

# Toward a More Effective UN-AU Partnership on Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management

DANIEL FORTI AND PRIYAL SINGH



**Cover Photo:** UN emblem, October 3, 2017. UN Photo/Cia Pak; AU medallion, May 21, 2015. Andrew Moore.

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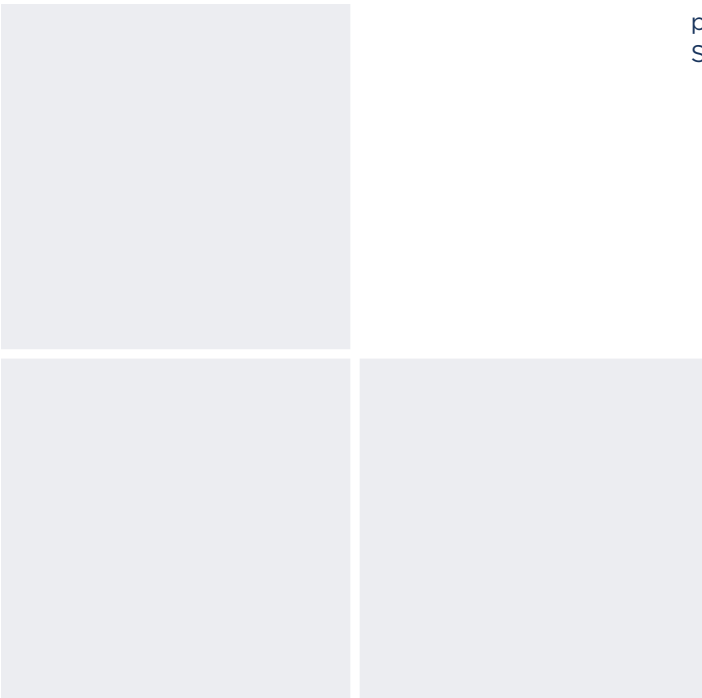
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## Abbreviations

A3	Three African nonpermanent members of the UN Security Council
AU	African Union
AUPOM	AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN
AUPSC	AU Peace and Security Council
CAR	Central African Republic
DPO	UN Department of Peace Operations
DPPA	UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
PCRD	Post-conflict reconstruction and development
PDA	Peace and development adviser
REC	Regional economic community
RM	Regional mechanism
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STG	Silencing the Guns
SRSG	Special representative of the secretary-general
UNAMID	AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNOAU	UN Office to the AU
UNSC	UN Security Council
WPS	Women, peace, and security
YPS	Youth, peace, and security





## Executive Summary

The United Nations and the African Union (AU) have worked in tandem since the AU's establishment in 2002. During this time, their partnership has evolved to focus increasingly on conflict prevention and crisis management, culminating in the 2017 Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. While the organizations' collaboration on peacekeeping has been extensively studied, other dimensions of the partnership warrant a closer look to understand how to foster political coherence and operational coordination.

The relationship between the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) is a central driver of the UN-AU partnership. Despite tensions stemming from the councils' unequal relationship, an informal division of labor has emerged, with the AUPSC mandating the AU to lead conflict prevention and crisis management on the continent while the UNSC sustains international attention and exerts political pressure. However, the councils' internal political dynamics, the uneven diplomatic capacities of member states, and broader debates over political primacy and subsidiarity can limit cooperation. Moreover, while the three African elected members of the UNSC and the councils' annual joint consultative meeting serve as a bridge between them, engagement between the councils is not consistently sustained.

Compared with the uneven relationship between the two councils, the partnership between the UN Secretariat and AU Commission has grown considerably stronger. This partnership is underpinned by institutional mechanisms, including the Joint Task Force on Peace and Security and the UN-AU Annual Conference, as well as the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN and the UN Office to the AU. Equally important are day-to-day working relationships, including between special envoys, focal points, and other staff. At the highest level, the relationship between the UN secretary-general and AU Commission chairperson has driven the partnership's recent growth. With the UN development system reforms that took effect in January 2019, UN country teams, especially the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and peace and development advisers, also play an increasingly

valuable role in the partnership.

The depth and nature of the UN-AU partnership varies across different areas of work. Cooperation on mediation is particularly advanced, with both organizations nurturing institutional mechanisms to work together. Similarly, the UN and AU have a long-standing working relationship on electoral support, with the UN focused on technical assistance and the AU on election observation. The AU's Silencing the Guns initiative is a growing feature of the partnership, with the UN considering how to advance the AU's initiative beyond 2020. In terms of the women, peace, and security and youth, peace, and security agendas, both organizations have progressed on internal implementation but could expand cooperation across the range of UN and AU entities working on these crosscutting issues. The partnership is weakest on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

While the UN-AU partnership on conflict prevention and crisis management has steadily grown, the following recommendations are intended to guide UN and AU stakeholders in improving cooperation:

- **Strengthen council-to-council engagement:** The councils should strengthen their political and institutional linkages, with a focus on clear, tangible outcomes.
- **Work toward a collective approach to conflict prevention and crisis management:** The UN and AU should strengthen informal collaboration, improve common messaging on shared successes, and mainstream a more comprehensive approach to conflict prevention throughout their joint work.
- **Create a dedicated team within the AU Peace and Security Department to support the partnership:** Such a team could support more sustained and regular interaction between the AU Commission and its UN counterparts.
- **Better align work on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development:** Both organizations should explore whether and how to learn from one another in these areas.
- **Build momentum on the AU's Silencing the Guns initiative:** Both organizations should sustain political and operational support beyond 2020.

- **Expand diplomatic capacities to support the partnership:** The UN, the AU, and their member states should invest more in their diplomatic capacities in New York and Addis Ababa to reflect the growth of the partnership.

Partnerships are essential for navigating contemporary pressures on multilateralism, especially as no organization can successfully prevent conflicts and manage crises on its own. The UN-AU partnership exemplifies both the benefits and the challenges of building systematic, predictable, and sustainable partnerships. Moving forward, coherence, flexibility, and sustainability should be prioritized so that the UN and AU can strengthen their engagement while accounting for their different mandates, resources, and interests.

## Introduction

The strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union (AU), two of the main organizations tasked with addressing collective peace and security challenges in Africa, remains an urgent priority for both organizations. The organizations and their member states have worked in tandem since the AU's establishment in 2002. During this time, shifting conflict dynamics and the AU's institutional growth have directed the partnership toward peace and security issues.<sup>1</sup>

This partnership, however, is confronting growing pressures that are impeding collective responses to conflict across the multilateral system. Governments are now more willing to undertake political and security interventions that circumvent the approval and oversight of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC). As a result, these member states are not giving the UN, the AU, and Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) the full buy-in and support necessary for these multilateral

organizations to effectively prevent and manage conflict. This has led to a widening rift between the organizations' conflict-prevention efforts and their capabilities to effectively respond to prevailing peace and security challenges. This rift is further compounded by a lack of consensus among member states on collective strategies for addressing ongoing and emergent conflicts.<sup>2</sup>

This prevailing international climate underscores the political, financial, and operational reality that neither organization can prevent conflicts and manage crises on its own.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore critical to ask how they can coordinate their actions, leverage their comparative advantages, and ensure coherence between their political strategies. But while there is extensive literature on the organizations' collaboration on peacekeeping (i.e., UN peace operations and AU peace support operations), there is comparatively less on other dimensions of the partnership.<sup>4</sup>

This report therefore considers the evolution of the strategic partnership between the UN and the AU, with a focus on their approach to conflict prevention and crisis management. This focus also stems from the April 2017 Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which emphasizes the need for the UN and AU to fully leverage their complementarity and interdependence to address conflicts in a holistic manner.<sup>5</sup> The Joint Framework serves as a point of reference to contextualize and examine recent developments relating to the partnership at the political, strategic, and working levels. Accordingly, this paper does not evaluate the framework's implementation but instead considers key dynamics of the partnership that can foster political coherence and operational coordination.

The paper, which is based on extensive desk research and over forty interviews conducted in

1 For a succinct overview, see: Ulf Engel, "The African Union and the United Nations: Crafting an International Partnership in the Field of Peace and Security," in *The African Union: Autocracy, Diplomacy and Peacebuilding in Africa*, Tony Karabo and Tim Murithi, eds. (London, UK: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018).

2 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture*, UN Doc. A/69/968-S/2015/490, June 30, 2015.

3 While the UN Charter affords the UN Security Council the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, it also envisions a prominent role for regional arrangements, thereby positioning the AU as an important interlocutor.

4 Arthur Boutellis and Paul D. Williams, "Peace Operations, the African Union, and the United Nations: Toward More Effective Partnerships in Peace Operations," International Peace Institute, April 2013. For a deeper exploration of the UN-AU partnership on peacekeeping-related issues, see: Paul D. Williams and Solomon A. Dersso, "Saving Strangers and Neighbors: Advancing UN-AU Cooperation on Peace Operations," International Peace Institute, February 2015; Cedric de Coning, "Peace Enforcement in Africa: Doctrinal Distinctions between the African Union and United Nations," *Contemporary Security Policy* 38, no. 1 (2017); Gustavo de Carvalho, "To Improve Peacekeeping, UN and AU Need to Improve Partnership," International Peace Institute, June 2018; Paul D. Williams, "Global and Regional Peacekeepers: Trends, Opportunities, Risks and a Way Ahead," *Global Policy* 8, no. 1 (2017); Paul D. Williams and Arthur Boutellis, "Partnership Peacekeeping: Challenges and Opportunities in the United Nations-African Union Relationship," *African Affairs* 113, no. 451 (2014).

5 *Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security*, New York, April 19, 2017, p. 1



2019 with diplomats based in New York and Addis Ababa, UN and AU officials, and independent experts, has four key sections. The first focuses on the UN-AU partnership at the member-state level, especially in the UNSC and AUPSC. The second section focuses on the operational side of the partnership across different UN and AU entities. The third section assesses pressing thematic issues relevant to conflict prevention and crisis management and discusses how these have translated into more meaningful collaboration between the two organizations. The final section offers recommendations directed primarily at the UN and AU and their member states.

## Dynamics among Member States

The relationship between the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), the organs with executive decision-making powers over peace and security issues, is a central driver of the UN-AU partnership. The political and operational relationship between the two councils has grown significantly since their first joint consultation in 2007. This section assesses the council-to-council partnership through the lens of each council's internal dynamics, as well as the ways in which they engage one another. It also focuses on the role of the three African nonpermanent members of the UNSC (the A3) and considers how the councils' working methods guide or limit the partnership's scope and effectiveness. Finally, it highlights the dynamics of the UN and AU's triangular partnerships with regional economic communities (RECs) and regional mechanisms (RMs).

### DYNAMICS ON THE TWO COUNCILS

The AUPSC is the only continental member-state body that regularly engages the UNSC in a

structured and systematic manner, and it is therefore uniquely privileged compared to other multilateral organizations.<sup>6</sup> The partnership's conflict-prevention, conflict-management, and peacekeeping priorities are codified in multiple AUPSC communiqués, UNSC resolutions and presidential statements, reports of the UN secretary-general and of the AU Commission chairperson, and meeting records (see Annex). The relationship between the two councils can be traced back to before the AUPSC became operational in 2004, when the UNSC's Ad Hoc Working Group on Africa (now the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa) recommended in 2002 that the council facilitate regular interactions with its eventual counterpart.<sup>7</sup>

This partnership, however, is defined by an overriding tension: the two councils are increasingly interdependent but remain locked in a relationship that is fundamentally unequal in terms of powers, authority, resources, and political status. While the UNSC jealously safeguards the primacy of its mandate to maintain international peace and security, the AU's growing political legitimacy and agency position it as a driver of the continent's peace and security agenda.<sup>8</sup>

Although this tension frequently emerges in the context of peace operations on the continent (especially those authorized and operated by the AU; see Box 1), the councils have managed to cooperate more effectively on conflict prevention and crisis management. They discuss many of the same situations (50 percent of the UNSC's country-specific meetings in 2018 focused on Africa) and are therefore readily positioned to engage one another.<sup>9</sup> For conflict-management efforts involving good offices and political mediation, the UNSC often views the AU and the RECs as first responders.<sup>10</sup> In such cases, the AUPSC mandates the AU (often in coordination with the relevant REC) to

6 The AUPSC is the "standing decision-making organ of the AU for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts." It has fifteen members, selected to ensure equitable regional representation, for either two- or three-year terms. Each member has equal voting powers. For more information, see: African Union, "The Peace and Security Council," available at <https://au.int/en/psc>.

7 UN Security Council, *Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa to the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/2002/979, August 30, 2002.

8 The primacy of the UNSC's mandate is laid out in: *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*, Addis Ababa, July 29, 2002, Article 17.1.

9 For more information on the files on which both councils are seized, see UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, "Highlights of Security Council Practice 2018," available at <https://unite.un.org/sites/unite.un.org/files/app-schighlights-2018/index.html#agenda>; African Union Assembly, *Report of the Peace and Security Council on Its Activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa*, AU Doc. Assembly/AU/7(XXXI), July 2, 2018.

10 UN Security Council, 8546<sup>th</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8546, June 12, 2019; 8473<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8473, June 12, 2019; 8314<sup>th</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8314, July 18, 2018; 8044<sup>th</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8044, September 12, 2017.

assume a leadership role, with the UNSC serving as a political guarantor to sustain international attention and pressure. This informal division of labor is guided by many factors, including the AU's growing normative foundation emphasizing the peaceful resolution of conflicts and good governance. The AU's comparative legitimacy as an African institution also allows it to engage more proactively and gives it more political leverage over some parties (especially those that express reservations about direct engagement by the UNSC).

