development of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework, avoiding duplication of decisions, ensuring clear deadlines, and considering financial implications to improve implementation prospects. A notable decision from the session was the PSC's call to reduce the number of meetings to allow more time for follow-up. It also emphasized the need to limit decisions by issuing Summary Records or Press Statements—rather than communiqués—for meetings of an 'update' or 'housekeeping' nature.

Finally, PSC's 1252nd session, convened on 18 December, was committed to evaluating the progress on the Silencing the Guns (STG) initiative. The session was convened within the context of the decision of 36th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly to review the implementation of the flagship project every two years, following the extension of the timeline of the STG initiative to 2030. During this session, Amani Africa had the privilege of briefing the Council, where its founding director, Solomon Dersso, shared the findings of Amani Africa's major research work[97] highlighting that conflicts in Africa have tripled since the initiative's launch in 2013, underscoring the urgent need to revamp the STG agenda through renewed collective action, targeted policy measures, and strengthened institutional leadership to ensure irreversible progress. The communiqué adopted at the session echoed Amani Africa's call, urging the AU Commission to convene a high-level reflection forum in 2025 to comprehensively assess and take stock of the progress made and challenges in the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap to Silence the Guns in Africa as the Roadmap marks five years since its extension.[98]

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96 For more details on whether and how the Sub-Committee can make a difference, See Amani Africa's Policy brief on 'Without purse or sword, what is the Peace and Security Council Sanctions Sub-Committee worth?' 12 June 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/without-purse-or-sword-what-is-the-peace-and-security-council-sanctions-sub-committee-worth/

97 Amani Africa, Memo to the new AU Commission leadership from the roaring guns on the AU's first decade of silencing the guns, Special Research Report No. 23, October 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/MEMO-TO-THE-NEW-AU-COMMISSION-LEADERSHIP.pdf

98 The briefing by Solomon Dersso underscored the need for a strategic review of the situation on the continent and the issues impeding the effective role of the AU and the APSA in pursuing the agenda of STGs. He stated that a strategic review should be one of the priorities of the AU for 2025, and it is our submission that such a review should be accompanied by a special summit of the AU under the new leadership of the AU Commission. The briefing is available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/amani-africa-briefing-to-the-1252nd-session-of-the-peace-and-security-council-on-silencing-the-guns-in-africa/

Elections and Governance

In the review year, three PSC sessions were held to address issues related to elections and governance. Two of these sessions were dedicated to the biannual consideration of the AU Commission Chairperson's report on elections in Africa. The first session on the Chairperson's report was the 1194th meeting, held on 24 January, which reviewed elections in seven Member States—Zimbabwe, Gabon, Eswatini, Liberia, Madagascar, Egypt, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)—that conducted presidential and/or legislative elections in the latter half of 2023.[99] The second session, the 1224th meeting on 25 July, examined the half-year report of the Chairperson of the Commission, covering elections held in the first half of 2024 (January–June) in Chad, the Union of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritania, Senegal, South Africa, and Togo.[100]

While the institutionalization of regular PSC sessions on elections in Africa is a commendable step, the substance of these discussions, as well as the Chairperson's half-year report, remains inadequate in critically assessing elections and broader governance trends on the continent. Moreover, reports from election observer missions often take a lax approach, failing to reveal electoral challenges and irregularities. As a result, these reports risk legitimizing elections that lack credibility rather than contributing to the improvement of electoral integrity in Africa.

Most importantly, the Chairperson's report and PSC sessions on elections should be leveraged as early warning mechanisms to detect potential electoral crises and implement timely measures to steer Member States toward credible elections. However, the Council has fallen short in this regard, as demonstrated by its failure to anticipate and properly assess election-related crises in Senegal and Mozambique—both of which held elections during the review year. As previously noted in this review, the PSC's decision to invite Chad to address the Council during its 1224th session as one of the countries that 'successfully' organized elections in the first half of 2024 was a serious misstep, questioning its own credibility.

Another session focused on constitutionalism, democracy, and governance. This open session, held as the PSC's 1226th meeting, reaffirmed the Council's deep concern over the persistent threats to constitutionalism and democracy in Africa, including the resurgence of UCG, terrorism, violent extremism, and external interference.[101]

Humanitarian Crisis and Action

Two PSC sessions, the 1216th and 1237th meetings, were convened to discuss the humanitarian situation and assistance on the continent. The 1216th session, held at the ministerial level on 19 June,

99 Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1194th session, held on 24 January 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1194.comm_en.pdf.

100 Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1224th session, held on 25 July 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1224th-PSC-Communique-on-Half-Year-Report-on-Elections-in-Africa-EN.pdf.

101 See Press Statement of the PSC issued at its 1226th session, held on 6 August 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1226th-PSC-Press-Statement-on-Constitutionalism-Democracy-and-Governance-EN.pdf.

focused on the situation of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and humanitarian assistance in Africa. The communiqué adopted at the session expressed deep concern over the worsening humanitarian crisis in various regions, particularly the Horn of Africa, the Lake Chad Basin, eastern DRC, and Mozambique.[102] However, it is striking that Sudan, where the world's most severe humanitarian crisis has unfolded, was conspicuously absent from the list of regions facing escalating humanitarian challenges.

As a way forward in addressing humanitarian needs amid dwindling resources, the PSC requested the AU Commission to undertake a comprehensive study to identify financial shortfalls and propose concrete, practical solutions for closing funding gaps. Additionally, the Council urged the AU Commission to lead efforts toward an all-Africa mega pledge, modeled after the post-Malabo 10-year plan of action, and to expedite the full operationalization of the African Union Humanitarian Agency (AHA). Given the sessions specific focus on refugees and IDPs, the Council reiterated its request for the Commission to develop systems for the collection, analysis and management of data and statistics related to these groups for their registration to enhance decision-making processes.

