



## “TOWARDS STRONGER GLOBAL-REGIONAL PEACE & SECURITY PARTNERSHIPS”

The Challenges Annual Forum (CAF23) gathered partners and key stakeholders in Addis Ababa on 26-27 October 2023, to exchange views and experiences, and to develop recommendations on the future of peace operations, with a particular focus on how the AU-UN peace and security partnership can be further deepened. The Forum was co-hosted by the Training for Peace Programme<sup>1</sup> and engaged more than 130 participants in discussions around the following three sub-themes:

### 1. Strategic coherence of global, regional and sub-regional peace operations

In times of increased global polarisation, the United Nations (UN) should consolidate its core values and develop functioning approaches and operational concepts. As highlighted in the UN Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace (NAP) policy brief, the world organisation needs to supplement its toolbox with deepened partnerships with regional organizations, like the African Union (AU) and European Union (EU), to strengthen the multilateral security architecture and to shore up the capacity of regional organisations to prevent and respond to conflicts. This will require mutual respect, common understanding and strategic coherence, based on leveraging comparative advantages.

#### Key takeaways:

- **Strategic fit-for-purpose partnerships.** Strengthening the AU-UN peace operations partnership will firstly address the urgent and complex peace and security deficit in many parts of Africa; and secondly will pave the way for consolidating a more multifaceted peace and security “toolbox”, that eventually could be applicable in other conflict contexts.
- **No actor can do it alone.** In a time of networked multilateralism, a successful AU-UN partnership should be grounded in a mutual understanding of what needs to be accomplished, and an equitable political recognition of what different partners bring to the fore. It is key to deepen and consolidate a value-driven and smart partnership, with a shared understanding and common vision to resolve conflicts. Responses need to be guided by more systematic joint analysis and leveraging comparative advantage, across human, material, and financial spheres.
- **When no peace to keep.** Many parts of Africa face complex security challenges, without a peace to keep. In these contexts, there needs to be a tangible option for a new generation of AU peace support operations (AU PSO's) as well, supported by the

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<sup>1</sup> The TfP Programme is the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' flagship capacity-support programme to the African Union Commission (AUC). It is comprised by a three-tier partnership between **African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)**, the **Institute for Security Studies (ISS)** in South Africa and the **Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)**.

UN. As part of the future of peace operations, it is time to review and expand the UN's "toolbox" with these AU PSO's, alongside the full range of available multilateral mechanisms. These tailor-made operations could be short-term and composed of special forces with offensive capabilities.

- **Primacy of politics.** It is key to avoid an over-militarisation of responses. Peace enforcement should always be founded in the primacy of politics principle, and be complemented by holistic and comprehensive approaches, addressing the drivers of conflict and state fragilities. The primacy of politics approach needs to deliver functioning political strategies and political unity.
- **Maintain an adaptable set of tools.** The development of UN peace and security instruments, along with the global framework for UN peace operations, has been a gradual process spanning 75 years, with deployable resources, specialised competencies, training and agreed standards. The broad palette of different UN peace operations, including peacekeeping, remain viable instruments to address violent conflicts today. These established mechanisms must be preserved and remain ready for re-occurring situations.
- **Host state consent.** Regional peace support operations may have greater legitimacy in the eyes of host governments and local populations. It is nevertheless important to underline that consent can evolve over time, e.g. when missions do not fully deliver on mandates or expectations. As such, AU PSO's can also face challenges to host country consent, particularly when trying to address drivers of conflict related to national elite interests and power balances.

## 2. Predictable financing of AU peace support operations

The UN Secretary-General has called for a new generation of peace enforcement missions, led by regional forces, with guaranteed and predictable funding, which could supplement UN's established spectrum of peace operations. It is key for AU and UN to find ways to finance AU PSO's in a more systematic manner.

### Key takeaways:

- **UN assessed contributions.** Sustainable and predictable financing of peace support operations is of fundamental importance to AU, and to the world. There is growing consensus that time has come for UN assessed contributions to complement and address funding shortfalls in AU PSO's, in fulfilment of the UN's primary responsibility for peace and security as part of global solidarity as enshrined in the UN Charter, and in compliance with International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. Fundamentally, this model should be applicable to all continents, but with a current and needs-based focus on Africa.
- **Funding models.** Previous reports<sup>2</sup> indicate a preference toward two models: 1) the establishment of a UN support office financed through UN assessed contributions; 2) a joint financing of an UN-AU hybrid mission. Although both models have been tested, further innovative calibration of UN support is needed for time-critical high pace AU PSO's. A key question is whether existing support and financing models are adequate or whether there needs to be 'out of the current toolkit' thinking. Certain types of support are appropriate for some AU missions while others are not, and flexibility is necessary to allow for tailored responses on a case-by-case basis.

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<sup>2</sup> The 'AU Consensus Paper' and consecutive Reports of the UN Secretary-General (2017, 2023) on the financing of AU Peace Support Operations.

- **Financing is not the panacea.** It is important to emphasise that funding is not the silver bullet solving all problems. Questions remain over AU absorption capacities and broader capability issues, including requisite personnel, institutional set-up, and infrastructure, to deliver on what might be increased demands for AU PSO's. It may be essential to revisit the AU's framework for undertaking PSO's, including the African Standby Force, considering current peace and security challenges.
- **Burden-sharing.** It is crucial that the entire international community remains committed to financing AU PSO's as part of global solidarity as highlighted in the NAP. Progress has been made in operationalising the AU Peace Fund, which is projected to have US\$400 million by the end of 2023, with most contributions from AU Member States. However, continued commitment from African Member States is needed. Amid diminishing resources and growing demands, there is a need for more solidarity as well as more political and financial commitment from African countries for Africa.

### 3. Addressing capability gaps more systematically

Deeper AU-UN partnership arrangements need to help to address technical and capability gaps of AU PSO's more systematically, with EU as a strategic partner in this context.

#### Key takeaways:

- **AU's own capacities.** Over the past two decades, AU has become a key actor in preventing and responding to conflicts on the African continent. However, the lack of predictable funding, procurement delays and lack of capacities limits the efficacy and impact of AU PSO's. It is key for the AU to further develop its operational and logistical capabilities as well as its ability to plan, deploy, manage, sustain, and finance its peace support operations. A more systematic and coordinated approach together with international partners and peacekeeping training centres is needed to ensure AU PSO's are well trained and equipped.
- **Inter-operability.** Joint UN-AU planning guidelines will allow for better inter-operability of UN-supported AU operations. More systematic coordination of international and bilateral supportive efforts is also needed.
- **A win-win investment.** To better address and resolve operational capacity gaps is a win-win approach for both the organisation leading an operation, and all the organisations and actors that are supporting it. Models for reporting results and measuring performance should ideally be developed within the respective partnerships. Existing and adopted approaches should be used as much as possible.
- **Power of Youth.** Since over 70 per cent of the African population is under the age of 30, young people should not have to prove their value, they should be given a "real" role in peace processes as 'partners of change' and political agents. The transformational role of the youth should be used in addressing gaps in conflict prevention and the protection of civilians in mission transitions. It is paramount to involve and engage African youth in shaping a more peaceful and prosperous future for a continent with so much untapped potential. Investing in young people's organizations is the pathway to sustainable peace.