The UN-AU partnership to support the peace process in the Central African Republic (CAR) demonstrates how this relationship between the two councils can play out positively. In July 2017, the AUPSC mandated the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR. Under this initiative, the AUPSC, alongside the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), provided political support to the AU Commission's effort to mediate between the government of CAR and fourteen armed groups.<sup>11</sup> The UNSC also supported the African initiative by mandating the UN mission in CAR (MINUSCA) to prioritize local-level mediation efforts to complement the track-one process and to provide logistical support.<sup>12</sup>

Following Sudan's initiation of a parallel mediation process in the latter half of 2018 (with the support of Russia), members of both councils helped unify the two processes in January 2019. This allowed the UN and AU to support the parties to the conflict in reaching a peace agreement in February 2019.<sup>13</sup> Despite the significant political capital invested by members of the two councils, however, they fell short of UN and AU standards for including women in peace processes and ensuring peace agreements comprehensively address gender-based violence.<sup>14</sup>

The two councils have also demonstrated complementarity during political crises sparked by unconstitutional changes of government. The AUPSC's founding protocol includes a provision enabling it to suspend members from all AU activities following unconstitutional changes of government—a flexible legal and political tool unavailable to the UNSC.<sup>15</sup> This provision has been used in response to crises in Madagascar, Egypt, and Sudan, among others, and offers the AUPSC leverage and the ability to engage expeditiously.<sup>16</sup> Rooted in AU normative principles, this policy tool provides the AU with a comparative advantage when engaging in political crises.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of their strong mandates, executive functions, and convening powers on international peace and security, both councils' decisions are shaped by their internal political dynamics, which make it challenging to achieve consensus. Coherence between the UNSC and AUPSC is most often hindered when one or more of the UNSC's five permanent members pursue their national interests or attempt to assert the primacy of the UNSC without due regard for the positions of AUPSC members. This challenge is manifest in how member states in both councils maintain informal ownership over specific files. Under the UNSC's penholder system, France, the UK, and the US, in particular, have disproportionate influence over all activities related to specific agenda items.<sup>18</sup> The AUPSC's regional composition (with each of the continent's five regions allocated three seats) gives those AU member states on the council de facto ownership over discussions about countries in their region. These informal practices enable individual member states to encourage, restrict, or heavily influence discussions on files both within and between the councils.

11 AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCXXXVII (November 21, 2017), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM(DCCXXXVII).

12 UN Security Council Resolution 2448 (December 13, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2448; UN Security Council, 8378<sup>th</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8378, October 23, 2018.

13 International Crisis Group, "Making the Central African Republic's Latest Peace Agreement Stick," June 2019, p. 6.

14 AU Peace and Security Council, Press Statement, AU Doc. PSC/PR/BR.(DCCCIII), October 19, 2018; UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (October 31, 2000), UN Doc. S/RES/1325; UN Security Council Resolution 2467 (April 23, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2467; UN Security Council, *Central African Republic—Report of the Secretary General*, UN Doc. S/2019/498, June 17, 2019.

15 *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*, Addis Ababa, July 9, 2002, Article 7.1(g); *Lomé Declaration of July 2000 on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government*, Lomé, July 11, 2000.

16 Following unconstitutional changes of government in Burkina Faso and Sudan, AUPSC communiqués did not immediately sanction the countries; they instead used the threat of sanctions to compel reform. Solomon Dersso, "Could the African Union Be the Entity That Could Save the Day?" World Peace Foundation, April 12, 2016.

17 Issaka K. Souaré, "The African Union as a Norm Entrepreneur on Military Coups d'État in Africa (1952–2012): An Empirical Assessment," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 52, no. 1 (2014).

18 Security Council Report, "The Penholder System," December 21, 2018.

The crisis in Libya underscores how sharp divisions between the two councils minimize the potential for joint engagement. Members of the UNSC and AUPSC have long held divergent perspectives on the Libyan crisis, dating back to their fallout over UNSC Resolution 1973 (2011) and the resulting NATO-led intervention that led to the ouster of President Muammar Qaddafi. Despite efforts by the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission to better coordinate their work in Libya in recent years and the AUPSC's unified position, the political interests of prominent member states within the UNSC have closed the space for developing a joint strategy.<sup>19</sup> These tensions are especially evident in disagreements over the AU's proposal for a joint UN-AU special envoy, for which there is little political appetite within the UNSC.<sup>20</sup> These dynamics became so problematic that in May 2019, the UN secretary-general and the AU Commission chairperson explicitly noted "the imperative for a single roadmap for Libya, while acknowledging the complementary roles of both organizations and regional actors."<sup>21</sup>

Uneven diplomatic capacities and bandwidth among member states on both councils can also limit their cooperation.<sup>22</sup> African member states rotating onto both councils often have less capacity and bandwidth to manage their respective agendas compared to the five permanent members of the UNSC or to member states like Algeria, Nigeria, or South Africa that regularly sit on the AUPSC and occasionally on the UNSC. Moreover, non-African elected members of the UNSC do not always have dedicated observer missions to the AU or strong diplomatic presences in Addis Ababa and can therefore lack a clear grasp of their counterpart

body's dynamics on specific files or its working methods.

Another factor threatening cooperation is the growing perception that the AUPSC is gradually losing its influence and credibility on the continent. This perception stems in part from the growing role played by certain AU member states outside the ambit of the AUPSC, including through parallel multilateral initiatives, bilateral interventions, and the activities of the AU Assembly and the AU Troika.<sup>23</sup> It also stems from the AUPSC's shift toward a more conservative approach. Some stakeholders perceived the AUPSC's decision on Burundi in January 2016—when the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government effectively overruled an earlier decision taken by the AUPSC at the ambassadorial level—as a turning point.<sup>24</sup> This perception has persisted even as the AUPSC engages more proactively on other files such as Sudan or the Gambia.<sup>25</sup> This dynamic has complicated the implementation of the subsidiarity principle between the AU and RECs. It has also directly impacted the council-to-council partnership; as the AUPSC strives to maintain its leading role in setting the direction of multilateral conflict management, the UNSC is navigating internal political divisions over whether (or how) to address unfolding crises in Africa. This dynamic is especially notable in crises that certain members of the UNSC see as "internal" affairs and therefore not threats to international peace and security.

These dynamics are evident in Cameroon, which is experiencing civil unrest, an armed insurrection, human rights abuses, and gender-based violence.<sup>26</sup> In spite of the AUPSC's founding protocol, which established it, in part, as a collective early-warning arrangement, it has not yet formally considered any

19 Peter Fabricus, "Resurrected Haftar Scuttles UN and AU Libyan Peace Efforts," Institute for Security Studies, April 12, 2019; AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCCXXXIX (April 9, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM(DCCCXXXIX); *Final Communiqué of the AU Troika Committee and the AU High-Level Committee on Libya*, Cairo, April 23, 2019; Interviews with UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

20 African Union, *Conclusions of the Meeting of the African Union (AU) High Level Committee on Libya*, Niamey, July 7, 2019.

21 UN Secretary-General and AU Commission Chairperson, "Note to Correspondents: Joint Communiqué of the Third African Union–United Nations Annual Conference," May 6, 2019.

22 The AUPSC has explicit provisions within its founding documents intended to prevent this issue. See: *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*, Addis Ababa, July 9, 2002, Article 5.2(h).

23 The AU Troika is an institutional configuration including the outgoing, current, and incoming AU chairpersons that is mandated to ensure continuity in and effective implementation of Assembly decisions.

24 This debate revolved around AU member states' interpretations of Articles 4(h) and 4(j) of the AUPSC Protocol regarding whether the decision to intervene in an AU member state could be made exclusively at the level of AUPSC ambassadors. For more information, see: Paul D. Williams, "Special Report: The African Union's Coercive Diplomacy in Burundi," *IPI Global Observatory*, December 18, 2015; "Special Report, Part 2: The AU's Less Coercive Diplomacy on Burundi," *IPI Global Observatory*, February 16, 2016.

25 Interviews with independent experts, April 2019; International Crisis Group, "A Tale of Two Councils: Strengthening AU-UN Cooperation," June 2019, p. 9.

26 Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Events of 2018," 2019; "Cameroon: Security Forces Kill Civilians, Rape Woman," July 2019.

developments in Cameroon and appears unlikely to do so in the immediate future.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, even though diplomats from some UNSC members are anxious about the deteriorating situation and have mandates to discuss the situation through both a regional lens and a women, peace, and security lens, others would prefer to see clear political engagement from the AUPSC prior to bringing it onto the UNSC agenda; UNSC members have only been able to discuss Cameroon indirectly through an Arria-formula meeting.<sup>28</sup> With limited action by the two councils, other diplomatic initiatives have emerged, including facilitation by the Swiss government and a symposium led by the Africa Forum.<sup>29</sup>

## THE A3 AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE COUNCILS

The three African elected members of the UN Security Council (the A3) are a crucial political bloc within the UNSC and have the potential to bring the two councils closer together in their analysis and action. While African states have been afforded three seats on the UNSC since the body expanded to fifteen members in 1966, the A3 have assumed a stronger role since the operationalization of the AUPSC in 2004.<sup>30</sup> The A3 are formally mandated by the AU Assembly to promote positions taken by the AUPSC and to support the work carried out by the AU Commission, including its public statements to the UNSC and the negotiation of its

Table 1. African countries on the UN Security Council (2004–2019)<sup>31</sup>

Year	Countries (bold denotes concurrent position on AUPSC)		
2004	<b>Algeria</b>	Benin	Angola
2005	<b>Algeria</b>	Benin	Tanzania
2006	<b>Ghana</b>	<b>Republic of the Congo</b>	Tanzania
2007	<b>Ghana</b>	<b>Republic of the Congo</b>	South Africa
2008	<b>Burkina Faso</b>	Libya	South Africa
2009	<b>Burkina Faso</b>	Libya	<b>Uganda</b>
2010	<b>Nigeria</b>	Gabon	Uganda
2011	<b>Nigeria</b>	Gabon	<b>South Africa</b>
2012	Morocco <sup>32</sup>	Togo	<b>South Africa</b>
2013	Morocco	Togo	Rwanda
2014	<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Chad</b>	Rwanda
2015	<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Chad</b>	Angola
2016	Senegal	<b>Egypt</b>	Angola
2017	Senegal	<b>Egypt</b>	Ethiopia
2018	Côte d'Ivoire	Equatorial Guinea	Ethiopia
2019	Côte d'Ivoire	<b>Equatorial Guinea</b>	South Africa

27 Institute for Security Studies, "Why the PSC Should Discuss Cameroon," April 2019.

28 "Arria-Formula Meeting of the UN Security Council," UN Web TV, May 13, 2019, available at <http://webtv.un.org/watch/arria-formula-meeting-of-the-un-security-council/6036271424001>; Interviews with UN diplomats, New York, March–April 2019.

29 "Switzerland Mediates in Cameroon Crisis," *SwissInfo*, June 28, 2019; "Africa Forum to Convene a Symposium on Cameroon," *Africanews*, July 7, 2019.

30 Although the UN Charter and General Assembly resolutions afford "African and Asian members" five combined seats on the UNSC, the informal practice among UN member states is to allocate three of the five to Africa. See UN General Assembly Resolution 1991 (December 17, 1963), UN Doc. A/RES/1991(XVIII); and Security Council Report, "Security Council Elections 2019," May 2019.

31 Adapted from: Williams and Boutellis, "Partnership Peacekeeping."

32 Morocco rejoined the AU in 2017.



resolutions and outcome documents.<sup>33</sup> The A3 regularly engage one another (with each member playing the unofficial role of A3 coordinator for one third of the year), and the A3's permanent representatives receive monthly briefings from senior officials in the AU and UN.<sup>34</sup>

The A3 are most influential within the UNSC on African files. Unified A3 positions on substantive issues, backed by clear AUPSC positions, provide legitimacy and credibility to the Security Council's political strategies or policies on Africa. Similarly, public divergences with the A3 can force other council members to reconsider their approaches. This was evident following the A3's collective press statement and media stakeout on Sudan, which was intended to "amplify the concerns of the AUPSC on this matter" and therefore push the UNSC to support the AU's position in the negotiations on renewing the mandate of the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).<sup>35</sup>

The A3 also play a valuable function vis-à-vis the other seven elected members of the UNSC. Compared to the five permanent members, the elected members often do not have the diplomatic presence necessary to obtain first-hand insights from conflict-affected environments in Africa. Analysis from the A3 and AUPSC help the other elected members by closing the information gap, providing additional insights, and articulating positions different from those in the secretary-general's reports. Multiple non-African elected members of the UNSC expressed that they often want to follow the A3's lead on responses to situations in Africa.<sup>36</sup>

However, dynamics among the A3, as well as their relations with other member states, can impact how the UNSC ultimately engages in the broader

partnership with the AUPSC. The most urgent challenge is potential divisions among the A3 on specific files. Each member of the A3 has its own national interests and may decide that advancing those interests is more important than adhering to the AU's position. The five permanent members of the council, as well as the non-African elected members, have also pressured the A3 to vote in certain ways, using them as a "political football"; as characterized by one diplomat, the A3 provide important political capital when they are on your side and are targets to divide and win over when they are not.<sup>37</sup> This dynamic was prevalent during the December 2018 negotiations on a UNSC resolution endorsing the use of UN assessed contributions to partially fund AU-authorized and -led peace support operations on a case-by-case basis (see Box 1).<sup>38</sup>

On Africa-related files, the A3 bloc has split its votes in only 8 out of 298 possible instances between January 2010 and August 2019 (see Table 2). Three of these were related to Western Sahara, which remains a complex political issue for the AU and African member states of the UN due to historical allegiances and geopolitical balancing, a dynamic made all the more complex by Morocco's admission into the AU in 2017.<sup>39</sup> Egypt's abstentions from votes on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and on Burundi were informed by its view that the UNSC was disregarding the peacekeeping principle of host-state consent to deployments.<sup>40</sup> Abstentions from votes on the sanctions regimes in South Sudan and in Somalia and Eritrea were informed by the position that the UNSC was acting without "synchronizing or calibrating its position" with that of the AUPSC.<sup>41</sup>

While such splits among the A3 are rare, they have happened more frequently in the past four years

33 AU Assembly, *Decision on the Activities of the Peace and Security Council and the State of Peace and Security in Africa*, AU Doc. Assembly/AU/Dec.598(XXVI), January 2016.