The second session was a briefing by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the humanitarian situation in Africa, a standing agenda item that takes place annually. While the session was held as the PSC's 1237th meeting on 29 October, no outcome document had been released at the time of this review—an unusual deviation from previous years, where it was customary to adopt a communiqué.

Terrorism

In 2024, the PSC held two sessions on terrorism, one more than in 2023. The 1219th session on 28 June considered the Declaration of the High-Level African Counter-Terrorism meeting, which was convened from 22 to 23 April 2024, in Abuja, Nigeria, under the theme 'Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Institution Building to Address the Evolving Threat of Terrorism in Africa.' Hosted by the Government of Nigeria, the High-Level meeting brought together various stakeholders from the continent to address the threat of terrorism and identify pathways for coordination and cooperation on matters of terrorism. A key outcome of this session was the endorsement of the Declaration of the High-Level African Counter-Terrorism Meeting, while welcoming the decision to upgrade the Nigerian National Counter-Terrorism Centre in Abuja to a Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre.[103]

PSC's 1237th session focused on the annual report of the AU Commission on combating terrorism in Africa, which provided an update on the state of terrorism and violent extremism across the continent. The report highlighted a worsening security situation, with a 20% increase in terrorist attacks and a 33.3%

102 Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1216th session, held on 19 June 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1216-Ministerial-on-Humanitarian-Action-in-Africa-EN.pdf.

103 Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1219th session, held on 28 June 2024, available at: https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/1219.comm-en.pdf.

rise in casualties during the first quarter of 2024 compared to the previous year.[104] In this context, the PSC reiterated its deep concern, as in previous sessions, over the **'exponential rise and spread of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism throughout the continent.'**

While much of the communiqué reiterated earlier pronouncements, the session introduced some new decisions. The Council directed the AU PCRD Centre **'to develop programmes to support the building of strong and resilient state institutions in counter-terrorism and post-territorial defeat efforts.'**[105] Regarding the implementation of its previous decisions, the Council set specific timeframes for follow-up. As such, it requested the Commission to report back by the first quarter of 2025 on the steps taken to establish and operationalize the PSC Sub-Committee on Counter-Terrorism, as well as on the implementation of the Malabo and Abuja Declarations.[106]

Climate, peace and security

Like in 2023, only one session was dedicated to discussing climate change during the review year. The PSC's 1240th meeting was convened for consultations on the draft **Common African Position on Climate Change, Peace, and Security (CAP-CPS).**[107] The AU Commission developed the CAP-CPS in response to the Council's request at its 774th and 1051st sessions.

Following the preparation of the draft, the Commission organized a three-day consultation in August 2024 in Nairobi with diverse stakeholders.

It was expected that the Nairobi consultations would mark the finalization of the draft, making it ready to be shared with Member States and submitted to the PSC for further consideration and potential adoption.[108] However, when the PSC convened its 1240th session, it appeared that the primary objective was instead to foster a shared understanding among PSC members of the complex climate change, peace, and security nexus in Africa and to gather further input for refining the CAP-CPS.

The communiqué adopted at the session suggests the importance of further engagement with various stakeholders, notably the private sector, civil society organizations (CSOs), research and technology innovation communities,

104 *See paragraph 3 of the Report of the AU Commission on Combatting Terrorism in the Continent (PSC/PR/RPT.1237 (2024)), available at: https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2188/1237%20Report%20-%20EN.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y.*

105 *Paragraph 17 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1237th session, held on 23 October 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1237.comm_.en.pdf.*

106 *Ibid, paragraph 11 and 14.*

107 *For further understanding on the draft Common African Position on Climate Change, Peace and Security, refer Amani Africa's 20 October 2024 edition of 'Insights on the PSC' prepared for the PSC's 1240th session, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/consultations-on-the-common-african-position-vis-a-vis-climate-change-peace-and-security/.*

108 *See the Press Release of the AU Commission on the conclusion of the 'AU Member States Consultation on Common African Position on Climate Change, Peace and Security, held from 27 to 29 August 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. The Press Release is available at: https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/au-member-states-consultation-on-common-african-position-on-climate-change-peace-and-security-concludes-fostering-greater-collaboration.*

the African Group of Negotiators, and national climate focal points to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).[109] The PSC, however, did not provide the Commission with a specific timeline for submitting the draft CAP-CPS for review and adoption.

Sessions on specific category of protected groups

The PSC convened five meetings addressing issues related to specific groups or categories of people, including on women peace and security (WPS), youth peace and security (YPS), children affected by armed conflicts (CAAC), and journalists. In addition to the five sessions, the PSC also organized Ministerial High-Level Seminar on WPS in Swakopmund, Namibia on 23 March 2024.

On **WPS**, the PSC convened one dedicated session—the 1242nd meeting—and one ministerial high-level seminar. The 1242nd session, held virtually on 31 October, took place in an open format to mark the 24th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). The session focused on promoting women's participation in peace support operations. In this context, the Council made several requests to the Commission, including the establishment of rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the exploration of funding options for gender components of peace and security, including from the Peace Fund.[110]

The Ministerial High-Level Seminar, on the other hand, was held earlier in March as the first in a series of events commemorating the 20th anniversary of the PSC. Among other objectives, the seminar aimed to advocate for women's meaningful participation and representation in all aspects of peacemaking, particularly in formal peace processes across the continent, and to explore policy options for enhancing women's involvement in peace processes. One of the key outcomes, highlighted in the seminar's conclusions, was the importance of adopting a gender parity policy for all AU-led and co-led mediation processes.[111] Additionally, the seminar agreed to institutionalize the 'High-Level Ministerial Seminar on Women, Peace, and Security in Africa,' to be formally known as the 'Swakopmund Process,' which will be held every two years on a rotational basis.[112]

PSC's 1202nd and 1229th sessions were dedicated to the issue of **CAAC**. The 1202nd session, held on 27 February, focused on the 'fight against the use of child soldiers.' The communiqué emphasized the need for a holistic and plural approach to prevent and combat the recruitment of child soldiers. Another key aspect of the communiqué was its reference to the prevention of detention and prosecution

109 *Paragraph 3 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1240th session, held on 30 October 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1240.comm_en.pdf.*

110 *Paragraph 12 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1242nd session, held on 31 October 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1242.comm_en.pdf.*

111 *Conclusions of the Ministerial High-Level Seminar of the PSC Commemorating 20 Years of the PSC by Taking Stock of Women's Participation and Leadership in Peace Processes in Africa (PSC/MIN/CONCL.INAUGURAL (2024)), 23 March 2024, Swakopmund, Namibia, available at: https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2049/Conclusions%20of%20the%20PSC%20Ministerial%20HLS%20on%20WPS%20on%2023%20March%202024%20-%20EN.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y.*

112 *Ibid*

of children for their alleged involvement with armed groups and terrorist actors.

The Council also made several actionable decisions, including requests for the Commission to review the DDR Guidelines for children, develop a Continental Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Framework, operationalize the Child Protection Architecture, and develop a best practices document to prevent and end the recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed groups. The call for the appointment of a Special Envoy on CAAC has persisted for over a decade since the PSC's 434th session in May 2014, when the decision for such an appointment was first made.

Although the 1229th session was framed around the theme of 'inclusive education in conflict situations,' aligning with the AU Theme of the Year, much of the discussion focused on the adverse effects of armed conflict on education, particularly its impact on children's personal, social, and cognitive development. The session underscored the importance of inclusive education, increased funding, and strengthened educational infrastructure and services, particularly in conflict-affected regions.

PSC's only dedicated session on **YPS** was its 1243rd meeting, held on 1 November, which addressed the theme 'Implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa.' In this session, the Council identified key action areas critical for advancing the YPS agenda on the continent, including mainstreaming peace education in school curriculums, ensuring systematic engagement of the WiseYouth network in the AU-led and co-led peace processes, and the need for Member States to allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of NAPs.

Recognizing the proliferation of youth structures, the session emphasized the need for close coordination among key AU bodies—including the Special Envoy on Youth, AYAPs, the WiseYouth Network, the Youth for Peace Africa program, the AGA-APSA Secretariat, and Youth Focal Points in RECs/RMs—to ensure context-specific and synergized efforts for greater impact. The Council also directed the AU Commission to present the draft Continental Guideline for the Development and Implementation of NAPs on YPS to the PSC Committee of Experts for validation, and, within three months, to the Council for consideration and adoption.

On 2 September, during its 1230th session, the PSC considered the protection of journalists and access to information in situations of armed conflict in Africa. The Council expressed concern over the rising number of violent attacks and threats against journalists and humanitarian workers in conflict zones. A key outcome of the session was the Council's direction to the AU Commission to conduct a comprehensive study on the legal, institutional, and policy frameworks governing the protection of journalists and access to information in Africa. The Council also requested the Commission to implement 'comprehensive, forward-looking, and action-oriented measures' to enhance the protection and safety of journalists in armed conflicts and to report back for further consideration.[113] To institutionalize this agenda, the Council

113 Press Statement issued by the PSC for the 1230th session, held on 2 September 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1230.press_.stat_.en.pdf.

envisaged holding annual interactive and consultative meetings on the protection of journalists.

Cyber security and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

During the review year, the PSC held two sessions dedicated to cyber security and AI. Its 1196th session on 29 January considered the draft Common African Position (CAP) on the application of international law to the use of information and communication technologies in cyberspace. This session followed up on the PSC's 1171st session, which had decided to establish an expert-level working group tasked with reviewing the Draft African Statement adopted and endorsed by the AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL). The aim was for the PSC to adopt this document as a Common African Position on the Application of International Law in Cyberspace.

The key outcome of the session was the adoption of the CAP, with the PSC also deciding to refer the document to the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly for consideration and endorsement. The Assembly subsequently endorsed the CAP,[114] making it the only statement to receive such high-level endorsement without going through the usual process of review by the Policy Organs.[115]

In addition to adopting the CAP, the PSC, in its communiqué, reaffirmed its position that international law applies to cyberspace.

The 1214th meeting, held on 13 June, focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its impact on peace and security in Africa. As highlighted in our Monthly Digest, the session produced several key outcomes that could be highly 'consequential' if effectively implemented.[116] These include the request to develop a Common African Position on the application of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in governing the use of AI in armed conflicts, conducting a comprehensive study on the implications of AI for peace, security, stability, democracy, and development in Africa, and integrating AI into all peace processes. In addition, the Council emphasized the need to establish frameworks for the responsible use of AI in military operations, promote AI-driven early warning systems, and create a multidisciplinary Advisory Group on AI, peace, security, and good governance in Africa.

Prevention of the ideology of hate, genocide and hate crimes in Africa

As part of its decision at the 678th session to hold an annual session in April on the prevention of the ideology of hate, genocide, and hate crimes in Africa, aligning with the commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in

114 See paragraph 46 of the AU Assembly decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.868(XXXVII)) adopted during its 37th Ordinary Session held from 17 to 18 February 2024, available at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/44015-ASSEMBLY_AU_DEC_866_-_902_XXXVII_E.pdf.

115 The PSC's decision to refer the CAP directly to the Assembly represents a departure from its usual practice of referring policy and strategic documents to the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety, and Security. This deviation may be linked to the fact that negotiations on the United Nations Cyber Treaty were set to conclude in 2024 and had already begun at the time.

116 Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, June 2024, pp.2-4, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-june-2024/.

Rwanda, the PSC convened its 1206th session on 4 April in an open format to discuss this theme.[117]

Most elements of the press statement for the session merely reiterated previous decisions that have yet to be followed up. These include the request for a comprehensive policy elaboration on 'hate speech' and 'hate crimes,' the construction of the AU Human Rights Memorial dedicated to victims of human rights violations in Africa, and the review of the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report of the OAU International Panel of Eminent Personalities on the 1994 Rwanda Genocide and surrounding events. Despite this, a major development during the review year in advancing this agenda was the appointment of Mr. Adama Dieng of Senegal as the first AU Special Envoy for the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide and other Mass Atrocities on 6 March by the Chairperson of the AU Commission.

Peace, Security and Development

Two sessions were convened on the nexus between peace, security, and development. The 1201st session focused on follow-up to the Tangier Conference, an annual AU conference held in October in Tangier, Morocco, that examines the interlinkages between peace, security, and development.[118] The Conference is primarily attended by the 15 members of the AU PSC, with additional states invited on a case-by-case basis and mutual agreement. Although the session took place on 21 February, no outcome document was adopted.

As highlighted in our Monthly Digest, the lack of consensus within the PSC appears to be the primary factor preventing the adoption of an outcome document.[119] The disagreement mainly revolves around ensuring that the Tangier process remains open and inclusive to all AU Member States. These differing views have stalled discussions and, as a result, prevented the formulation of a final document reflecting the session's outcomes.

The other session was its 1234th meeting, which discussed the theme 'Peace, Security, and Development Nexus in Africa: Bridging the Gaps between Policy and Practice.' As the theme suggests, one of the key issues discussed was how to effectively operationalize the peace, security, and development nexus in policy and practice. In this respect, the Council directed the AU Commission to develop a matrix on the status of implementation of all AU decisions and declarations on peace, security and development nexus since 1991, including those that specifically address PCRD.' Another important outcome of the session was the emphasis on the need to develop an AU Policy Framework on the Peace, Security, and Development Nexus.

117 Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1206th session, held on 4 April 2024, available at: https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2050/1206.press.stat_en.pdf?sequence=11&isAllowed=y

118 For more background to the Tangier process, see Amani Africa's 20 February 2024 edition of 'Insights on the PSC,' available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/peace-security-and-development-nexus/

119 See Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, February 2024, pp.4-5, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-february-2024/

Other thematic issues

In addition to the above thematic issues, the PSC also addressed other agenda items. During its 1199th session on 6 February, the PSC discussed transitional justice and post-conflict peacebuilding, which underlined the need to support the AU Transitional Justice Policy and the African Transitional Justice Forum as critical continental frameworks to guide national efforts and build institutional capacity of Member States emerging from violent conflicts.

On the other hand, its 1200th session was dedicated to the discussion on health security and the promotion of peace and security in the continent. In this session, PSC addressed several issues, including the nexus between health security and peace and security, and measures that should be taken at the continental, regional and national levels to enhance health security in the continent. One key outcome of the session is PSC's call for the AU Commission to urgently develop a 'Health, Peace and Security Nexus Framework for Africa,' aimed at steering policies and mechanisms at the Continental level.[120]

On 13 May 2024, the PSC held its 1210th session to consider the Common African Position for the 4th UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, convened in line with the Assembly Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.843 (XXXVI)] adopted during its 36th Ordinary Session in February 2023. The PSC adopted the Common African Position and tasked the AU Commission with its circulation to member states, RECs/RMs, and partners.[121] It also directed the Commission to convene regular meetings for member states to share best practices in combating the illicit trade, trafficking, and circulation of small arms and light weapons.

The PSC's 1220th session, held on 5 July, was an open session to brainstorm on the Summit of the Future, scheduled for 22–23 September 2024 in New York, U.S.A. Convened at the ambassadorial level, the session was part of the PSC's 20th-anniversary celebrations and served as a platform for member states to reflect on Africa's most pressing challenges, particularly in peace, security, stability, and sustainable development. In the press statement issued after the session, the PSC reflected on the Chapeau and the five chapters of the Global Pact for the Summit of the Future.[122] It also emphasized the importance of an implementation Roadmap, means of implementation, as well as a follow-up and monitoring mechanism to the Pact of the Future.

The discussion on new security threats in Africa and the future of the PSC was another important convening that took place on 25 September at the PSC's 1233rd session, held at the ministerial level on the margins of the 79th session of the UN

120 Paragraph 2 of the Communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1200th session, held on 8 February 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1200.comm-en.pdf.

121 See the Common African Position on the fourth United Nations Conference to review the progress made in the implementation of the programme of action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects submitted to PSC's 1210th session [PSC/PR/CAP.1210 (2024)], available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1210-CAP-on-4th-Conference-of-UNPoA-EN.pdf.

122 Press statement of the PSC adopted at its 1220th session, held on 5 July 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1220-PSC-Press-on-Summit-of-the-Future-EN.pdf.

General Assembly. During this session, the PSC expressed concern over rising inter-state tensions, violent intrastate conflicts, and renewed geopolitical and ideological competition. A key outcome of the session was the PSC's request for the AU Commission to develop a policy paper on emerging threats to peace and security in Africa, to be submitted to the Council by November 2024 for consideration; but it was not followed-up. This decision aligns with Amani Africa's recommendation, as reflected in its Insights on the PSC[123] and special research report[124] , which called for the articulation of a New Agenda for Peace in Africa. Following up on this initiative in 2025 remains crucial, as it offers deeper insights into Africa's evolving security challenges and helps guide necessary reforms to ensure that the PSC and the broader African peace and security architecture remain relevant and fit for purpose amid new security threats, increasing conflicts, and shifting geopolitical dynamics.

On 26 November, at its 1246th session, the PSC also addressed the issue of 'enhancing mechanisms for curbing illegal exploitation of natural resources by armed and terrorist groups in Africa.' Although the draft communiqué has been circulated to PSC Members, the communiqué for this session still remains outstanding. As highlighted in our Monthly Digest, it appears that the Council tasked the AU Counter-terrorism Centre (AUCTC) to undertake a study on the situation of illegal exploitation of natural resources in the continent.[125] It also called for an AU Continental Treaty on the management of natural resources in Africa although the Council fails to designate a specific body to oversee this initiative.

3.4. Consultative meetings and other engagements

In 2024, the PSC conducted its regular consultative meetings with various bodies, including RECs/RMs, UNSC, EU PSC, and other partner organizations. However, several of the annual consultative meetings envisaged in its Annual Programme of Work did not occur. These included consultations with the Pan African Parliament (PAP), the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), representatives of Civil Society Organizations, the RECs/RMs Policy Organs, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the AGA-APSA Platform.

PSC starts meetings with RECs policy organs

In 2024, a major omission was the absence of annual consultative meetings with the RECs/RMs Policy Organs, which have been scheduled annually since the inaugural meeting in May 2019. Despite this, for the first time since its operationalization, the PSC directly engaged with the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council (ECOWAS MSC) and the SADC Organ on Politics,

123 Amani Africa, Insights on the PSC, 'New Security Threats in Africa and the Future of the PSC,' 24 September 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/new-security-threats-in-africa-and-the-future-of-the-psc/

124 Amani Africa, Special Research Report, 'Towards a New Agenda for Peace and Security in Africa: New Security Threats and the Future of the Peace and Security Council,' 25 September 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/towards-a-new-agenda-for-peace-and-security-in-africa/

125 Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, November 2024, pp.8-9, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-november-2024/

Defence, and Security (SADC Organ).

The meeting with ECOWAS MSC took place on 24 April in Abuja, Nigeria, focusing on issues such as UCG, counter-terrorism efforts, and resource mobilization for regional Peace Support Operations (PSOs). Both parties agreed to institutionalize their collaboration by holding annual joint consultative meetings, fostering regular interactions between the Chairperson of the PSC and ECOWAS MSC, swiftly communicating decisions on peace and security matters, conducting joint field missions, organizing joint retreats and brainstorming sessions, establishing focal points from both Secretariats to facilitate consultations, and arranging staff exchange visits.[126]

The engagement with the SADC Organ took place on 30 August in Gaborone, Botswana, with discussions focusing on counter-terrorism efforts, the situation in eastern DRC and the operation of SAMIDRC, resource mobilization for regional peace and security, and broader efforts towards peacemaking and Silencing the Guns. Both sides committed to strengthening their cooperation in conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.[127] They also agreed to institutionalize their collaboration through annual joint consultative meetings.

The direct engagement with specific policy and decision-making organs of RECs represents a step forward in enhancing coordination and fostering more substantive engagement. This approach allows for more context-specific and tailored discussions on matters of mutual interest. Yet, it remains unclear whether such engagements will replace the existing but largely overlooked joint annual PSC-RECs/RMs Policy Organs consultative meetings. It is also uncertain whether this approach will extend beyond the two RECs, potentially leading to separate consultative meetings with each REC/RM individually.

PSC meeting with UN Security Council

The PSC and the UNSC held their 9th annual informal joint seminar and 18th annual joint consultative meeting on 17 and 18 October 2024 in New York, USA. The two councils adopted a joint communiqué.[128] The seminar, hosted in a retreat format in Tarrytown at Switzerland's proposal, aimed to facilitate interactive dialogue. However, limited prior coordination resulted in the PSC maintaining its usual scripted approach. The two Councils adopted a joint communiqué. Despite this, both Councils agreed to institutionalize the retreat format to enhance cooperation and trust and supported PSC's proposal to explore an informal follow-up mechanism for implementing past joint communiqués. The 9th informal seminar was particularly

126 *Paragraph 17 of the Joint Communiqué of the inaugural annual joint consultative meeting between the PSC and the Mediation and Security Council of ECOWAS, held on 24 April 2024 in Abuja, Nigeria, available at: https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/1.comm-psc.ecowas-en.pdf.*

127 *Joint Communiqué of the inaugural annual joint consultative meeting between the PSC and the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security and SADC Member States, held on 30 August 2024 in Gaborone, Botswana, available at: https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/inaugural-joint-communique-aupsc-sadc-en.pdf.*

128 *Joint Communiqué of the 18th annual joint consultative meeting between the PSC and UNSC, New York, 18 October 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/18th-AUPSC-UNSC-Consultative-Meeting.pdf.*

packed with six agenda items, twice as many as the previous year.[129]

The joint consultative meeting addressed four key issues: Sudan, Somalia and post-ATMIS security, the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, and the Great Lakes region, with a focus on the DRC and CAR.[130] Two agenda items stood out. First, discussions on the Sahel were notably cautious, with the joint communiqué merely 'noting', rather than expressing concern over, Mali's withdrawal from the Algiers Peace Agreement and the UN's MINUSMA exit—reportedly due to opposition from a UNSC permanent member. Second, the situation in eastern DRC became a point of contention, particularly regarding the condemnation of foreign military support for the M23 and the exploitation of natural resources. The opposition to such a reference reportedly came from one of the A3 member of the UNSC, but with broader support, the communiqué ultimately issued a strong condemnation of external backing for M23 and called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from DRC—marking a significant shift in the PSC-UNSC stance, likely influenced by DRC's membership in the PSC.

