

Challenges Annual Forum 2024

African Perspective on the Future of Peace Operations

This paper explores the evolving landscape of peace operations, focusing on the increasing significance of African Union-led Peace Support Operations in addressing Africa's complex security challenges.

With the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023), progress has been made toward securing predictable financing for these missions, though significant implementation challenges remain.

This paper aims at bringing African priorities and considerations to the fore in the ongoing discussion on the future of peace operations as well as the African Union efforts in this regard.

United Nations (UN) peace operations remain an effective multilateral tool for preventing and responding to armed conflict, advancing sustainable peace and addressing a broader range of threats to international peace and security. The UN is currently reflecting on the future of peace operations. This includes exploring new models and capabilities through an independent study commissioned by the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) at the request of Germany and the other co-chairs of the UN Peacekeeping

Ministerial process. An upcoming review of all forms of peace operations, as suggested by the Pact for the Future, will be undertaken by the UN.

In this context, it is relevant to emphasise the African perspective on the future of peace operations, as Africa is likely to be a key player in addressing the escalating threats of terrorism, violent extremism leading to terrorism, asymmetric warfare and transnational organised crime, in the future.

The African Union (AU) and its regional organizations, have increasingly taken ownership of addressing peace and security threats across the African continent, demonstrating a clear comparative advantage as first responders with the political will to undertake peace enforcement and offensive operations—such as counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency.

The deployment of AU-led peace support operations (AU-PSOs) has been high on the agenda over the past year, particularly with the adoption of UNSCR 2719 (2023) on financing peace support operations through UN-assessed contributions – a landmark resolution, but not without its challenges in implementation.

Journey to UNSCR 2719 (2023)

The relevance and need for AU-PSOs have long been highlighted in various UN frameworks and reports. This argument dates back to Boutros Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace (1992) and the Brahimi report (2000), which both highlighted the importance of partnerships in peace operations and the role of regional organizations, particularly the AU, recognising the importance of African ownership in addressing African conflicts.

This was further reiterated by the HIPPO report (2015) which highlighted the importance of providing support to of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and its different tools, including logistical, financial and political support to African-led operations. Moreover, the new Agenda for Peace (2023) notably emphasises the limitations of UN peacekeeping and the comparative advantage of AU-PSOs, when it comes to peace enforcement, especially in contexts of *“increasing fragmentation of many conflicts, and the proliferation of non-State armed groups that operate across borders and use violence against civilians”*.

Most recently, the Pact for the Future (2024) highlights UN peace operations as critical tools to maintain international peace and security, while reaffirming the importance of enhanced collaboration between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations, particularly the AU. This includes their peace support operations and peace enforcement authorised by the Security Council to maintain or restore international peace and security.

After many attempts by the African members of the UN Security Council (A3), UN Security Council Resolution 2719 was finally adopted in 2023.

Beyond a One-Size-Fits-All Solution

Despite marking a significant breakthrough in addressing the persistent financing challenges that have long

plagued the AU peace and security agenda, the resolution stirred mixed opinions among AU member states, primarily due to concerns over capping access to UN assessed contributions at a specific percentage (up to 75%).

The AU's current concern is the remaining 25% as stipulated in the resolution: *“with the remaining amount to be jointly mobilised by the AU and UN from the international community as extra-budgetary resources and [the Security Council] commits to consider all viable options in the event of significant shortfalls in resource mobilization”*.

It is noteworthy that through the AU Peace Fund and its Crisis Reserve Facility, the AU has financially contributed to the various regional Peace Support Operations such as SAMIM, East Africa Community Regional Force and now SAMIDRC and the Multinational Joint Task Force and most recently the new mission in Somalia: the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). While acknowledging the significant role of International donors in contributing to AU-PSOs, especially the European Union as the major contributor to AMISOM and ATMIS, in the view of many, the narrative of *“burden-sharing”* to cover the remaining 25% is not taking into consideration that the AU is already deploying missions in highly dangerous and volatile environments, often at great cost, with substantial loss of personnel and significant risks, in addition to high training and capacity-building costs.

Mindful of the above, the resolution is not a silver bullet or a perfect solution to all the problems at hand. While it may address certain aspects of the financing issue, it is not a one-size-fits-all fix and complexity lie in its implementation.

Efforts are actively underway to unpack and fully operationalise the resolution, with a strong emphasis on integrating African perspectives and priorities. The Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN signed a Joint

Roadmap in October 2024 for the implementation of this resolution based on the four agreed streams (2024-2025), namely: 1) Joint planning, decision making and reporting, 2) Mission support, 3) Financing and budgeting, 4) Compliance and Protection of Civilians.

In addition, addressing logistical and technical challenges in AU-PSOs is crucial for the effectiveness and sustainability of these operations to contribute to stability and sustaining peace across the continent.

Towards more effective and sustainable AU-PSOs

With the international community increasingly relying on the AU to manage complex and high-risk conflicts, it is essential that partners also fulfil their respective responsibilities in the collective global effort to sustain peace and security in Africa through the following:

- Predictable and sustainable funding for AU-PSOs through the proper and timely implementation of UNSCR 2719.
- Partners such as the UN and EU should assist the AU in establishing logistics frameworks to effectively deploy and sustain peace support operations. This includes sharing best practices in logistics management, supply chain operations and the use of technology to enhance operational efficiency.
- Providing technical expertise in mission planning, monitoring,

evaluation and reporting to enhance the AU's operational capacity.

- As part of the ongoing discussion on the future of peace operations, it is crucial to leverage the ongoing review process of the African Standby Force as well as reflect on the outcomes of *The Inaugural Lessons Learned Forum on AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and the African Standby Force (ASF)*¹. Launched by the AU two years ago, this initiative also aims to share experiences, identify challenges and leverage best practices from past and current AU-PSOs.
- Enhance coordination between the AU and regional economic communities (RECs) and regional mechanisms (RMs), which could benefit from assessed contributions if deployed under AU's command and control. A key issue to be discussed is the division of labour/complementarity among these organisations.

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¹ African Union, *Conclusions of the Inaugural Lessons Learned Forum on AU Peace Support Operations and the African Standby Force*, November 2022, <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/llf-conclusions-en.pdf>