34 Interviews with UN diplomats and UN officials, New York, March–April 2019; Amani Africa Media and Research Services, "Insights on the Peace & Security Council: Amani Africa Seminar Report on the Role of the African Non-permanent Members (A3) of the UN Security Council," March 2019.

35 "Press Conference by the African Members (A3) of the United Nations Security Council (Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea & South Africa) on the Situation in Sudan at the UNSC Press Stakeout," June 6, 2019, available at [www.southafrica-newyork.net/pmun/statements%202019/UNSC\\_A3\\_20190606.html](http://www.southafrica-newyork.net/pmun/statements%202019/UNSC_A3_20190606.html); Jerry Matthews Matjila, informal comments to the media on the situation in Sudan, New York, June 6, 2019, available at <http://webtv.un.org/watch/jerry-matthews-matjila-south-africa-on-the-situation-in-sudan-security-council-media-stakeout-6-june-2019/6045477934001>; Daniel Forti, "Security Council Pauses UNAMID's Drawdown while Core Transition Questions Remain," *IPI Global Observatory*, July 3, 2019.

36 Interviews with UN diplomats, New York, March–April 2019.

37 Amani Africa Media and Research Services, "Insights on the Peace & Security Council."

38 Interviews with UN diplomats, New York, March–April 2019.

39 The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara) is an AU member state. Institute for Security Studies, "Africa's Divisions over Western Sahara Could Impact the PSC," April 2019.

40 UN Security Council, 7754<sup>th</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.7754, August 12, 2016; 7752<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.7752, July 29, 2016.

41 UN Security Council, 8273<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8273, May 31, 2018.

### Box 1. Can the UNSC-AUPSC partnership overcome the issue of financing peace support operations?

In December 2018, the A3 (mandated by the AUPSC) championed a draft resolution that sought the UN Security Council's endorsement of using UN assessed contributions to partially fund AU-authorized and -led peace support operations on a case-by-case basis. This initiative aimed to address a crucial issue within the UN-AU partnership and to build on progress achieved in UNSC Resolutions 2320 (2016) and 2378 (2017).<sup>42</sup> This issue received near unanimous support from UNSC members and was championed in part by the US under the administration of President Barack Obama; the US, however, reversed its position in 2017 under Donald Trump. This has led to discord within the UNSC and between the two councils due to the unmet expectation that UN assessed contributions would be a viable route to making funding for AU-led peace support operations more predictable and sustainable.

Draft texts of the resolution were negotiated throughout November and December 2018, with significant amendments made in an attempt to achieve consensus. Compromises in the text included limitations on the extent to which UN assessed contributions could be used to fund AU-led peace support operations, as well as the removal of all references to the phrase "AU-mandated peace support operations." These compromises aimed at neutralizing the United States' threat to veto the resolution—an outcome that would damage the UN-AU partnership. Despite these negotiations, the planned vote on the resolution failed to occur because the US sustained its veto threat and France sought to include additional language that was perceived to water down the resolution beyond acceptability.<sup>43</sup> The AUPSC has since taken up this matter for further consideration and has requested the AU Commission to provide recommendations on the way forward.

The unsuccessful negotiations, in which both organizations and their member states invested significant political capital, left a bitter taste and created uncertainty surrounding one of the partnership's core priorities. Member states have routinely identified the financing issue as a hurdle facing the UN-AU partnership despite many other areas of successful collaboration.

One way to potentially work around this deadlock is for UN and AU stakeholders to cooperate on fully operationalizing the AU Peace Fund, which is meant to cover 25 percent of the AU's peace and security budget.<sup>44</sup> Launched in November 2018, the Peace Fund relies not only on appropriations from the AU's regular budget and member-state contributions but also on contributions from the continent's private sector and civil society. Given the importance of predictable and sustainable financing, UN and AU stakeholders should see the Peace Fund as a critical priority in order to circumvent the fallout from the failed negotiations in December 2018 and to work toward financing a more holistic approach to peace and security in Africa that is inclusive of peace operations, preventive diplomacy, and mediation.

compared to the previous five, underscoring greater pressure on the A3 to remain unified. And while votes on UNSC resolutions are directly observable ways of identifying when the A3 are split, divisions behind closed doors could impact the language of resolutions or other outcome documents or block them from ever being put forward.

Another challenge is the uneven diplomatic capacities and resources among the A3. While more powerful African countries often serve as informal leaders of the A3 bloc, limited diplomatic

capacities among some A3 members' missions to the UN have led them to disengage from certain files, placing additional pressure on the others to carry their collective weight. Limited capacities can also constrain the A3's ability to coordinate foreign policy positions and champion collective African positions simultaneously in their capitals, Addis Ababa, and New York; in some instances, member states have failed to put forward consistent positions on agenda items when serving simultaneously on the AUPSC and UNSC.<sup>45</sup>

42 Security Council Report, "Debate and Resolution on Strengthening the UN-AU Partnership," November 17, 2016.

43 Security Council Report, "Vote on Draft Resolution on the Financing of AU Peace Support Operations," December 18, 2018.

44 AU Commission, *African Union Handbook 2019*, p. 79.

45 Interviews with UN diplomats and UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019



Table 2. A3 voting splits on adopted UNSC resolutions for Africa files (January 2010–August 2019)

UNSC resolution	Topic	A3 members abstaining from vote
Resolution 2468 (2019)	UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara	South Africa
Resolution 2440 (2018)	UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara	Ethiopia
Resolution 2428 (2018)	South Sudan (sanctions)	Ethiopia
Resolution 2418 (2018)	South Sudan (sanctions)	Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia
Resolution 2414 (2018)	UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara	Ethiopia
Resolution 2385 (2017)	Somalia and Eritrea (sanctions)	Egypt
Resolution 2304 (2016)	UN Mission in South Sudan	Egypt
Resolution 2303 (2016)	Burundi	Angola, Egypt

A final challenge is the AUPSC's inconsistent understanding of the UNSC's political dynamics and working methods—and, by extension, of the pressures on the A3. There are efforts by the AUPSC, the A3, and the AU Commission to coordinate and harmonize their approaches, including through participation by the A3's Addis Ababa delegations in some closed AU sessions and the convening of an annual seminar between members of the A3 and the AUPSC. However, because A3 members are not required to simultaneously serve on the AUPSC, some interlocutors suggested that they do not always wield influence within the AUPSC as a bloc, minimizing the potential impact of these efforts.

#### ANNUAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE MEETING

The annual joint consultative meeting between members of the UNSC and AUPSC, which first took place in 2007, is the most visible demonstration of the two councils' partnership. Alternating between Addis Ababa and New York, the meeting has been valuable for sharing analysis and developing common messaging, but it has not consistently produced clear, actionable, joint outcomes. While the early meetings focused primarily on working methods, the meetings between 2011 and 2015 also

focused on country-specific files, which overloaded the agenda and diluted the conversations. To rectify this dynamic, starting in 2016, the two councils convened an informal seminar to hold thematic discussions before the formal consultation with its focus on country-specific discussions. In recent years, the AUPSC has also convened its own preparatory meetings in advance of the annual consultation, signaling the importance with which it treats the process.<sup>46</sup> Diplomats who have participated in these discussions consider the deliberations to be frank, substantive, and worthwhile.<sup>47</sup>

Although the annual consultation is now institutionalized, its deliberations do not always inform coordinated and joint action. Structural tensions underpin the meeting, best exemplified by its formal title: “members” of the UNSC meet with “the AUPSC,” an intentional distinction that emerged from UNSC members' wariness to establish a precedent that positions the AUPSC as an equal.<sup>48</sup> These tensions are also reflected in some diplomats and officials' observations that the AUPSC has consistently presented common positions on various conflict situations, while UNSC members assert their own national positions.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, as these meetings have evolved, they have gravitated toward form over

<sup>46</sup> AU Peace and Security Council, “Preparation for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Joint Consultative Meeting with the UN Security Council: Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Provisional PSC Programme for the Month of August 2018,” July 10, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Interviews with UN diplomats, New York, March–April 2019.

<sup>48</sup> Some stakeholders felt that this was no longer a significant point of political tension. See Williams and Boutellis, “Partnership Peacekeeping”; Interviews with AU officials, Addis Ababa, April 2019.

<sup>49</sup> Interviews with UN diplomats and UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

substance; the process for organizing the consultation has been routinely described as “[too] elaborate and time-consuming,” with months spent negotiating the agenda.<sup>50</sup>

The absence of any meaningful follow-up on the communiqué emerging from these meetings is another long-standing challenge, exacerbated by member states’ scrutiny of the text during its negotiation. The communiqués following the 2016 and 2017 annual meetings were only finalized months after the meetings took place, largely because of disagreements over language on country-specific issues.<sup>51</sup> Beyond these delays, the communiqués are not perceived as actionable documents by either the UNSC or the AUPSC and are not referenced in subsequent UNSC resolutions or AUPSC communiqués.<sup>52</sup>

The July 2018 meeting in New York, which was one of the more successful consultations, exemplifies both the benefits and the shortfalls of the process. Delegates from Ethiopia and Sweden worked efficiently with the AU for months, largely driven by the political will of their governments and their individual relationships.<sup>53</sup> As part of this preparatory meeting, an expert-level delegation came from Addis Ababa to agree on the agenda and draft the communiqué in advance, a welcome addition to the process<sup>54</sup> (it is worth noting that the final communiqué was ratified on the same day as the meeting).<sup>55</sup> The meeting focused on three pressing issues—the impact of UN reform on the UN-AU partnership, the AU’s Silencing the Guns initiative, and UN financing of AU-led peace support operations—and discussions on the latter two directly guided the UNSC in the months that

followed.<sup>56</sup> However, the formal consultations’ focus on the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan did not directly influence how the bodies considered these situations.<sup>57</sup>

Because of the dynamics of the joint consultative meetings, the two councils often fall short of aligning their strategies for dealing with emerging crises and working collaboratively to identify potential future challenges. But their positive trajectory toward more results-oriented engagement and increased commitment to the annual consultation suggests encouraging forward momentum.

### TRANSLATING A PRIVILEGED RELATIONSHIP INTO SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT

While the annual consultation positively contributes to the partnership, diplomats and officials at the UN and AU alike underscored the need for more frequent and sustained engagement between members of the two councils to better prevent and manage crises.<sup>58</sup> Such sustained engagement can be promoted through adjustments to existing working methods—including those of the UNSC, which specifically reference the AU and AUPSC (see Box 2)—particularly in three areas: monthly agendas, briefings, and joint visits.

As both councils deliberate on many of the same country-specific and thematic issues, there are opportunities to better align their monthly agendas. In previous years, the president of the UNSC and chair of the AUPSC would exchange draft programs of work. Although this practice stopped for a few years, the UN Office to the AU

50 Interview with UN diplomat, March 2019; Security Council Report, “Consultative Meeting between Members of the Council and the AU,” May 23, 2011.

51 The communiqué from the 2016 annual consultation was delayed by negotiations over language regarding Burundi and Somalia; the communiqué from the 2017 annual consultation was delayed by negotiations over language regarding South Sudan and the financing of AU-led peace support operations. See: Security Council Report “Annual Meeting with Members of the AU Peace and Security Council,” Security Council Report, July 18, 2018.

52 This is the case even though the UNSC explicitly requested greater follow-up on these communiqués in Resolution 2033 (2012). Interviews with UN diplomats and UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019; Interview with independent researcher, Addis Ababa, April 2019.

53 Ethiopia was chair of the UNSC Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, which has a mandate to lead the organization of the annual council-to-council meeting. Sweden held the presidency of the UNSC when the consultations were held.

54 UN Security Council, *Strengthening the Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on Issues of Peace and Security in Africa, Including on the Work of the United Nations Office to the African Union*, UN Doc. S/2018/678, July 6, 2018, para. 60; AU Assembly, *Report of the Peace and Security Council on Its Activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa*, AU Doc. Assembly/AU/7(XXXI), July 2, 2018, para. 11; UN Office to the AU (UNOAU), “Peace and Security in Africa: A United Nations–African Union Priority,” July 2018.

55 Interviews with UN diplomats and UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

56 Security Council Report, “Vote on Draft Resolution on the Financing of AU Peace Support Operations”; UN Security Council Resolution 2457 (February 27, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2457.

57 UN Security Council Resolution 2459 (March 15, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2459; UN Security Council Resolution 2463 (March 29, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2463; AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCCVIII (November 19, 2018), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM(DCCCVIII); AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCC (October 10, 2018), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.3(DCCC).

