
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release

Date: 21 September 2026

Venue: Bujumbura, Burundi

African Union Convenes 18th Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security

Advancing African leadership, fostering innovation and promoting forward-looking approaches to defence and security

The Commission of the African Union (AU) convened the 18th Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS) at Ministerial level on 18 September 2026 in Bujumbura, Burundi. The Ministerial Session was preceded by the Meeting of Experts, held from 15 to 16 September 2026, and the Meeting of the African Chiefs of Defence Staff and Heads of Safety and Security Services (ACDS), held on 17 September 2026.

The session began with a minute of silence in honour of African peacekeepers and victims of violence across the continent. Participants considered and adopted the draft Report of the 18th Ordinary Session of the STCDSS, which will be submitted to the 50th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, scheduled to take place from 27 to 28 January 2027 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Report focused on key documents relating to Africa's peace and security architecture, including the planning and decision-making guidelines for Peace Support Operations (PSOs); AU-UN joint planning guidelines pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2719 on the financing of PSOs; guidelines on the assessment of individual police officers and formed police units for deployment in AU PSOs; and the revised OAU Convention for the elimination of mercenarism on the continent.

Representing the AU Commission, the Head of the Peace Support Operations Division within the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department, General Cheick Dembélé, highlighted the essential role of the STCDSS as a unique continental policy platform for advancing African leadership, fostering innovation and promoting forward-looking approaches to defence and security. He noted that, despite progress made in promoting peace and security across the continent, significant work remains to address persistent gaps and challenges.

General Dembélé called on Member States to strengthen their ownership of the STCDSS, including by increasing their financial contributions.

The Chairperson of the 18th Ordinary Session of the STCDSS, Ms. Marie Chantal Nijimbere, Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs of the Republic of Burundi, emphasized the need to strengthen regional and continental cooperation in addressing security challenges in Africa. She highlighted the role of the African Standby Force in facilitating rapid crisis intervention and supporting peace support operations, and commended efforts to advance the objectives of Agenda 2063, particularly the “Silencing the Guns” initiative.

The STCDSS provided a framework for AU Member States to consider matters relating to defence, safety and security within the mandate of the African Union, including relevant reports, policies, frameworks and recommendations, and to provide guidance on their implementation. The forum also provided an opportunity to build a shared understanding of emerging risks and trends, agree on policies, procedures and programmes to address them, and draw lessons from collective experience to strengthen Africa’s peace and security efforts.

In his closing remarks, General Dembélé expressed appreciation for the continued goodwill and commitment of Member States and strategic partners. He also conveyed his sincere gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Burundi for hosting the 18th Ordinary Session of the STCDSS and for the warm hospitality extended to all delegations. General Dembélé further expressed appreciation to the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), as well as the experts, for their continued availability, cooperation and support.

For her part, Ms. Nijimbere thanked the AU Commission and participating Member States for their contributions to the session. She also expressed gratitude to the countries and organizations working tirelessly to advance peace, strengthen the African Union, and realize the shared aspiration for a more united, peaceful and prosperous continent.

The session brought together representatives of AU Member States and RECs/RMs, including experts, Chiefs of Defence Staff, Heads of Safety and Security Services, and Ministers responsible for Defence, Internal Affairs, Safety and Security.

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Note to Editors

About the Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD)

The Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) is a core division within the African Union Commission’s Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), responsible for supporting the management of continental Peace Support Operations (PSOs). It provides a

framework for the planning, launching, management and liquidation of Peace Support Operations mandated by the Peace and Security Council (PSC). The Division also oversees the implementation and monitoring of the strategic framework for the African Standby Force (ASF).

Core Mandate and Functions

- **Mission Lifecycle Management:** Supports the planning, launch, sustainment, monitoring and liquidation of Peace Support Operations mandated or authorized by the AU policy organs, including the Peace and Security Council.
- **African Standby Force (ASF):** Serves as the strategic Headquarters and Continental Planning Element of the ASF. Supports the operationalization, readiness and development of the ASF, including engagement with its relevant regional structures.
- **Policy and Frameworks:** Develops guidelines, security arrangements and operational doctrines to support multinational peace support interventions.
- **Regional Coordination:** Promotes coordination and harmonization of peace and security initiatives and works closely with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs).

About the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS)

The Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS) is a key organ of the African Union responsible for advancing the continental defence, safety and security agenda. It serves as a continental policy platform responsible for supervising, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of decisions adopted by the AU's competent decision-making bodies on defence and security.

The STCDSS also coordinates and harmonizes ongoing projects and programmes, while preparing draft proposals for consideration by the relevant AU decision-making bodies.

Overview and Role

- **Core Function:** Formulates policies, provides guidance and oversees strategies related to defence, safety and security, including collective security, conflict prevention and other relevant peace and security priorities.
- **APSA Pillar:** Contributes to the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), including frameworks such as the African Standby Force (ASF).
- **Composition:** Brings together Ministers responsible for Defence, Safety and Security, Chiefs of Defence, Heads of relevant national safety and security institutions, and representatives of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs).