

African Regional Consultation on the UN General Assembly Debate on UN, Peace and Security

4 March 2016, Addis Ababa

Cedric de Coning, Ashraf Swelam, Priyal Singh & Natasja Rupesinghe¹



¹ Cedric de Coning is a senior research fellow with ACCORD and NUPI. Ashraf Swelam is the Director of CCCPA. Natasja Rupesinghe is a junior researcher with NUPI. Priyal Singh is a researcher with ACCORD.

Contents

Background	4
Context	5
The Security Council.....	6
From Conflict Management to Sustainable Peace	7
The UN-AU-REC Relationship	8
Financing of AU Peace and Security Activities	10
Recommendations	11

Background

The President of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, has called for a High-Level Thematic Debate (HLTD) on UN, Peace and Security for 10 and 11 May 2016. The aim of the debate is to examine the UN's peace and security architecture and to consider what remains to be done, in the context of the 2015 reviews of peace operations, peacebuilding and women, peace and security.² The hope is that the HLTD will generate a clear set of priorities for the next UN Secretary-General to pursue to make the UN's peace and security architecture more effective.

In support of this initiative, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the Cairo Center for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA), and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), co-organised an African Regional Consultation in Addis Ababa on the 4th of March 2016. The Consultation was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim of the Consultation was to identify some of the key issues, from an African perspective, that the UN should address to make its peace and security architecture more effective.

The Consultation was attended by approximately 80 persons from countries represented in Addis Ababa; representatives from several departments and divisions of the African Union Commission; liaison officers from the African Regional Communities (RECs); United Nations (UN) officials from New York and Addis Ababa, including the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the African Union (AU), Amb. Haile Menkerios; diplomats and experts based in Addis Ababa, international and continental think tanks, as well as civil society organisations.

The Consultation was opened by the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, and the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Dr. Aisha L. Abdullahi. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, delivered the closing address alongside the President of the General Assembly. This report highlights the key considerations and ideas that emerged from the event.

² Stamnes, E. & Osland, K.M., 2016. *Synthesis Report : Reviewing UN Peace Operations , the UN Peace- building Architecture and the Implementation of UNSCR 1325*, Oslo

Context

Some of the developments that framed the conversation included ongoing and new conflicts and crises in Africa, especially in the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and in the Lake Chad basin; the role of armed non-state actors, including violent extremists in many of these conflicts; the degree to which transnational organised crime weakened governance and its links with many of these non-state actors. New challenges to the international peace and security architecture were discussed, such as the high number of people displaced by poverty, poor governance and instability, and the significant political and security challenges posed by trends in migration within Africa and from Africa to Europe and elsewhere, including as refugees and asylum-seekers. Other issues discussed included rivalries among major powers and uncertainty in the global order, international terrorism, crises and wars in the Middle East, the global financial and energy crises, capital flight from Africa facilitated by the international financial system including secrecy jurisdictions and tax havens, and the exploitation of Africa's natural resources.

When the discussion turned to the UN, the overall sense was one of frustration with the shortcomings of the current peace and security architecture in dealing effectively with the many challenges highlighted above. Despite recognition for all the efforts made by the UN, especially through its special political missions, regional offices, special envoys and peacekeeping operations in Africa, the overall sense was that the UN could do much better, and should be held accountable for fulfilling its mandate to maintain international peace and security in Africa.

The Security Council

The frustration seemed to be primarily linked to the mismatch between the degree to which Africa occupied the UN's agenda, and the lack of African permanent members on the Security Council. There was a sense that the Security Council speaks to Africa, not with Africa, and that the Council will only show solidarity with, and co-ownership of, Africa's interests and needs when Africa is appropriately represented on the Council.

Whilst it was agreed that pressure for Security Council reform must be maintained, and whilst the AU position - the Ezulwini Consensus - which seeks two permanent seats for Africa, was acknowledged, the focus was on more immediate steps that can be taken to ensure that African positions are reflected in UN Security Council decisions.

These included better coordination among African states, including between the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the African non-permanent members of the UN Security Council; improved consultations among African missions to the UN and the strengthening of the AU's observer mission to the UN; better coordination in Addis Ababa between the AU, the PSC and the members of the UN Security Council represented in Addis Ababa; more substantial consultations and coordination between the UN Security Council and the PSC; and more effective cooperation between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission.

From Conflict Management to Sustainable Peace

Frustration was also expressed with how the current UN peace and security architecture favours militarised or securitised responses to crises, both in the form of UN peacekeeping operations, and via UN Security Council mandated support for AU peace support operations. It was observed that the majority of UN peacekeeping missions today are mandated to manage, rather than resolve conflicts. Several persons highlighted the need to improve the UN's ability to take decisive and proactive actions to prevent violent conflict, in close cooperation with the AU and RECs.

There was also frustration with the fragmented and compartmentalised way in which the UN addresses peace and security. Some argued that the UN's peace and security architecture needs to be reformed to reflect a more comprehensive understanding of the interlinkages between peace and security, human rights and development. In this regard hope was expressed that the UN's Agenda 2030, and the new Sustainable Development Goals, will help the UN, and its Member States, to develop a more holistic and integrated approach to preventing and resolving conflicts. Participants expressed that conflict prevention needs to be approached at a structural level, to avoid ad-hoc solutions to crises. There was consensus around the idea that the current UN peace and security architecture is outdated and needs to be reformed if the UN is going to become more relevant for Africa.

The UN-AU-REC Relationship

In his closing remarks Minister Tedros said that principled, consistent and predictable cooperation between the United Nations, on one hand, and regional organizations, on the other, is indispensable for the maintenance of international peace and security. During the consultation participants agreed that this relationship has to be strategic, not technical. It has to go beyond financial support and capacity building, and seek rather to foster a shared understanding of the issues the UN, AU and RECs have to address. It should also aim to generate a common vision to which the international, regional and sub-regional levels can each contribute to with complimentary and mutually supportive actions.

This relationship needs to be based on an agreed understanding of the place and role of the UN, AU and RECs in the global governance architecture. SRSG Menkerios argued that Chapter VIII (Regional Arrangements) of the UN Charter was drafted at a time when the current level of UN and regional cooperation could not have been foreseen. The UN-AU-REC relationship that has emerged over the last decade has contributed to a new interpretation of this chapter of the Charter. The AU recognises the primary responsibility of the UN Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. At the same time, the AU and the RECs are able and willing to take up its share of responsibility for peace and security in Africa. Dr. Solomon Dersso, Commissioner with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, raised the question whether regional organisations like the AU and the RECs should become part of a new institutionalised global peace and security architecture, or do we continue with ad hoc, uncertain and unpredictable case-by-case solutions. He and others argued that it is now time to more formally articulate this relationship, and to clarify the role and division of tasks of the AU and RECs in the global peace and security architecture.

When it comes to dealing with specific crises and conflicts, the degree to which the UNSC and the AU PSC has engaged each other and sought to improve coherence was noted and complimented. Whilst it was recognised that there have been significant improvements especially over the last few years, several examples such as the ongoing crisis in Burundi were highlighted as situations where the UN Security Council and the AU PSC could have done more to ensure greater synergy among their respective decisions. There was agreement that tensions between the Councils are highly undesirable. It was clarified that the AU was not seeking a 'partnership of equals' but more effective and coherent subsidiarity.

To address these shortcomings and to avoid tensions between the Councils, a number of recommendations were offered. In addition to the recommendations made earlier, including the need for increased coordination and consultations between the AU PSC and UNSC as well as more substantial consultations among the PSC and UNSC representatives in Addis Ababa and New York, it was argued that the quality of these interactions need to be improved so that greater synergy and complementarity is achieved between the decisions of the two Councils.

A prerequisite for improving the quality of these interactions would be to further intensify the level and depth of the exchanges between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission. The regular meetings between the AU and the UN, both at Commissioner-Under Secretary-General level, as well as the desk-to-desk exchanges, were recognised and commended. The work of the UN Office to the African Union (UNOAU) to encourage and facilitate these processes, and the work streams they generated, was singled out for praise. At the same time, the need to strengthen the AU observer mission to the UN was stressed. However, despite this progress, it was recommended that the AU and UN desk-to-desk exchanges should be further developed with the aim to generate more shared analysis and scenario-based planning options, that can be presented to the UNSC and PSC for consideration.

With the focus on prevention, emphasis was placed on the coordination of the broadest possible range of efforts – political approaches, peacebuilding, development, human rights - to prevent violent conflict. These developments have resulted in the UN-AU-REC relationship going beyond the traditional political and peace operations spheres to include human rights and development. Where AU and UN peace operations are needed, participants stressed the importance of improved shared analysis, joint planning, collaborative support and joint assessments. The joint work done to date on lessons learned from transitions and the intent to develop guidelines for transitions were noted and commended.

Financing of AU Peace and Security Activities

The meeting also took note of the work that the AU and UN are about to jointly embark on related to reviewing funding and support options for AU peace support operations. In this regard the appointment of Dr. Donald Kaberuka as AU High Representative for the Peace Fund was welcomed. It was recommended that the AU and UN work closely together with the European Union (EU) and other partners to identify predictable and sustainable funding mechanisms for the AU's peace and security work. The Consultation welcomed the recommendations of the UN High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), and recalled the African Common Position on the HIPPO, and subsequent PSC decisions welcoming the HIPPO recommendations and endorsing the Chairperson's report on the implementation of the African Common Position. These ensure that there is solid political support and guidance for the work of the High Representative and the AU Commission for seeking a predictable and sustainable mechanism for financing the AU's peace and security responsibilities.

Recommendations

Based on the ideas that emerged from the African Consultation, the following recommendations are presented for consideration at the High Level Debate:

1. The UN and its Member states should shift their focus from militarized and securitized, reactive responses to develop a more proactive, holistic, integrated and gender-sensitive approaches to preventing and resolving conflicts. These efforts should seek greater synergy among the UN's peace and security, development and human rights work. More work needs to be done to explore if and how the UN's Agenda 2030 can serve as a common set of goals around which the whole UN system can align itself to ensure that pursuing sustainable development also contributes to sustaining peace.
2. The strategic relationship between the UN, AU and RECS needs to be institutionalised, so that their respective roles and responsibilities are clarified:
 - a) This partnership must be anchored in a shared understanding and recognition of the comparative advantages of each organization at the international, regional and sub-regional levels;
 - b) The consultations between the UNSC and the AU PSC need to be intensified and underpinned through more in-depth desk-to-desk exchanges;
 - c) The UN and AU should share their analyses of unfolding crises and discuss their findings in order to arrive at common understandings of triggers and causes, so that they can develop coherent responses, and they should jointly assess the effects their responses are having so that they can regularly adapt their analyses and responses; and
 - d) The UN and AU should closely coordinate their respective missions when they operate alongside each other, and should cooperate closely when AU missions transition into UN missions or vice versa.
3. The UN, EU and partners should support the AU in its efforts to secure predictable and sustainable sources of funding for the peace operations the AU and RECs undertake in the service of maintaining international peace and security. The AU and its

partners should develop a menu of support options, including supporting AU operations with UN assessed contributions, to supplement the funding generated from within Africa.

4. The UN peace and security architecture should be reformed to improve effectiveness, coherence and efficiency, for instance by integrating the departments of political affairs and peacekeeping and re-organizing them into a geographically structured secretariat.