58 Interviews with UN diplomats and UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

**Box 2. Language on the AU in the *Note on Security Council Practice*<sup>59</sup>****X. Dialogue with non-Council members and bodies**

“93. The Security Council underscores the importance of increased coordination, cooperation and interaction among the principal organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat, as well as with other relevant bodies including the Peacebuilding Commission, and regional organizations, including the African Union, and reaffirms that the relationship between the principal organs of the United Nations is mutually reinforcing and complementary, in accordance with and with full respect for their respective functions, authority, powers and competencies as enshrined in the Charter....

97. In this regard, the members of the Security Council acknowledge the importance of annual joint consultative meetings and informal dialogues with the members of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, to exchange views on ways to strengthen cooperation and partnership, building on the progress made. The dates, venues, agendas, modalities and outcomes will be determined through consultations between the two Councils....

**XI. Security Council missions**

122. With a view to enhancing synergy and maximizing impact, the members of the Security Council agree to consider joint missions of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to conflict situations in Africa. The modalities of joint missions will be discussed and agreed on a case-by-case basis by the two Councils.”

(UNOAU) revived it in March 2019 under France and Germany’s joint presidency of the UNSC and Nigeria’s chairmanship of the AUPSC.<sup>60</sup> One positive example of this practice is the UNSC’s briefing on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in July 2019 and the AUPSC’s discussion on the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) one day later. In 2018, Ethiopia (as chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa) proposed institutionalizing monthly exchanges between the president and the chair.<sup>61</sup>

While this information-sharing initiative is worthwhile, two issues make it difficult to align the two agendas more coherently. First, mandated reporting cycles for UN peace operations drive much of the UNSC’s monthly agenda. Although rigid and not aligned to developments on the ground, these reporting cycles often determine when the UNSC will discuss specific issues, and therefore when the AUPSC can engage in these

debates in New York (though alignment of the agendas does not automatically mean that substantive discussions will inform one another). Second, the design and sequencing of each agenda is largely within the purview of the president or chair, and consultations are therefore heavily dependent on their initiative.<sup>62</sup> Overcoming these issues requires coordinated and proactive planning.

Regular briefings to the two councils by senior UN and AU officials also help maintain interaction between the two organizations. UNOAU regularly briefs the AUPSC on behalf of the UN secretary-general and facilitates briefings by UN special envoys and special representatives of the secretary-general (SRSGs). The AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN (AUPOM) similarly briefs the UNSC on behalf of the AU Commission and facilitates briefings by AU envoys and special representatives (including via videoconference). For example, UN officials briefed the AUPSC 179 times between 2016 and July 2019.<sup>63</sup> But while the UNSC

59 UN Security Council, *Note by the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/2017/507, August 30, 2017.

60 Interview with UN officials, New York, April 2019.

61 United Nations, “Divisions among Security Council Members Continue to Impede Work of Sanctions Committees, Other Subsidiary Bodies, Chairs Stress in Annual Briefing,” Press Release, December 17, 2018.

62 Interview with UN official, New York, April 2019.

63 See the secretary-general’s reports on *Strengthening the Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on Issues of Peace and Security in Africa, Including the Work of the United Nations Office to the African Union from 2016* (UN Doc. S/2016/780, September 13, 2016, para. 13); 2017 (UN Doc. S/2017/744, August 30, 2017, para. 11); 2018 (UN Doc. S/2018/678, July 6, 2018, para. 59); and 2019 (UN Doc. S/2019/759, September 19, 2019, para. 61).

disproportionately deals with Africa-related issues (35 percent of its meetings in 2018 focused on a situation in the continent), the AU was only the second most common briefer among regional organizations during that time span (see Table 3).

Another form of sustained engagement is joint

missions to conflict-affected countries and regions. Member states considered the prospect of joint UNSC-AUPSC missions as far back as 2002 and have discussed the idea regularly since at least 2010.<sup>64</sup> Both councils undertake their own missions to countries in Africa annually, and the AUPSC has even conducted a joint mission with the EU

**Table 3. Number of briefings by regional intergovernmental organizations to the UNSC (Rule 39) (January 2014–June 2019)<sup>65</sup>**

Organization	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
African Union (AU)	11	15	20	14	22	16	98
European Union (EU)	35	30	35	30	31	15	176
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)	4	6	5	6	3	6	30
League of Arab States (LAS)	2	4	4	1	5	5	21
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)			3	5	4		11
Organization of American States (OAS)		1	5	1	1		8
Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)			1		1	1	3
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)			1		1		2
G5 Sahel					2		2
Commonwealth Secretariat			1				1
Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)			1				1
East African Community (EAC)				1			1
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)		1					1
Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC)						1	1
International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)	1						1
Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)					1		1
Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM)				1			1
Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)		1					1
Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)			1				1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>362</b>

<sup>64</sup> UN Security Council, *Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa to the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/2002/979, August 30, 2002, para. 2(g); *Letter Dated 20 July 2010 from the Permanent Representatives of Gabon, Nigeria and Uganda to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/2010/392, July 21, 2010, para. 7.

<sup>65</sup> UN Security Council, *Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S.96/Rev.7, 1983. Authors' calculations using data provided by the Security Council Affairs Division, UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).



Political and Security Committee to CAR.<sup>66</sup> As of October 2019, however, the UNSC and AUPSC have not undertaken a joint mission.

Although diplomats and officials at the UN and AU did not identify precisely why joint missions have not materialized, they highlighted political and logistical constraints. The UNSC's assertion of primacy on international peace and security and the AUPSC's prerogative to be considered the UN's equal partner in Africa create a political roadblock. This roadblock further manifests itself in questions surrounding the logistics of more elaborate joint missions. Although members of the AUPSC have considered developing modalities for joint field visits, these have not been formally presented to either council.<sup>67</sup> Questions remain over how many representatives and staff would attend, who would develop the agenda, who would pay, and who would oversee the logistics on the ground. These questions are especially salient as the UN supports the AUPSC's field missions, an operational and symbolic burden that could contribute to the lack of progress in organizing joint missions.<sup>68</sup> Council missions are often also the prerogative of the monthly president or chair, who use them as much to advance their national interests as to advance the council's work. Unless the member states presiding over the two councils explicitly conceptualize, plan, and implement a joint visit with each other—a task that requires a strong bilateral relationship—it is unlikely these missions will materialize.

These tensions were evident following the UNSC's March 2019 visit to Mali and Burkina Faso, co-organized by Côte d'Ivoire, France, and Germany. While the Sahel is an area of concern for both councils, the mission was conceptualized

exclusively under the purview of the UNSC. The chair of the AUPSC for March 2019 was belatedly “invited to observe” the visit along with the chair of the EU Political and Security Committee;<sup>69</sup> while the EU representative joined for the visit, the AUPSC representative did not. That the entire AUPSC was not engaged from the beginning of the process or invited to send a full delegation led to perceptions that the AUPSC “was an afterthought in the entire process.”<sup>70</sup>

### THE TRIANGULAR PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE UN, AU, AND SUBREGIONAL BODIES

It is difficult to assess the UN-AU partnership on conflict prevention and crisis management without considering the role of the continent's regional economic communities (RECs) and regional mechanisms (RMs).<sup>71</sup> These organizations occupy an imprecise political position vis-à-vis the AU and the UN. The RECs/RMs are meant to serve as the building blocks of the African Peace and Security Architecture—a set of continent-wide mechanisms mandated to engage across the whole conflict cycle—and therefore should be working in lockstep with the AU, especially when it comes to engaging with the UN.<sup>72</sup> Chapter VIII of the UN Charter does not distinguish between regional and subregional organizations, so the AU and RECs/RMs are legally comparable entities vis-à-vis the UN, even though they have different mandates, resources, and normative foundations.<sup>73</sup>

As a result, the triangular partnerships between the UN, AU, and RECs/RMs depend on the REC/RM involved, its comparative advantages, and how it decides to engage both the UN and the AU. Recent examples highlight the challenge of coordi-

66 DPPA's Security Council Affairs Division documents all reports from UNSC missions. See: UN Security Council, “Reports of the Security Council Missions,” available at [www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/reports-security-council-missions](http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/reports-security-council-missions). In 2018 alone, the AUPSC conducted field missions to the Central African Republic, Sudan, and South Sudan. See: AU Assembly, *Report of the Peace and Security Council on Its Activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa*, AU Doc. Assembly/AU/7(XXXI), July 2, 2018; AU Peace and Security Council and EU Political and Security Committee, “Joint Press Statement of the Joint Field Mission of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the European Union Political and Security Committee to the Central African Republic,” March 9, 2018.

67 Interview with former UN diplomat, Addis Ababa, April 2019.

68 UN Security Council, *Strengthening the Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on Issues of Peace and Security in Africa, Including the Work of the United Nations Office to the African Union—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2018/678, July 6, 2018, para. 4.

69 UN Security Council, 8492<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8492, March 27, 2019.

70 Interviews with UN diplomats, New York, March 2019.

71 RECs and RMs are regional groupings of African states that regularly engage the AU on peace and security, governance, and development priorities. The AU formally recognizes eight RECs based on a series of endorsed legal frameworks. While RMs are increasingly engaged in similar areas, the RECs are much more institutionalized within the AU's peace and security frameworks. For more information, see: AU Commission, *African Union Handbook* 2019, pp. 138–150.

72 *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern Africa and Northern Africa*, Addis Ababa, September 2, 2007.

73 UN Department of Political Affairs, *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council*, 20<sup>th</sup> Supplement, 2016–2017—Part VIII: Regional Arrangements, p. 4, footnote 1.

nating among all three actors on crisis prevention and response. From the UNSC's perspective, divergent messages from the AU and specific RECs/RMs complicate the political options available. This dynamic could be seen in the competing approaches to the December 2018 elections in the DRC taken by members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and a meeting of some AU heads of state and government convened by the AU Commission chairperson.<sup>74</sup>

The AU also incurs significant transaction costs trying to align its approaches with those of the RECs/RMs and the UN. Whereas the AUPSC and AU Assembly are intended to be the preeminent decision- and policy-making organs, decisions by RECs/RMs and AU member states also spill over into the UN-AU partnership. This problem is compounded by the relative absence of REC/RM representatives in New York compared to Addis Ababa; while all RECs/RMs have liaison offices to the AU, only the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have similar, albeit small, offices to the UN. This makes it easier for the RECs/RMs to influence debates in Addis Ababa but more difficult to influence them in New York.

#### EXTERNAL SUPPORT FROM MEMBER STATES

With the partnership between the UN and the AU gradually growing in prominence, member states outside of the two councils are striving to play a more constructive role in supporting it. The Friends of the UN-AU Partnership, an informal group launched at the AU in May 2019, is one such initiative. While such member-state-driven "groups of friends" informally advocating on specific issues are commonplace in New York, they are far less common in Addis Ababa. Co-chaired in 2019 by Norway and Rwanda and supported by an operational quartet and an informal steering group,

the group of friends aims to "strengthen the collaborative approach of the Member States of the UN and AU with regard to issues of peace and security as well as development."<sup>75</sup> The group presents an opportunity to bring together delegations from the UNSC, the AUPSC, AU member states, and development partners to informally discuss thematic issues and test new approaches to advancing the partnership at the operational level.<sup>76</sup> There have been preliminary discussions about establishing a similar group in New York.<sup>77</sup>

The UN General Assembly's Africa Group (an informal caucus of African member states) provides another opportunity for improving relations among member states supporting the UN-AU partnership. Coordinated by the AU's permanent observer to the UN, the Africa Group meets regularly to discuss a range of peace and security, development, and humanitarian issues and to advocate for the AU's work and African common positions; the A3 provide the group monthly peace and security briefings.<sup>78</sup> The group is even more important considering that African member states do not have formal caucuses representing the AUPSC or RECs/RMs in New York. The Africa Group is therefore a platform where African member states can advocate on their behalf, including with UNSC members.

## Dynamics between the UN Secretariat and AU Commission

Like the relationship between the two councils, the partnership between the UN Secretariat and AU Commission remains a work in progress and has grown in recent years. The UN has systematically partnered with the AU since the AU's genesis in 2002, hallmarked by the 2006 Framework for the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union and the 2017 Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and

74 African Union, "Communiqué of the High-Level Consultative Meeting of Heads of State and Government on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," January 17, 2019; Institute for Security Studies, "Will South Africa Bridge the AU-SADC Divide?" June 6, 2019.

75 In 2019, the quartet includes Norway, Rwanda, UNOAU, and the AU Commission. The member states rotate on an annual basis. The quartet serves as the operational backbone of the group. The steering group for 2019 includes the DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa, among other countries. It is expected to serve as an informal sounding board for the quartet. Interview with AU diplomat, New York, June 2019; UNOAU, "Strengthening the Collaborative Approach of the UN and AU in Peace, Security, and Development," May 21, 2019.

76 Interview with AU officials, Addis Ababa, April 2019; Interview with AU diplomat, New York, June 2019.

77 Interview with AU official, New York, June 2019; Interviews with UN officials, New York, July 2019.

78 Interview with UN diplomats, New York, March–April 2019.



Security (see Box 3).<sup>79</sup> While this 2017 framework provides the policy foundation for closer and more systematic cooperation across peace and security activities, stronger relations are equally driven by political impetus and personal relationships.

This section analyzes the institutional dimensions of the UN-AU partnership and examines their impact on conflict prevention and crisis management. It considers the dedicated mechanisms supporting the partnership, as well as the day-to-day working relationships in headquarters and in field settings. Finally, the section considers the role of UN agencies, funds, and programs in the UN-AU partnership and how the ongoing UN reforms and the secretary-general's vision for conflict prevention position them to play a more meaningful role in the partnership going

forward.

### STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP: THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL AND AU COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON

The personal relationship between UN Secretary-General António Guterres and AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat is a central driver of the partnership's recent growth. In his first formal remarks to the UNSC—coincidentally at an open debate on conflict prevention and mediation—Guterres committed to the partnership by calling on the UNSC to “commit to a surge in diplomacy for peace, in partnership with regional organizations, mobilizing the entire range of those with influence,” a commitment he expanded upon weeks later in his inaugural address to the AU

#### **Box 3. Unpacking the 2017 Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security**

The Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed by the secretary-general and the AU Commission chairperson in April 2017, serves as the UN-AU partnership's guiding policy document, covering core principles, thematic areas, and working modalities. While the Joint Framework shares many similarities with its 2014 predecessor signed between former SRSG of UNOAU Haile Menkerios and AU Commissioner Smail Chergui, the 2017 version is significantly more detailed on both substantive and operational aspects of the partnership, reflecting stronger political backing and the day-to-day advances already made.

Four “essential themes” underpin the Joint Framework: preventing and mediating conflict and sustaining peace; responding to conflict; addressing root causes; and continuous partnership review and enhancement. Short, descriptive paragraphs summarize the thrust of expected engagement on each theme. The framework then elaborates policies and strategies for coordination, as well as specific formal and informal cooperation mechanisms, including policy consultations, briefings, and field visits involving staff ranging from senior officials down to desk officers.

Some of the themes and modalities in the Joint Framework reinforce existing areas of collaboration, such as mediation, early-warning support, desk-to-desk meetings, and annual workshops with experts. Other issues captured in the framework reflect a more holistic approach to peace and security as well as the organizations' newer priorities, such as counterterrorism and preventing violent extremism, national infrastructures for peace, the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), the AU's Silencing the Guns initiative, and the African Governance Architecture.

The Joint Framework is an invaluable guidance document for the organizations and captures the partnership's breadth and depth. Officials in both organizations noted, however, that it should not be used to rigidly benchmark the partnership's health or its impact on specific countries. They emphasized the importance of maintaining the flexibility to adapt the partnership to changing conflict dynamics and institutional circumstances. UNOAU and the AU Commission drafted a matrix in June 2017 to assist in monitoring implementation of the framework.

<sup>79</sup> UN General Assembly, *Letter Dated 11 December 2006 from the Secretary General Addressed to the President of the General Assembly*, UN Doc. A/61/630, December 12, 2006.

Summit.<sup>80</sup> Faki has similarly underscored the importance of the partnership to addressing Africa's complex peace and security challenges; he emphasized "the need for sustained action in the area of conflict prevention" and that "the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations has evolved to allow for creative negotiations on current security challenges."<sup>81</sup>

Guterres and Faki have consistently emphasized the partnership's importance to member states and their bureaucracies. This is best exemplified by the 2017 Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which was conceptualized and drafted before they assumed office but has nonetheless come to anchor the policies of both leaders and symbolize the potential for closer cooperation.<sup>82</sup> Diplomats and officials in the UN and AU universally emphasized the importance of the leaders' personal relationship, noting that their attitude toward the partnership sends an unambiguously positive message.<sup>83</sup> This is reflected in formal meetings and tête-à-têtes, including on the margins of major multilateral summits,<sup>84</sup> joint statements on specific country situations,<sup>85</sup> and efforts to organize joint visits to conflict-affected countries.<sup>86</sup> Informal conversations often carry as much weight as the formal meetings, and the two leaders are in regular contact.<sup>87</sup>

#### PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES: THE JOINT TASK FORCE, ANNUAL DESK-TO-DESK MEETING, AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The UN and AU have three institutional mechanisms to help them align positions and work

together. Two of these, the UN-AU Joint Task Force on Peace and Security and the annual desk-to-desk meeting are established mechanisms, while the UN-AU Annual Conference is a relatively new component of the partnership. The long-term efficacy and impact of these mechanisms depends on the UN secretary-general and AU Commission chairperson's political commitment to the partnership and to joint engagement, as well as their efforts to filter this commitment through the rest of the organization. While each mechanism has its own characteristics and objectives, the desk-to-desk meeting, Joint Task Force, and Annual Conference are conceptualized as parts of a cohesive, sequential process: the desk-to-desk meeting lays the groundwork for joint analysis and identifies possibilities for improving joint interventions; discussions that are more sensitive or require additional political direction are then escalated to the Joint Task Force for deliberation and agreement; and the most sensitive and complex issues are then escalated to the principals during the Annual Conference.

The Joint Task Force on Peace and Security, officially launched in September 2010, convenes biannually on the margins of the AU Summit and the UN General Assembly.<sup>88</sup> It reviews country-specific and thematic issues and outlines next steps for joint action between the UN and the AU.<sup>89</sup> Like the Annual Conference, the Joint Task Force is just one of many fora for interaction between the organizations' leaders. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN under-secretary-general for peace operations, and Smaïl Chergui, the AU commissioner for peace and security, have built a particularly close relationship

80 António Guterres, remarks to the Security Council open debate on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace," New York, January 10, 2017, available at [www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-01-10/secretary-generals-remarks-maintenance-international-peace-and-remarks-to-the-au-summit](http://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-01-10/secretary-generals-remarks-maintenance-international-peace-and-remarks-to-the-au-summit), Addis Ababa, January 30, 2017, available at [www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-01-30/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-remarks-african-union-summit-delivered](http://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-01-30/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-remarks-african-union-summit-delivered).

81 Moussa Faki Mahamat, remarks delivered to the 8414<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UN Security Council, UN Doc. S/PV.8414, December 6, 2018.

82 Security Council Report, "Annual Meeting with Members of the AU PSC and Open Debate and Presidential Statement on AU-UN Cooperation," May 23, 2016.

83 Interviews with UN and AU diplomats, UN and AU officials, representatives of civil society organizations, and independent researchers, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

84 UN Secretary-General and AU Commission Chairperson, "Joint Statement by United Nations Secretary-General, African Union Commission Chairperson," Press Release, UN Doc. SG/2246, September 23, 2018; UN Economic Commission for Africa, "Guterres Praises UN-AU Cooperation, Calls It an 'Asset,'" February 9, 2019.

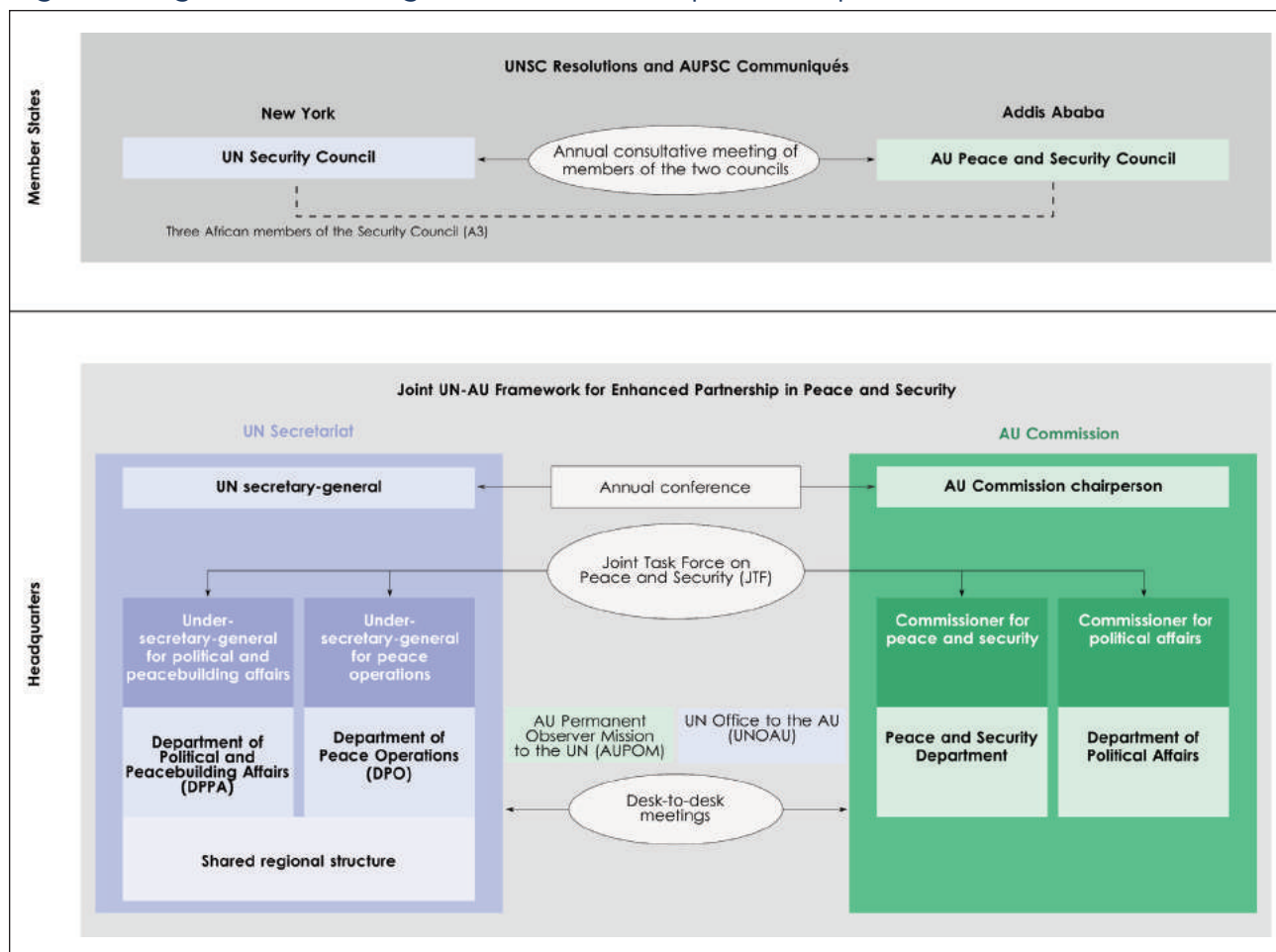
85 See joint statements by the UN secretary-general and AU Commission chairperson on the situations in South Sudan (January 12, 2018), Kenya (October 22, 2017), and Guinea-Bissau (February 3, 2017), as well as the joint press conference by the UN secretary-general, AU Commission chairperson, UN special representative for Libya, and high representative for the EU on the situation in Libya (March 31, 2019).

86 Ida Sawyer, "DR Congo's Kabila Snubs Senior Diplomats," Human Rights Watch, July 10, 2018.

87 Interviews with UN officials, New York, April–May 2019.

88 United Nations and African Union, "United Nations, African Union Launch Joint Task Force on Peace and Security," Press Release, UN Doc. SG/2166-AFR/2044, September 25, 2010. The Joint Task Force is chaired by the AU commissioners for peace and security and for political affairs and by the UN under-secretaries-general for peace operations and for political and peacebuilding affairs.

89 UN Secretary-General, "Note to Correspondents: United Nations–African Union Joint Task Force on Peace and Security Holds Sixteenth Consultative Meeting in Addis-Ababa," February 15, 2019.

Figure 1. Organizational diagram of the UN-AU partnership<sup>90</sup>

through the Joint Task Force, illustrated by their joint visits to multiple countries and their collaboration during the January–February 2019 mediation process in CAR.<sup>91</sup> While interlocutors stressed the value of the Joint Task Force in sustaining the partnership’s momentum, they called for more systematic interaction between the two organizations at the director level and for the outcomes of the task force and senior-level engagements to better filter through to working-level staff.<sup>92</sup>

The desk-to-desk meeting, first held in 2008, is considered the foundation of working-level cooperation between the two organizations. It

allows approximately eighty officials from different teams and departments within the UN and AU to discuss conflict dynamics, emerging thematic concerns, and issues with the partnership (including implementation of the Joint Framework). Each desk-to-desk meeting produces a series of recommendations intended to guide the institutions over the months that follow. The 2019 meeting was the first that included officials from the headquarters of the RECs/RMs (as opposed to their Addis Ababa–based liaison offices), whose participation improved the discussions and reaffirmed the importance of the RECs/RMs to the partnership. The meeting also plays an underrated

90 Adapted from: Williams and Boutellis, “Partnership Peacekeeping.”

91 The two have jointly visited CAR (April 2018, January–February 2019, October 2019), Sudan (October 2019), South Sudan (July 2018, October 2018, May 2019), and Niger and Chad (July 2018). Rosemary DiCarlo, the UN under-secretary-general for political and peacebuilding affairs, led the UN’s delegation on the joint UN-AU visit to Libya with Commissioner Chergui (March 2019). “UN Calls for Support to Implement Central Africa’s Newly Minted Peace Agreement,” *UN News*, February 2, 2019.

92 Interviews with UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

role at the individual level by allowing desk officers the rare opportunity to interact with their counterparts.<sup>93</sup>

However, interlocutors stressed the necessity of refining the desk-to-desk meeting. Meeting agendas were described as “too packed,” especially since the meeting only lasts two days, preventing participants from going into depth on specific issues. Some characterized discussions as consisting of more political rhetoric than detailed substance, noting that any meaningful joint analysis that emerges is not accompanied by agreement on “action-oriented” responses (reflected in the final report’s emphasis on technical recommendations rather than country-specific commitments). Participants in the meetings also noted the logistical burden and transaction cost of organizing them (in terms of both budgets and time spent traveling), as well as both organizations’ constrained capacity to follow up on recommendations.<sup>94</sup> The rescheduling of the desk-to-desk meeting in 2018 due to the AU’s eleventh Extraordinary Summit, which threw off the sequence of partnership meetings in 2019, underscores the impact of this logistical burden on strategic engagement.<sup>95</sup>

The UN-AU Annual Conference, first organized in April 2017 when the two organizations’ leaders signed the Joint Framework and held under their joint chairmanship, provides a forum for senior officials to discuss thematic and country-specific issues. While the conference is far from the only interaction between the organizations’ leaders, it serves as a valuable forum for providing strategic direction, finalizing upcoming joint initiatives, and coordinating messaging. Each communiqué has grown progressively longer and more detailed, signaling more advanced planning and broader substantive areas of agreement.<sup>96</sup> While the country-specific discussions are often determined by contemporary developments, the communiqués provide space for joint messaging around priorities

related to inclusive political processes, the protection of civilians, and women, peace, and security.

#### THE DAY-TO-DAY PARTNERSHIP: PURSUING MEANINGFUL COLLABORATION AMID BUREAUCRATIC FRICTION

Formal partnership structures are only one component of the UN and AU’s collective work. Much of their day-to-day collaboration on conflict prevention and crisis management takes place through their respective peace and security structures, both at headquarters and in the field. As one official highlighted, “While the formal meetings are important, the critical aspect is what happens in between these meetings, because the principals’ engagements really depend on the quality of the day-to-day interaction.”<sup>97</sup> Cooperation at the working level has progressed in recent years, as the political commitment from the organizations’ principals filters down, with many desk officers now “trying to catch up” to the rapid growth of the partnership.<sup>98</sup> Nonetheless, this progress is uneven and varies depending on the file and individual relationships. The two organizations continue to navigate how best to complement each other in practice, as well as the bureaucratic friction inherent to coordinating the activities of two large organizations.

The UN and AU have complementary strengths in conflict prevention and crisis management. The AU often has more political legitimacy to engage national governments and can therefore access more political entry points to engage on a crisis as it emerges. With its global mandate for international peace and security and its diverse field presences (including peace operations and country teams), the UN has more operational and logistical capabilities and a larger, more predictable budget. These comparative advantages color how day-to-day interactions unfold.

Both the UN and the AU have dedicated focal points for their partnership on peace and security,

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.; “Report from the Twelfth UN-AU-RECs/RMs Consultative Meeting on the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts (Desk-To-Desk), 11–12 March 2019” (internal document).

95 Interview with UN official, New York, April 2019.

96 United Nations, “Communiqué of United Nations–African Union Annual Conference in New York,” Press Release, UN Doc. SG/2239, April 19, 2017; UN Secretary-General, “Note to Correspondents: Joint Communiqué of the Second African Union–United Nations Annual Conference,” July 9, 2018; UN Secretary-General, “Note to Correspondents: Joint Communiqué of the Third African Union–United Nations Annual Conference,” May 6, 2019.

97 Interview with AU official, Addis Ababa, April 2019.

98 Interview with UN official, New York, April 2019.



although the UN's capacities are far more institutionalized. The UN's dedicated focal point is the assistant secretary-general for Africa, whose office is located within the shared regional structure of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and houses the newly constituted AU Partnership Team.<sup>99</sup> This team supports the organization of key UN-AU meetings, including the Annual Conference, the Joint Task Force, and the desk-to-desk meeting. It also provides political analysis to senior officials, liaises between DPPA and DPO and their counterparts at the AU (including the AUPOM), and manages joint programmatic activities. At the AU, the dedicated focal point is the head of the Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division, located within the Peace and Security Department. Unlike the office of the UN assistant secretary-general, this division does not have a dedicated mechanism to backstop the partnership and instead relies on staff with other mandates.<sup>100</sup> While the department's divisions hold regular coordination meetings, including on the partnership with the UN, they could better coordinate on day-to-day aspects of the partnership. While these UN and AU focal points oversee the breadth of engagements between the two organizations, many substantive teams across the two organizations maintain some degree of day-to-day contact with their counterparts.

Implementation of the Joint Framework could strengthen the partnership at the operational level. Joint conflict-prevention and crisis-management efforts would benefit from more regular use of the working methods outlined in the Joint Framework, including joint planning exercises, joint analytical reports, joint field visits, coordinated political messaging and joint statements, and staff exchanges.<sup>101</sup> In spite of the partnership's recent growth, however, working-level interactions need

to be more systematic. Officials regularly highlighted that the momentum of the UN-AU operational partnership accelerates in the weeks leading up to a formal partnership meeting but is otherwise ad hoc, informal, and unstructured.<sup>102</sup> Others noted that there are many opportunities to engage with their counterparts—with some even hinting at too many—but that these were often isolated from the organizations' political strategies on a specific country or region.

For many years, interpersonal working relationships have served as the fulcrum of UN-AU engagement. While these interpersonal dynamics enable more open conversations, they also raise questions about the long-term sustainability of cooperation as personnel change. Another challenge is the lack of regular director-level engagement. Officials observed that monthly conversations between UN and AU directors have ebbed and flowed but that there is now a renewed push to revitalize monthly videoconferences between regional or country-specific focal points.<sup>103</sup>

Other challenges will likely require structural adaptation. Officials highlighted how the relationship between member states and the UN and AU bureaucracies impact the partnership. Some suggested that the UN Secretariat is more independent from its member states on day-to-day issues and can therefore have more open discussions than the AU. For example, some perceived the AUPSC's reluctance to engage on Cameroon as limiting the scope of briefers from the AU's Peace and Security Department.<sup>104</sup> Others, however, viewed the AU Commission's more active role in drafting AUPSC communiqués as an indicator that it is more influential than the UN Secretariat vis-à-vis the UNSC. But this has to be understood in the context of certain AUPSC member states' more limited resources and bandwidth compared to some of their counterparts on the UNSC; as a

99 The AU-focused partnership teams in the former Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs were merged as part of the secretary-general's peace and security reforms, implemented in January 2019. See UN General Assembly, *Revised Estimates Relating to the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2018–2019—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/772, March 1, 2018, para. 69; DPPA and DPO Information Management Unit, "Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations Organizational Chart," January 2019, available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dppa-dpo-org-chart-2019.pdf>.

100 Interviews with AU officials, Addis Ababa, April 2019.

101 UN Security Council, *Strengthening the Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on Issues of Peace and Security in Africa, Including the Work of the United Nations Office to the African Union—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2018/678, July 6, 2018; "Implementation Framework (June 2017 Draft) for the Joint UN–AU Framework for the Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security" (internal document).

102 Interviews with UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

103 Ibid.

104 Interviews with AU officials, Addis Ababa, April 2019; Interviews with independent experts, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

result, they require more technical and administrative support from the AU Commission. Moreover, AU Commission officials have more freedom to interpret the mandates provided by their member states (given the Peace and Security Department's strong role supporting the AUPSC) compared to their UN colleagues, who operate within a more rigid bureaucracy.

The asymmetry between the two organizations' capacities and resources is another structural challenge. Significantly more UN staff work on peace and security compared to the AU, and the AU's Peace and Security Department relies more on short-term contracts, largely due to a lack of funding.<sup>105</sup> As a result, AU officials do not have the bandwidth to constantly engage on specific issues, which delays the sharing of analysis and consideration of joint responses.

Massive funding disparities (in terms of both programming and logistics) similarly influence interactions between the two organizations; the UN, for example, continues to finance many joint UN-AU initiatives.<sup>106</sup> This is one reason the AU Commission's push to operationalize the AU Peace Fund is seen as valuable. While this fund is most commonly referenced in the context of AU peace support operations (see Box 1), it dedicates two of its three thematic funding windows to institutional capacity support and to mediation and preventive diplomacy.<sup>107</sup> Even if the AU Peace Fund only provides a small amount of the resources needed, this additional financial support would not only strengthen the AU Commission's joint work with the UN but also provide it greater capacity to deliver on all its mandates.

These dynamics force the UN and AU to play a difficult balancing act: on the one hand, the UN may defer to the AU because of the AU's push for political ownership and leadership, while on the other hand, the AU may defer to the UN due to the UN's greater resources, capacities, and in-country presences.

## THE FACILITATIVE ROLES OF UNOAU AND THE AUPOM

The AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN (AUPOM) and UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) play valuable roles in facilitating the organizations' daily interactions. These offices share information, analysis, and strategic guidance and support their organizations' administrative and operational engagement. They also help their organizations build relationships with diplomats and officials and regularly represent their institutions in public fora and private consultations. While these offices were established nearly a decade ago (the AUPOM as a representational office in 2009, UNOAU as a regional office in 2010), they have only recently gained more prominence and space within New York and Addis Ababa, respectively—not only due to the renewed political emphasis on the partnership but also due to new leaders who have revitalized both offices.

The AUPOM is attempting to fill a massive political space in New York with limited capacity. It serves as a secretariat for the A3, a coordinator for the Africa Group, a representative of the AU Commission chairperson, and an advocate of the AU and its member states. While its mandate is broader than peace and security, the AUPOM is most visible on issues on the Security Council agenda. Fatima K. Mohammed, the AU's permanent observer, has played an outsize role in capturing public space for the AU in New York.<sup>108</sup> The AUPOM played a significant role in shepherding the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2457 on the AU's Silencing the Guns initiative (discussed later in this report). It coordinates interactions between the A3 and UN officials, including a monthly briefing from senior UN officials on Security Council agenda items.<sup>109</sup>

Capacity constraints limit the AUPOM's potential impact, however. Compared to UNOAU's fifty-six staff, the AUPOM has approximately fifteen to cover all of the UNSC's files on

105 As of 2018, the UN Secretariat had 855 headquarters staff working in what were then the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs, with another 12,061 staff deployed to UN peace operations in Africa. UN General Assembly, *Composition of the Secretariat: Staff Demographics—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/74/82, April 22, 2019, pp. 18–20. As of 2018, the AU Commission had 1,688 staff across all departments and offices. AU Commission, *African Union Handbook 2018* (Addis Ababa: AU Commission, 2018), p. 84.

106 UN Security Council, *Strengthening the Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on Issues of Peace and Security in Africa, Including the Work of the United Nations Office to the African Union—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2018/678, July 6, 2018, para. 59.

107 AU Commission, "Peace Fund," available at <https://au.int/en/aureforms/peacefund>.

108 Interviews with UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

109 Ibid.; Interviews with UN diplomats, March 2019.



peace and security.<sup>110</sup> Because much of the AUPOM's efforts are geared toward the UNSC, it does not have the capacity to engage as consistently on other relevant subjects, including on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission.<sup>111</sup>

The UNOAU, the UN's Addis Ababa-based counterpart to the AUPOM, has evolved with the UN-AU partnership. UNOAU is mandated primarily to "enhance the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in the area of peace and security."<sup>112</sup> While the adoption of the Joint Framework in 2017 set a guiding vision for the partnership, UNOAU's recent unexpected leadership changes created a year-long stasis from which it is only now emerging.<sup>113</sup> Like her counterpart in the AU, SRSG Hanna Tetteh regularly briefs the AUPSC and engages diplomats and senior AU officials.

Under Tetteh, UNOAU has a three-pillared strategy to expand its already strong engagement with the AU Commission: to serve as an effective interface between the UN and the AU; to provide more direct engagement to Addis Ababa-based diplomatic missions on how UNOAU supports the UN-AU partnership on preventive diplomacy and conflict management; and to provide analysis of how Addis Ababa-based partners see specific peace and security files.<sup>114</sup> Some of this approach may be reflected in the UN Secretariat's upcoming strategic review of UNOAU, which is expected to be completed in the near future.<sup>115</sup>

UNOAU is also expanding its engagement with member states to improve relations and create more entry points for the UN. This is evidenced by UNOAU's recent campaign to meet with Addis Ababa-based delegations of the RECs.<sup>116</sup> In

addition, UNOAU and the AU Commission co-lead a conflict prevention cluster that meets on a quarterly basis to conduct a horizon-scanning exercise, review joint activities, and provide strategic guidance on country situations; though the cluster became dormant in 2018, the AU and UNOAU revived it in April 2019.<sup>117</sup>

## COLLABORATION BETWEEN PEACE OPERATIONS AND SPECIAL ENVOYS

While the two headquarters oversee the strategic direction of the UN-AU partnership, much of the partnership unfolds beyond New York and Addis Ababa. Among the main avenues for this partnership in the field are UN peacekeeping and special political missions, which are increasingly mandated to drive comprehensive political strategies, and the AU's peace support operations and missions, special representatives, and liaison offices. Beyond the UN and the AU, the RECs often deploy their own envoys and security operations.

The UN, AU, and RECs consistently deploy officials to the same countries (see Figure 2). How they engage and support one another in these settings is therefore a direct expression of the partnership and its potential impact on crisis prevention and management. The UN, AU, and RECs now collaborate in areas including support to mediation processes (in Burundi, CAR, and Mali), provision of good offices and confidence building during elections (in Liberia and Madagascar), shuttle diplomacy during crises (in Guinea-Bissau and Sudan), political and technical engagement on peacebuilding and stabilization (in the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel), and coordination of political strategies among international partners (in Central Africa and the Sahel). This in-country engagement

110 UN General Assembly, *Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2018–2019*, UN Doc. A/74/6, April 22, 2019, section 5; Interview with AU official, April 2019; AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN, "Office of the Head of Mission," available at [www.africanunion-un.org/our-team-1](http://www.africanunion-un.org/our-team-1).

