

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Humanitarian crisis, terrorism and unconstitutional changes of governments take centre stage in Ministerial meeting of the African Union

Ministers of Foreign Affairs are meeting in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea for the African Union Executive Council session to prepare the work for the upcoming Heads of State and Government Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference, and the Extraordinary Summit on Unconstitutional Changes of Governments in Africa on 27th and 28th May respectively. The Executive Council will consider the Assembly Declaration of the Extraordinary Summit and Pledging Conference as well as the Malabo Declaration on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa.

The Extraordinary summits are convened at a time when humanitarian needs are growing fast in Africa, driven by increasing climatic shocks, conflicts, impact of Covid-19 and economic slowdowns. Over 114 million people in 15 most affected African countries require urgent assistance in 2022. Africa has more than 30 million internally displaced persons (IDPS), refugees and asylum seekers, among them, over 10.4 million are internally displaced children aged below 15 years. Protracted conflicts and intercommunal conflicts in some parts of Africa continue to contribute to increased displacements, food insecurity, and limited access to basic social services. Most countries facing conflicts are also experiencing other forms of shocks particularly related to climate and economic shocks.

The number of people displaced due to climatic conditions is increasing with approximately 4.3 million newly displaced due to disasters mostly related to climate change. The southern region faces multiple climatic shocks characterised by cyclones, floods, and sporadic rainfall patterns in some countries.

In East Africa, humanitarian needs are on the rise, as more than 25 million people are facing high levels of food insecurity. These needs are driven by the impact of climate change disasters, conflict and the economic impact of Covid-19.

In the Western and Central regions, the protracted conflicts, high poverty rates and macro-economic conditions have led to increased needs, including high rates of food insecurity and malnutrition. More than 58 million people in the Western and Central regions are facing severe food insecurity.

Amidst this crisis, humanitarian response plans have been severely underfunded to cope with the modern-day challenges during the past three years in Africa, and the funding gap remains large.

The Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference will deliberate on efforts by African leaders to address the humanitarian challenges that Africa is facing, and identifying durable and sustainable solutions to address the issues including those that contribute to post-conflict recovery and peace and development nexus.

At the same time, Africa continues to witness a proliferation of terrorist groups that threaten peace and security as well as the integrity of the respective states where they operate. For the first time in the continent's history, the threat has spread to the five regions of the African Union. The dual phenomenon of terrorism and violent extremism undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the African State, disrupting the functioning of the government, weakening the social contract, and facilitating the plundering of natural resources. This negative development is further compounded by the presence of foreign fighters and mercenaries on the continent. The intrinsic link between terrorism, violent extremism and unconstitutional changes of government compounds the challenges.

The Extraordinary Summit on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG) to be held on the 28th May 2022, will assess the persistent threats, evaluate current response mechanisms, and decide on the specific actions and measures necessary to strengthen the collective security of Member States facing terrorism and violent extremism. The summit will also discuss actionable measures needed to stem the upsurge on the continent. Among other issues, the Assembly will also consider the recommendations in the 'Accra Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa emanating from the AU Reflection Forum, held on 15-17 March, 2022 in Accra, Ghana.

Ahead of the two summits, the Executive Council of the African Union met on the 25th May 2022, to prepare the documents for consideration by Heads of State and Government. Addressing the opening session of the Executive Council, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat noted that the situation has been prolonged by internal armed conflicts, the inter-community conflicts and the effects of climate change, leading to depressed capacities of agricultural production, coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and amplified by the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. He also added, "The African Union did not wait for the current deterioration of the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons to react. It adopted the Kampala Convention in 2009. Accompanied by a Declaration organized around fifty practical recommendations, this Convention aimed to effectively address the challenge posed by people who are victims of forced displacement on the continent. In this operational perspective, the AU convened in 2011 the first Humanitarian Donors Conference, which was held under the theme "One Africa, one voice against hunger."

The Chairperson of the Executive Council, H.E. Madame Aïssata Tall Sall, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, observed that the current threat of terrorism and unconstitutional changes of government calls for collective action from all the AU member states and the world at large. "Terrorist and armed conflict threats are becoming very worrying, coupled by the return of coups which are reversing the gains Africa has made. This also kills the dream of our fore fathers for a united and secure continent. Conflicts are eroding good governance, human rights and the principles of zero tolerance we adopted. Our economies are over-burdened and we must act fast."

H.E. Simeón Oyono Esono, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea restated his government's commitment to address the challenges of the humanitarian crisis. The country's leader H.E. Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, is the AU Champion on "Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)". "The debate on terrorism is timely because of the challenges we continue to face, particularly in the Sahel region and the neighboring countries. The insecurity gaps have exacerbated the trafficking of illicit arms, drugs and cases of kidnappings and other social crises due to conflicts. We need to use and share intelligence to be able to effectively fight terrorism."

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