PSC meeting with UN Peacebuilding Commission (UNPBC)

On 15 October, the PSC and UNPBC convened their 7th annual consultative meeting in New York. As recent years witnessed the untimely drawdowns and departure of several missions in the continent such as MINUSMA, MONUSCO, UNITMAS, and SAMIM, the issue of transition from peacekeeping operations to paecebuilding was high on the agenda of this annual convening. In this context, the joint statement issued after the session 'underscored the crucial role of structured transitions from peacekeeping missions to peacebuilding in preventing the relapse of conflicts and sustaining peace in Africa'.[131] The PSC and PBC emphasised the importance of initiating early collaborations with national authorities and integrating peacebuilding strategies throughout a mission's cycle to ensure a smooth transition. In terms of working methods, the two sides agreed for their annual consultative meetings to be preceded by at least one preparatory meeting at the level of the Committee of experts.

PSC meeting with the European Union Political and Security Committee (EUPSC)

The PSC and EUPSC also held their 15th annual joint consultative meeting on 22 November 2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The joint consultative meeting addressed various situations in the continent, including Somalia, Sudan, eastern DRC, the Sahel region, Lake Chad Basin, as well as the implementation of UNSC resolution 2719. However, the consultative meeting was concluded without the adoption of a joint communiqué. This

129 The agenda items of the 9th informal joint seminar include: youth, peace and security, women, peace and security, children affected by armed conflict, climate change, Resolution 2719, and operationalization of the joint working methods between the PC and UNSC.

130 For detailed discussion on each agenda item, see Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, October 2024, pp.7-10.

131 Joint Statement of the 7th annual consultative meeting of the PSC and UNPBC held on 18 October 2024 in New York, USA, available at: https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/aupsc-unpbc-7th-joint-statement-oct-2024.pdf.

marks the third consecutive year that the two bodies failed to produce a shared outcome document, raising concerns about the effectiveness of their working methods and the broader implications for their strategic partnership.[132]

3.5. Other activities

On 25 May, Africa Day, the PSC held a High-Level Colloquium in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as part of its 20th-anniversary commemoration. A day earlier, it hosted a public lecture at the University of Dar es Salaam on 'The Peace and Security We Want.' The Colloquium, themed '20 Years of the AU PSC as a Standing Decision-Making Organ: The Next Two Decades of the Peace and Security We Want in Africa,' provided an opportunity to reflect on past achievements and chart the way forward.

The resulting Declaration acknowledged progress over the past two decades while highlighting persistent challenges, including rising conflicts, the resurgence of military coups, the growing threat of terrorism, and cyber-attacks.[133] It called for strengthening the PSC's conflict prevention role, addressing governance deficits, and enhancing the operationalization of key instruments within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to reposition the PSC for the future.

The 11th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, also known as the Oran Process, was also held on 1–2 December 2024 in Oran, Algeria. This edition took place within the context of the PSC's 20th anniversary, providing an opportunity to assess the achievements of the A3+1 in fulfilling their AU-mandated role, identify urgent challenges, and explore ways to enhance their capacity. The seminar also reviewed the implementation of recommendations from the 10th High-Level Seminar, held in December 2023. The conclusions of the 11th seminar were adopted by the PSC on 5 February 2025 during its 1259th session.[134]

Beyond the Oran Process, the PSC held at least four informal consultations with the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (CPAPS) over the year. These engagements covered various topics, including post-ATMIS security arrangements in Somalia, the implications of the withdrawal of the three AES members from ECOWAS, and the continental early warning system.

132 See Fikir Getachew and Solomon A. Dersso, Will the AU and the EU peace and security organs once again fail to adopt joint communique of their annual consultative meeting?, Ideas Indaba, 20 November 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/will-the-au-and-the-eu-peace-and-security-organs-once-again-fail-to-adopt-joint-communique-of-their-annual-consultative-meeting/; Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, November 2024, p.6.

133 Dar Es Salaam Declaration on the 20th anniversary of the African Union Peace and Security Council, 25 May 2024, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/DAR-ES-SALAAM-DECLARATION-ON-THE-20TH-ANNIVERSARY-OF-THE-AFRICAN-UNION-PEACE-AND-SECURITY-COUNCIL-AUPSC.pdf.

134 Communiqué adopted by the PSC during its 1259th session, held on 5 February 2025, available at: https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-1259th-meeting-of-the-peace-and-security-council-held-on-5-february-2025-on-consideration-of-the-conclusions-of-the-11th-high-level-seminar-on-peace-and-security-in-africa-held-at-the-ministerial-level-in-oran-algeria-from-1-to-2-decem.

Retreats

16th PSC Retreat

The PSC convened its 16th annual retreat on working methods from 5 to 6 November in Djibouti.[135] As in previous retreats, the conclusions included key decisions aimed at refining its working methods.[136] The conclusion of the retreat was considered by the PSC on 9 December during its 1250th session, which the Council not only adopted the Conclusions but also decided to submit them for endorsement to the 38th Ordinary Session of the Assembly, scheduled for 15-16 February 2025.[137]

Notably, the retreat emphasized the need for greater focus on reviewing the implementation of PSC decisions, prioritizing countries in transition, and strengthening collaboration with RECs/RMs, particularly by reviving the annual consultative meeting at least twice a year.

A major concern raised was the growing tendency of monthly PSC Chairs to prioritize national interests over the Council's collective mandate. As such, the retreat urged PSC Chairs to maintain a balance between national and continental priorities. Additionally, amid concerns over the increasing focus on thematic issues, the retreat called for stricter adherence to paragraph 12 of the Manual on the Working Methods of the PSC and the Annual Indicative Programme of Work, and particularly to limit the introduction of new thematic topics.

PSC Retreat on UNSC Resolution 2719

On 24 July, the PSC held a retreat in Addis Ababa to further deliberate on UNSC Resolution 2719 (2023). This followed the 1215th session, where the Council underscored the need for deeper engagement with stakeholders to establish a common understanding of the resolution's implementation and applicability. Although, the retreat did not see the expected participation from various stakeholders, Commissioner Bankole presented a detailed AU Commission report on the political, strategic, and institutional implications of the resolution. The report guided discussions on four key elements: (i) planning and decision-making of AU-led PSOs, (ii) mission support, finance, budgeting, and management, (iii) human rights due diligence and the AU Compliance and Accountability Framework, and (iv) reporting and monitoring. [138]

Field missions

During the review year, the PSC conducted six field missions, twice the number in 2023. The only region that was not part of

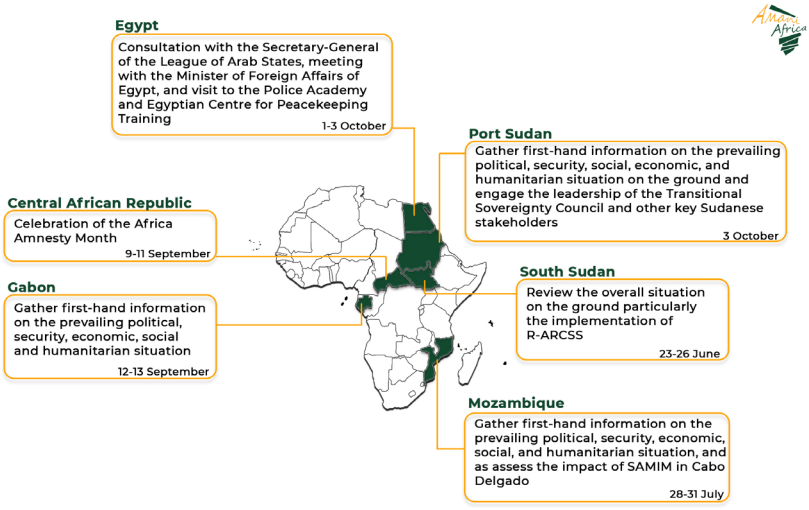
135 *The retreat focused on four agenda items: PAPS footprints in Africa, virtual tour of the ASF Continental Logistic Base, PSC working methods and budget of the PSC, brainstorming on the future of complex political transitions in Africa.*

136 *Conclusions of the 16th retreat of the PSC on the review of its working methods, held on 5-6 November 2024 in Djibouti, Djibouti, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/Conclusions-16th-Retreat-EN.pdf.*

137 *Communiqué adopted by the PSC during its 1250th session, held on 9 December 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1250.comm-en.pdf.*

138 *For more details on the deliberation on the four elements of resolution 2719, see Amani Africa, Monthly Digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council, July 2024, pp.8-9, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/monthly-digest-on-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-july-2024/.*

the field mission was West Africa despite that the annual indicative programme of work of the Council envisaged a field mission to the Sahel region and Guinea Bissau. Countries covered by the field mission in 2024 include: South Sudan (June), Mozambique (July), CAR (September), Gabon (September), Egypt (October), and Sudan (October).



Map 11: PSC field missions 2024

IV. THE AU AND ITS PSC AT A CRITICAL CROSSROAD

With Africa faced with a new era of insecurity and instability, the AU stands at a critical crossroad. The continental body had experience of being at such crossroad and charting the right pathway as was the case with AU's predecessor the Organization of African Unity (OAU) following the end of the Cold War and the debacles in Rwanda and Somalia. Yet, today's world that is between a dying order and another that is yet to be born and the multiplicity, gravity and intersectionality of the challenges it poses seem to be more profound than in the 1990s. The PSC has to summon the spirit and courage of those who charted the path for the transition of the OAU to the AU, building on the 1990 OAU Declaration, and reposition itself not only vis-à-vis a qualitatively shifting security environment continentally but also a changing global context, characterised by multipolarity.

While the current context may not lead to the situation of the 1990s in which, as Kofi Annan put it, 'Africa was left to fend for itself'[139] given the rivalry over and the scramble for Africa, it is sure that the international environment is not as hospitable and supportive of the African Peace and Security Architecture as it once was.[140] Most notably, the 'rising prominence of geopolitical rivalries as major factor shaping conflict and political dynamics is not only having deleterious impact on the behaviour of conflict parties and local political actors.' As our review for 2023 noted, 'the fraying multilateral system and the growing geopolitical tensions in the world have made the PSC and its effective functioning a fundamental strategic imperative for Africa today more than at any other time before.'[141] This necessitates that the adoption by the PSC of a diplomatic and institutional posture and approach to enable Africa to 'fend for itself.' The PSC must take greater responsibility and break from the business-as-usual approach to peace and security in Africa. At this historic juncture and given the gravity and complexity of the dynamics at play,

139 Kofi Annan, The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (1998).

140 The Pan-Africanist, Amani Africa Podcast, Exclusive interview with Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security 29 January 2025, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=magjZmp0K-Q&t=1122s.

141 Amani Africa, The Peace and Security Council in 2023: The Year in Review, February 2024, available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Peace-and-Security-Council-in-2023-The-Year-in-Review.pdf.

it ill affords to continue with a 'business as usual' approach-predominantly reactive and characterized by a sporadic, ad-hoc response to and touch and go engagement for dealing with crises or one that is no more than performative confined to reiteration or expression of concern.

At the same time, 2025 presents opportunities for institutional renewal. Key leadership transitions, including the appointment of a new Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission and changes in the PSC's composition with the election of five member states for a three-year term, offer a chance to introduce fresh perspectives and enhance the PSC's effectiveness. In this context, the following measures should be considered:

- The nature of the changes and challenges facing Africa and the gap between the demand for and supply of peacemaking necessitate **a strategic review of the emerging new era of insecurity and instability and the African Peace and Security Architecture** for making the AU and the PSC fit for delivering effectively on the mandate of conflict prevention, management and resolution. **Such a strategic review should be one of the priorities of the AU and its new leadership for 2025.** One possible avenue for advancing this initiative is the convening of a **special summit of the AU** under the new leadership of the AU Commission.

- Considering that the PSC only have very finite resources and limited institutional capacity, the issue that is of strategic importance for the credibility and effectiveness of the PSC is how it utilizes its time, diplomatic resources, legal powers and moral and political authority to deliver on the core of its mandates—prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. The cases where the PSC engaged successfully indicate that the PSC is effective when it makes effective use of the key tools of conflict prevention, management and resolution. For some of the high intensity conflicts such as Sudan, the Sahel and Eastern DRC, the PSC should dedicate more regular engagement. To enhance its impact, the PSC must rationalize its program of work, ensuring greater focus on conflict situations and strategic priorities while **curbing the proliferation of thematic issues that dominate its agenda.**

- As noted in our review of the PSC for 2023, the intensifying geopolitical rivalry and the increasing exercise of heavy influence in conflict situations by external powers notably middle powers such as UAE and Turkey is 'striping regional and continental policy makers off the limited agency that they have (sought to exercise in recent years) regarding the search for resolution of conflicts and political crises on the continent.'[142] This necessitates both a reassessment of the assumptions about the willingness of emerging powers and middle powers to differ diplomatic leadership to the AU and the bolstering of AU's diplomatic muscle by enhancing unity of voice of member states and provision of technical leadership by articulating and pursuing cogently crafted strategy tailored to each conflict situation.

142 *Ibid.*

- As highlighted in this review, the growing trend of PSC chairs prioritizing national interests over collective continental concerns underscores the need for recalibrating agenda-setting. In this regard, the consideration and adoption of the Council's monthly provisional program of work should be approached with serious deliberation rather than as a procedural formality. It is essential to ensure that proposed agenda items are of strategic importance and reflect the collective interests of the continent rather than the national priorities of individual member states.

- As noted above, the PSC and the AU broadly ill afford to continue the current path of sustaining the bare minimum of their functions and increasingly contested credibility. The PSC and the AU need to reinvigorate the assumption of their leadership in not only outlining well-grounded political solutions for the resolution of conflicts but also in mobilizing the level of consensus and support from member states and other key stakeholders necessary for advancing the implementation of such political solutions supported by relevant peace and security instruments of the APSA.

- The PSC should also **foreground political solutions and diplomacy** as the primary means of resolving conflicts, addressing the governance and institutional fragilities and weaknesses that create the conditions both for the expansion of the terrorist threat on the continent and the eruption of violent conflicts. The PSC and the AU need to reinvigorate the primacy of diplomacy. In this respect, there is a need for the development and implementation of a strategy that clearly establishes the range of AU diplomatic instruments and, bolsters their effectiveness and enhances their use as primary means of advancing peace and security in the continent. Most of all, the AU Commission needs to assume its full responsibility and exercise its agency for building consensus as the critical lever for deploying the required collective action based on technically sound, politically imaginative and diplomatically astute strategy adequately cognizant of the sensitivities involved and firmly grounded in and guided by the principles and norms by which member states are legally and politically bound.

- There is clearly a need for a much forceful and proactive approach to conflict prevention if new conflicts are to be prevented from erupting. This entails that the AU and RECs/RMs as well as international organizations such as the UN and partners are able to effectively map situations that face risks of violent conflict and initiate timely policy intervention to prevent such risks from materializing.

- With the rise of non-state actors as dominant players in the peace and security landscape of the continent and the increasing prevalence of inter-communal conflicts, there is a pressing need to develop and strengthen peace and security tools specifically tailored to address such conflicts. One key area of intervention is enhancing the mapping of inter-communal conflicts and their trends through the Continental Early Warning System.

- There is also a need to reinvigorate the use of AU-led peace support operations

on the basis of the African Standby Force. Since the deployment of the last major AU-led peace support operations in CAR and Mali, a vacuum has emerged, leading to the proliferation of ad hoc missions which are not fully anchored on the APSA and have the unintended consequence of undermining the use of AU-led peace support operations. Accordingly, AU needs to assert its leadership role in deploying peace support operations as it did some years back and **leverage Resolution 2719,** which affirms AU's leadership role in peace support operations.

- Finally, the lack of systematic follow-up on the implementation of PSC and AU Assembly decisions, coupled with a clear absence of commitment to taking concrete action, is undermining the AU's credibility. This challenge was aptly captured by the outgoing Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, in his address to the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly, where he stated that 'the frantic tendency to make decisions without real political will to implement them has grown to such an extent that it has become devastating to our individual and collective credibility.' This problem is not unfamiliar to the PSC, as it has been repeatedly acknowledged in its retreats, including one held in Tunis in 2023. What remains lacking is the translation of these commitments into action. The PSC continues to issue decisions without fully considering their financial implications, while past decisions receive little follow-up. This trend must change in 2025. There is an urgent need for anchoring decisions on firm political commitment of member states with strong buy in from capitals of PSC members to enhance implementation and systematic follow-up, supported by dedicated mechanisms and adequate resources.

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