111 Interviews with UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

112 United Nations, "UNOAU—Mandate," available at <https://unoau.unmissions.org/mandate>.

113 Sahle-Work Zewde succeeded Haile Menkerios as head of UNOAU in June 2018 and stayed on as SRSG until her appointment as Ethiopia's president in October 2018. Secretary-General Guterres then appointed Hanna Tetteh as SRSG and head of UNOAU in December 2018.

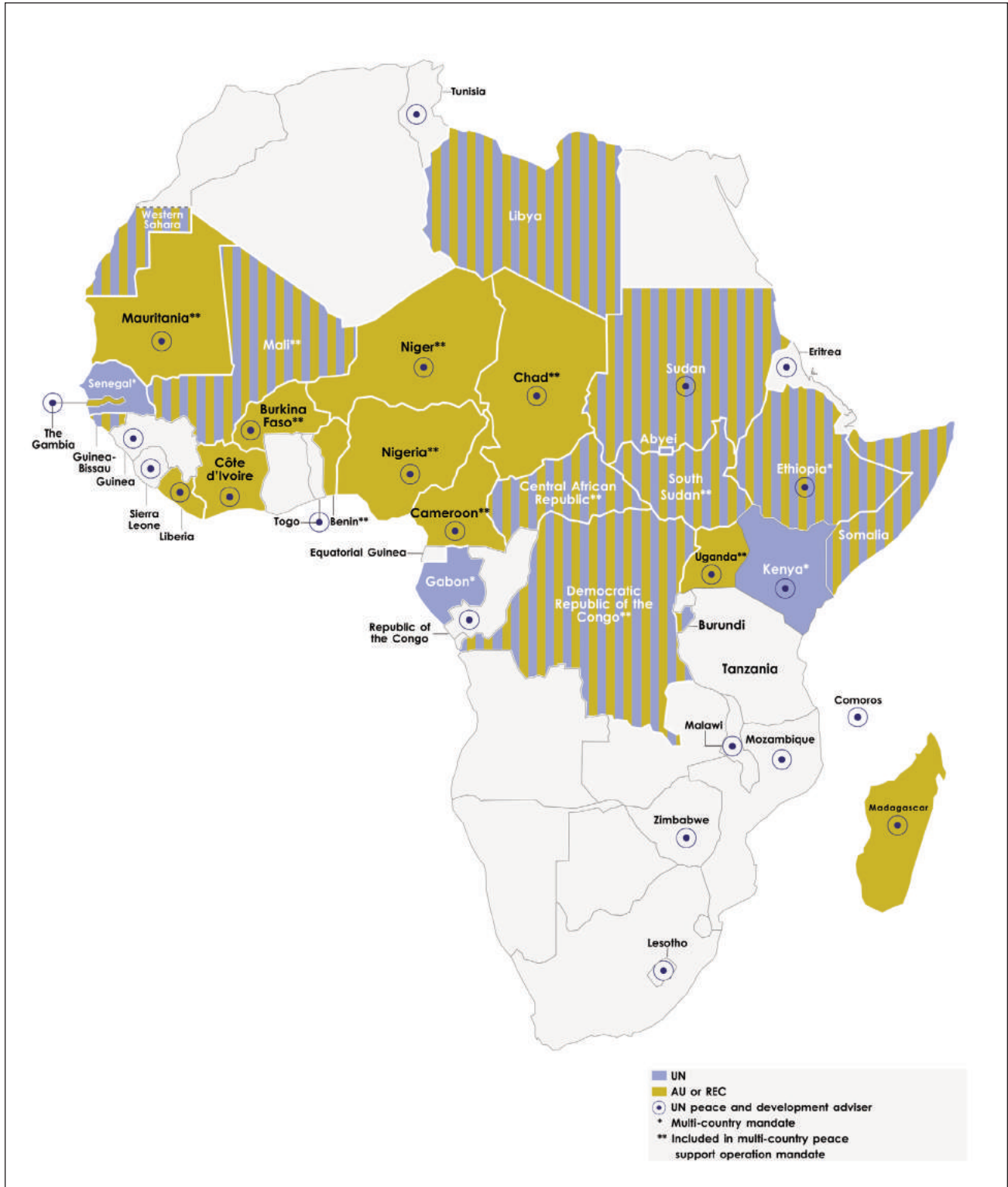
114 Interviews with UN officials, New York, April 2019; "Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations," opened for signature September 2018.

115 The strategic review of UNOAU was requested by the UN General Assembly in 2016 following proposals to reconfigure its staffing and resources. The secretary-general committed to conduct such a review in a 2016 report, and the UNSC welcomed this review in Resolution 2320 (2016). The most recent report on the UN-AU partnership indicates that the review will be conducted "in the coming months." UN Security Council, *Strengthening the Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on Issues of Peace and Security in Africa, Including the Work of the United Nations Office to the African Union—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2019/759, September 19, 2019, para. 73.

116 Interviews with UN officials, New York, April 2019; UNOAU, "UNOAU Highlights, Vol. 1," April 2019.

117 Interview with AU official, Addis Ababa, April 2019; UNOAU, "Conflict Prevention, Including Early Warning and Mediation," available at <https://unoau.unmissions.org/conflict-prevention-including-early-warning-and-mediation>; UNOAU, "AU Peace and Security Council Open Session on the Role of Women in Protecting Lives in Challenging Security Environments in Africa," January 2019; "Implementation Framework (June 2017 Draft) for the Joint UN-AU Framework for the Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security" (internal document).

Figure 2. UN, AU, and REC/RM peace operations, liaison offices, and peace and development advisers (as of July 2019)<sup>118</sup>



118 AU Commission, *African Union Handbook 2019*, pp. 82–86; DPPA, “2018 Map of UN-AU Partnership in Peace and Security,” July 19, 2018, available at [https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/180717\\_un-au\\_partnership\\_2018\\_map\\_final.pdf](https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/180717_un-au_partnership_2018_map_final.pdf); DPPA, “Peace and Development Advisers: Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention,” available at <https://dppa.un.org/en/peace-and-development-advisors-joint-undp-dppa-programme-building-national-capacities-conflict>.

- UN peacekeeping operation
- UN special political mission
- ▶ UN envoy or adviser
- ◊ UN country team or peace and development adviser

- AU or REC peace support operation
- AU or REC mission or liaison office
- ▷ AU or REC envoy, representative, or mediator

- \* Multi-country mandate
- \*\* Multi-country peace support operation mandate

## Burundi

- ▶ UN special envoy in Burundi
- AU human rights observers and military experts in Burundi
- AU Liaison Office in Burundi
- ▷ East African Community (EAC) mediator and facilitator of the Inter-Burundian Dialogue

## Central African Republic (CAR)

- UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA)
- AU Mission for CAR and Central Africa (MISAC)\*
- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) special representative

## Chad

- Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram\*\* (Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria)
- AU Liaison Office in Chad

## Côte d'Ivoire

- AU Liaison Office in Côte d'Ivoire

## Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

- UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO)
- AU Liaison Office in the DRC
- ▷ AU Facilitator of the National Dialogue in the DRC

## Ethiopia

- UN Office to the AU (UNOAU)
- ▶ UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa
- ▷ AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan and South Sudan\*

## Gabon

- UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA)\* (Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, DRC, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe)

## The Gambia

- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Military Intervention in the Gambia (ECOMIG)

## Guinea-Bissau

- UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS)
- AU Liaison Office in Guinea-Bissau
- ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB)
- ▷ ECOWAS mediator for Guinea-Bissau

## Kenya

- ▶ UN special envoy for the Great Lakes Region\* (Angola, Burundi, CAR, DRC, Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia)

## Liberia

- AU Liaison Office in Liberia
- ▷ AU special representative for Liberia

## Libya

- UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)
- ▷ AU high representative for Libya
- AU Liaison Office in Libya

## Madagascar

- AU/Southern African Development Community (SADC) Liaison Office in Madagascar

## Mali

- UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)
- G5 Sahel Joint Force\*\* (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger)
- AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL)\*
- ▷ AU high representative for Mali and the Sahel\*

## Senegal

- UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)\* (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Togo)
- UN support to the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission\*

## Somalia

- UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)
- AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)
- ▷ Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) special envoy for Somalia

## Sudan/Darfur

- UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)
- ▶ UN special adviser to Sudan
- ▷ AU envoy to Sudan
- AU Liaison Office in Sudan

## Abyei

- UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)

## South Sudan

- UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS)
- AU Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army\*\* (CAR, DRC, South Sudan, Uganda)
- AU Liaison Office in South Sudan
- ▷ AU high representative for South Sudan
- IGAD-led Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission
- ▷ IGAD special envoy for South Sudan

## Western Sahara

- UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)
- ▶ UN Personal Envoy to Western Sahara
- ▷ AU special envoy for Western Sahara

## UN country teams with peace and development advisers

- ◊ Burkina Faso, Comoros, Cameroon, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, the Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe



has focused less on crosscutting issues such as the women, peace, and security agenda and the protection of civilians.

The mandates and political capital guiding or constraining these offices and envoys influence the potential for collaboration. Broad mandates that provide them the freedom to align their work with other organizations, combined with unified political backing from relevant member states and institutional leaders, offer space for working together. This was the case in the run-up to Liberia's 2017 elections, allowing the UN, AU, and ECOWAS envoys to collectively secure credible political commitments from key national and regional actors, institute joint early-warning systems at the regional and national levels, and undertake common messaging and shuttle diplomacy in support of a peaceful political transition.<sup>119</sup>

Conversely, narrow mandates, a lack of political will, or divisions among member states on the appropriate political strategy can render joint interventions ineffective from the get-go. For example, political divisions among member states blocked the AU's attempt to launch the African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi and delayed the deployment of human rights observers to the country.<sup>120</sup> At the same time, the East African Community's fierce ownership over multilateral engagements in the Arusha Peace Talks and the Burundian government's waning commitment to the process have limited the scope for more flexible responses.<sup>121</sup>

The greater financial, logistical, and human resources available to UN peace operations compared to AU and REC operations and liaison offices also influence how the two organizations perceive one another and their respective roles.<sup>122</sup>

For example, while the AU received significant political support for its leadership of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR, the UN bore much of the logistical and administrative burden. This created tension, especially following the signing of a peace agreement in which the AU, as guarantor, committed the members of the facilitation panel (including the UN) to providing technical and financial support without agreeing how this burden would be shared.<sup>123</sup>

Finally, the individual officials on the ground can impact how the UN and AU work together. Ideally, senior representatives of the UN, AU, and RECs would support one another by aligning their understanding of conflict drivers and potential responses, unifying external and internal messaging, and leveraging their institutions' comparative advantages (see Box 4). Oftentimes, however, senior leaders are chosen as special envoys and special representatives for their political gravitas, which cannot substitute for political skill, understanding of conflict dynamics, ability to navigate multilateral organizations, or relationships with national and international actors.

#### BRINGING THE UN COUNTRY TEAMS INTO THE PARTNERSHIP

Although much of the UN-AU partnership falls under peace and security, there is growing recognition that UN country teams can play a meaningful role in conflict prevention.<sup>124</sup> This role is especially critical considering that the UN's development system reforms, which came into effect in January 2019, aim to better position UN country teams to achieve the UN's prevention and sustaining peace agendas.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, a significant portion of prevention-related work is undertaken in countries not yet undergoing political crises or systematic

119 Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying: Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition," International Peace Institute, December 2019, pp. 23–25.

120 For more details, see: Solomon Dersso, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene? An Inside View of the AU's Decision Making on Article 4(h) and Burundi," World Peace Foundation, February 26, 2016.

121 United Nations, "Special Envoy, Briefing Security Council, Calls for Reassessment of How Best to Help Burundi Emerge from Political Impasse," UN Doc. SC/13597, November 21, 2018; International Crisis Group, "Running Out of Options in Burundi," June 2019.

122 Liaison offices are small field presences that backstop an AU high representative, special representative, or special envoy. The envoys leading these offices are appointed by the AU Commission chairperson and are mandated to provide ongoing analysis and good offices. The offices usually include a small number of political officers and administrative officials. Interviews with UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

123 UN Security Council, *Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic*, UN Doc. S/2019/145, February 15, 2019, Article 23; Interviews with UN officials, March 2019.

124 Sebastian von Einsiedel, ed., "What Works in UN Resident Coordinator-Led Conflict Prevention: Lessons from the Field," UN University Centre for Policy Research, June 2018.

125 Lesley Connolly and Laurie Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Liberia: New Reforms, New Opportunities," International Peace Institute, May 2019, p. 7.

