

Kenya pushes Western Sahara issue back on AU agenda



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Western Saharan flag

By Kwanta Douglas –

Kenya on Friday pushed for another round of discussions on the contested territory of Western Sahara, setting the stage for a possible counter-lobbying from Morocco which claims it is part of its land.


A provisional programme for Nairobi as the February Chair of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) shows Kenya wants heads of state and government to hold a session on the “consideration of the situation in Western Sahara” which has seen renewed violence.

In an AFP report, the final programme schedule is expected on Saturday this week, but Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta will speak on the sidelines of the upcoming African Union Heads of State Summit on Sunday in Addis Ababa on “critical issues impacting Peace and Security in Africa” including rising extremism, instability, climate change and urban violence.

However, a tentative programme issued earlier in the week says Kenya has planned for a virtual meeting on February 16 “on the situation in Western Sahara.”

“The meeting on Western Sahara will be a follow up to a previous session of the PSC at summit level that was chaired by HE President Kenyatta on March 9, 2021.

“The objective of the meeting will be to examine the conditions that have given rise to current tensions and violence and assesses whether the policy measures and strategies adopted at the international, regional and national levels are bringing peace to Saharawi,” a note of the programme said, referring to the segment of Western Sahara formally known as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic which is governed by the POLISARIO Front, exiled in Algeria.

The 15-member Council also includes Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Eg  English
Ghana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Malawi, Ethiopia and Algeria. All members rotate in a staggering three-year cycle and they deliberate and decide on continental issues of peace and security will also discuss violent extremism, on the same day. But it is the Sahrawi issue that could raise storm.

In the last three years, Kenya and Morocco have bickered in public over Nairobi's push to have Western Sahara decide its future, via a possible referendum.

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