Despite its late entry into, and relatively slow spread in Africa, Corona virus has infected over 17,247 Africans with almost 910 of those succumbing to the disease. Aside this deadly impact, the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in closure of borders, cancellation of international flights, strict quarantine measures, state of emergencies, curfews, lockdowns and many other strict measures in many of the African countries to help curb the rapid spread of the virus and its likely impact. However, the impacts of the pandemic are more than just a health issue reaching far on the socio-economic, political, human and peace and security spheres. At its 910th meeting on 20 February, the African Union’s Peace and Security Council already expressed “grave concern” at the outbreak which “could constitute a threat to peace and security on the Continent.”

Similarly, the UN Secretary-General warned members of the Security Council in a closed video-conference held on Thursday April 17 that as a result of the pandemic world might be facing social unrest and violence greatly hampering the world’s capacity to fight the pandemic. With the pandemic leading to a potential global recession, Africa stands to be predicted as the most affected with revenue streams losses and decline of 3-8% GDP in 2020 alone. Such economic instability could result in main stressors especially for women who constitute greater proportion of the worst affected sectors. Moreover, with the implementation of the AfCFTA set to kick start on July 1st, the impact of the COVID-19 calls for attention especially with the implementation relying on the free movement of people.

H.E Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security in a recently shared Op-ed on the Peace and Security amidst covid-19 stated that in a region where resources, climatic shocks and scarce structural governance and absence of institutionalized dispute resolution mechanisms drive considerable number of conflicts, the COVID-19 will aggravate these situations in an environment where societies deal with various government responses that has a direct impact on their ability to feed their families. In the meantime, with more than 30 million refugees and

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7 OpED: Peace and Security amidst COVID-19 by H.E Amb. Smail Chergui AU Commissioner for Peace and Security
internally displaced people spread across the continent, the most vulnerable will remain at risk. He further stated that the escalation of xenophobia and stigmas towards infected and recovered patients, migrants as well as their families are security issues that require adequate attention of States. Such development issues poses a critical question on countries’ abilities to curb the impact of COVID-19 in their countries and handle its socio-economic, political, human and peace and security consequences of the disease. This leaves these countries much lesser time to concentrate on the nitty-gritty processes of kick-starting implementation of ACFTA.

It is against this background that IPSS brings together key stakeholders to a meeting through Webinar to discuss these issues and follow up actions on the topic ‘AfCFTA, Peace and Security: Implications of COVID-19’ to be held on the 30th of April 2020.

Key Questions

1. How does the socio-economic, political, human political and security spheres look in Africa following the outbreak of the pandemic?

2. With free movement of people being at the center, what would the implementation of the AfCFTA, be in light of the pandemic?

3. What is the impact of COVID 19 on the youth and women and peace and security?

4. Are there measures the AfCFTA Secretariat planning to take to help curb the impact of the pandemic on the effective implementation of the AfCFTA and what is the current situation regarding the functionality of the Office?

5. What measures/ way forward should be set to increase countries’ capacities to curb the impact of COVID-19 in their countries and handle its socio-economic, political, human and peace and security consequences of the disease?

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8 OpED: Peace and Security amidst COVID-19 by H.E Amb. Smail Chergui AU Commissioner for Peace and Security
9 Id.