#### **Box 4. How cooperation between the UN, AU, and SADC envoys strengthened collective support to Madagascar**

Cooperation between the UN, AU, and Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Madagascar epitomizes the beneficial impact of sustained multilateral cooperation at the field level. The organizations were not always politically aligned on Madagascar, especially following the SADC-led mediation effort leading to the September 2011 roadmap for ending the crisis in the country.<sup>126</sup> This changed in the run-up to the 2018 elections, when strong leadership by and cooperation between the organizations' envoys—Abdoulaye Bathily (UN), Ramtane Lamamra (AU), and Joaquim Chissano (SADC)—unified the international community.<sup>127</sup>

The personal relationships between the envoys—all senior political leaders who had previously worked in the multilateral system—made it easier for them to talk openly with one another.<sup>128</sup> The UN and AU were supported by the UN country team and the AU liaison office, which continuously engaged with national actors to ensure the process was inclusive and with international actors to sustain funding. The envoys also coordinated to constructively engage international partners with strong interests in the country (including some UNSC members).<sup>129</sup>

The envoys' efforts reflected their conscious dedication to learning from the mistakes committed by their organizations in Madagascar earlier in the decade, which had built up mutual mistrust. Through near-constant coordination and dedicated efforts to deliver common messages, the organizations presented a united front to Malagasy stakeholders and prevented them from shopping among the organizations. This unity was imperative when the organizations presented a joint “red line” that the Malagasy constitution needed to be respected.<sup>130</sup>

violence and where the UN, AU, and RECs thus do not maintain peace operations or liaison offices. Many of the UN's agencies, funds, and programs maintain their own relationships with the AU Commission, but their activities and strategic impact on peace and security are not systematically integrated into the UN-AU partnership.<sup>131</sup>

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), in particular, has the mandate and expertise to help bridge this gap. UNDP's presence in mission and non-mission settings enables it to address country-specific, regional, and thematic issues alike through the lens of conflict prevention.<sup>132</sup> UNDP has a mandate to work with the AU and RECs both at the

headquarters level (including through the UNDP Regional Service Centre in Addis Ababa) and at the country level. For UNDP to support joint UN-AU work on conflict prevention, however, stronger institutional links are needed between UNDP personnel in the field and their country-focused DPPA and DPO counterparts in the field and in headquarters, as well as between UNDP and UNOAU.<sup>133</sup> UNDP also needs to overcome its own geographic structures: UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa covers most sub-Saharan countries and the AU, while its Regional Bureau for Arab States covers northern African countries and some Horn of Africa countries.<sup>134</sup> Because this geographic

126 Lesley Connolly, “The Troubled Road to Peace: Reflections on the Complexities of Resolving the Political Impasse in Madagascar,” ACCORD, February 2013.

127 This cooperation predated 2018, beginning with the strong relationships between former SRSG Menkerios, Lamamra, and their SADC counterpart.

128 Interview with UN official, New York, March 2019.

129 International Peace Institute, “Abdoulaye Bathily: A Tale of Mediation in Madagascar,” New York, April 24, 2019, available at [www.ipinst.org/2019/04/abdoulaye-bathily-special-adviser-of-the-secretary-general-on-madagascar#4](http://www.ipinst.org/2019/04/abdoulaye-bathily-special-adviser-of-the-secretary-general-on-madagascar#4).

130 Ibid.

131 As an illustration, twenty-five UN entities (including both Secretariat and non-Secretariat entities) maintain liaison or representational offices in Addis Ababa. AU Commission, *African Union Handbook 2019*, pp. 182–183.

132 UNDP, “UNDP Funding Windows,” available at [www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Partnerships/UNDP-Complete\\_Funding-Windows.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Partnerships/UNDP-Complete_Funding-Windows.pdf).

133 This issue became even more important following the secretary-general's April 2019 note verbale asking for all UN entities to inform UNOAU when working on peace and security initiatives with the AU and to inform the UN Economic Commission for Africa when working on development initiatives with the AU. Interviews with UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019.

134 UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States covers Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, and Sudan. UNDP, “Countries and Territories Where We Work,” available at [www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/about-us/countries\\_where\\_we\\_work.html](http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/about-us/countries_where_we_work.html).



division is not mirrored in either the AU or the UN's peace and security work, UNDP will need to coordinate among its offices on the ground and between its own divisions to effectively engage the UN and AU on countries such as Sudan.

The UN's peace and development advisers (PDAs), located in the resident coordinator offices of twenty-five UN country teams in Africa and co-managed by DPPA and UNDP, are another recent entry point for strengthening the UN-AU partnership (see Figure 2).<sup>135</sup> PDAs are mandated to provide strategic advice on conflict prevention to the resident coordinator and UN country team, including through political analysis and the mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity into their programming.<sup>136</sup> While maintaining strategic partnerships on behalf of the resident coordinator office is part of the PDAs' job, interlocutors suggested that their knowledge of AU conflict-prevention tools and desk officers in the AU's Peace and Security Department is uneven; they highlighted that those who regularly interact with the AU or RECs do so more through personal relationships than through structured engagement.<sup>137</sup>

The PDAs are well-positioned to bridge some of the gaps in the UN-AU partnership in non-mission settings. PDAs can enhance awareness of the AU and RECs' tools for conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction and development within UN country teams. They can informally facilitate engagement between colleagues in the UN country team and their counterparts in the AU and RECs. They are strongly positioned to informally share the UN country team's information and analysis with the AU and RECs' early-warning structures.<sup>138</sup> Finally, some interlocutors highlighted the untapped potential for PDAs to amplify the UN's regional and cross-border programming, which would align with existing collaboration between

the AU and individual RECs. One UN official cautioned, however, that PDAs are already stretched by their existing job functions and should not be explicitly mandated to oversee the UN country team's engagement with regional and subregional organizations.<sup>139</sup>

## The Thematic Scope of the Partnership

The UN-AU partnership on conflict prevention and crisis management cuts across many areas of work. This section focuses on six issues: (1) the Silencing the Guns initiative; (2) mediation; (3) women, peace, and security; (4) elections; (5) peacebuilding; and (6) youth, peace, and security. For each issue, it looks at current dynamics, key entry points for more meaningful cooperation, and how the issue can fit into a more coherent, overarching strategy. This is not an exhaustive discussion of all areas of UN-AU cooperation but is representative of the scope of the partnership.

### SILENCING THE GUNS IN AFRICA

The AU's Silencing the Guns (STG) initiative presents an opportunity for advancing the AU-UN partnership's approach to conflict prevention. The initiative, born from the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government's Solemn Declaration in 2013, is now a flagship project of the first ten-year implementation plan of the AU's Agenda 2063.<sup>140</sup> Through a holistic and integrated approach to peace, security, and development, the STG initiative aims to address the root causes of conflict in Africa, strengthen the continent's capacities for peace, and support the African Peace and Security Architecture's mechanisms for conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace support, and post-conflict reconstruction and development.

The AUPSC adopted a "Master Roadmap of

135 The PDAs are one component of the Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention. See DPPA, "Peace and Development Advisers—Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention." This program is also considering establishing three regional PDAs: one to cover East and Southern Africa, another to cover West Africa, and a third to cover the Horn of Africa. Interview with UN official, New York, April 2019.

136 UNDP, "Joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention: Annual Report 2016," June 13, 2017.

137 Interviews with UN officials, New York, April 2019; "Report of the UNDP-AU CPEWED Dialogue on Conflict Prevention, Early Warning and Horizon Scanning," March 2019 (internal document).

138 UNDP's crisis risk dashboards aggregate open-source data and reporting from UNDP colleagues to track specific conflict indicators, monitor patterns, and produce visualizations. UNDP Tanzania's crisis risk dashboard is a prominent example. See UNDP, "Early Warning and Response System: The UNDP Tanzania Crisis Risk Dashboard," March 2018.

139 Interviews with UN officials, April 2019.

140 Agenda 2063 is the AU's overarching, continent-wide development roadmap. See: AU Commission, "Agenda 2063," September 2015.

### Box 5. Peacebuilding and stabilization cooperation between the Lake Chad Basin Commission, AU, and UN

While much of the UN-AU partnership on conflict prevention rests on joint political analysis, information sharing, and good offices, related efforts in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) also contribute to conflict prevention. Recent cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin highlights how a UN-AU-REC partnership can adopt a more holistic approach to conflict prevention.

The AU is an integral partner to the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), and in 2019 they adopted a joint Regional Stabilization Strategy, the primary multilateral vehicle for peacebuilding and development in the region and a complement to the security-oriented Multinational Joint Task Force.<sup>141</sup> The AU Commission supports the LCBC in operationalizing the strategy, including by providing strategic direction, mobilizing resources, monitoring results, and coordinating with its member states to sustain diplomatic and financial support.<sup>142</sup> It is also building the LCBC's expertise on peace and security (it was initially a forum for environmental cooperation).<sup>143</sup> These efforts have helped the LCBC and its member states connect the peace enforcement work with their peacebuilding and stabilization-oriented programs.

Under its peace and security and development pillars, the UN is amplifying the AU's direct contributions to the LCBC, while UNSC Resolution 2349 (2017) provides a system-wide mandate for closer cooperation between the UN, AU, and LCBC. Backed by this mandate and the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the headquarters-based Inter-Agency Task Force on Boko Haram, UNDP's country offices in the region, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate are all supporting the LCBC and the AU in executing the strategy.<sup>144</sup>

Practical Steps to Silence the Guns by 2020" in late 2016 to anchor the initiative. The roadmap details substantive priorities and programmatic steps to implement the STG initiative and links these to institutional focal points, time frames for deliverables and outcomes, and possible sources of funding (including AU member states, subregional organizations, and the UN).<sup>145</sup> Specific to the UN-AU partnership, the roadmap's recommendations include more frequent dialogue between the AUPSC and the UNSC on conflict prevention, the appointment of A3 members as penholders and co-penholders in the UNSC, and the convening of preparatory meetings ahead of council-to-council consultations.

The STG initiative is a valuable tool for mobilizing the AU and its member states at both the political and policy levels. Some African countries have embraced the Agenda 2063 by

mainstreaming some of its priorities into their foreign policies; Equatorial Guinea, as one of its more visible champions, used the STG initiative as a cornerstone of its February 2019 UNSC presidency, which culminated in the unanimous adoption of Resolution 2457 (2019). During the open debate following the adoption of this resolution, the AU's high representative for Silencing the Guns, Ramtane Lamamra, emphasized the importance of strengthening conflict prevention in line with the STG roadmap.<sup>146</sup> Building on this progress, and in light of the initial 2020 end date, the AU's Executive Council decided at its July 2019 summit that the AU's theme for 2020 would be "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development."<sup>147</sup>

In light of this momentum, the UN, the AU, and their member states are considering concrete steps to advance the initiative beyond 2020. With

141 Lake Chad Basin Commission and AU Commission, "Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram-Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin," August 2018, pp. 21, 28–47.

142 Interview with UN official, New York, April 2019.

143 Interview with AU official, Addis Ababa, April 2019.

144 Interviews with UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, April 2019.

145 "AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020" (internal document).

146 UN Security Council, 8473<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8473, February 27, 2019.

147 Institute for Security Studies, "Silencing the Guns beyond 2020," August 2019

member states slow to implement many provisions the AU Commission has launched its own action plan to advance the roadmap. Resolution 2457's lack of specific commitments in its operative paragraphs places significant onus on the A3 to invest political capital in integrating the concepts and language in this resolution into other areas of the UNSC's work.<sup>148</sup> Both the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission have established interdepartmental task forces to align priorities and consolidate efforts internally. These task forces' assessment of progress and lessons learned and articulation of next steps will be invaluable inputs into the organizations' implementation of the initiative. These internal task forces could be complemented by joint UN-AU work plans on Silencing the Guns post-2020 to harmonize efforts between the two organizations.

## MEDIATION

UN-AU collaboration on mediation—a cornerstone of both preventive diplomacy and crisis management—is one of the most advanced areas of the partnership. Since 2007, the UN and AU have engaged formally and informally on mediation efforts in Burundi, CAR, Darfur, the DRC, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Liberia, Libya, South Sudan, and Togo, among others. Beyond their collaboration on track-one processes, the two organizations have supported one another in nurturing institutional mechanisms to undertake and support mediation. While these efforts have not always produced viable political settlements or gone smoothly, the two organizations have accepted the political, operational, and financial benefit of partnering in this area.

Both organizations maintain a diverse set of tools to undertake and support one another's mediation efforts, each with its own comparative advantages. The UNSC, AUPSC, UN secretary-general, and AU Commission chairperson can all mandate the appointment of a special envoy to represent their organization in a mediation or facilitation process. The UN's Mediation Support Unit is a system-wide repository of mediation expertise, analysis, and support; the AU's Mediation Support Unit,

established in early 2019, is expected to serve a similar function and to engage its counterpart at the UN.<sup>149</sup> The AU's Panel of the Wise—a core component of the African Peace and Security Architecture—is a standing body of senior African leaders mandated to undertake quiet diplomacy and support formal mediation processes; the UN secretary-general's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation—established in 2018—follows a similar model but is expected to be more informal than its AU counterpart.

Both organizations have collaborated to launch the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise and the Pan-African Network of the Wise that aims to bridge the gap in terms of women's participation and agency in high-level mediation efforts.<sup>150</sup> Beyond these institutional mechanisms, the organizations have collaborated on developing mediation training curricula, standard operating procedures, and guidelines and have informally engaged on mediation at the level of individual staff. These partnerships build on working-level and senior-level relationships, as exemplified by the UN and AU senior envoys' participation in annual seminars, including the AU High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability.

As the UN and AU coordinate their mediation efforts, they have had to navigate the contested issue of political primacy. When brought into track-one mediation processes, both organizations are usually tasked with coordinating a range of bilateral and multilateral envoys over whom they often have only informal political leverage.<sup>151</sup> Questions over political primacy are further complicated by the role of RECs/RMs, which often initiate and lead mediation efforts, given their closer proximity to the crises. While results have been mixed, certain REC/RM-led mediation processes have yielded positive results, especially when done in close collaboration with UN and AU stakeholders. However, RECs/RMs often have more vested interests in specific outcomes and can therefore act out of lockstep with the UN and AU,

148 Interviews with UN diplomats, New York, March–April 2019.

149 Interview with AU official, Addis Ababa, April 2019.

150 Ndubuisi Christian Ani, "FemWise-Africa Set to Boost Women's Role in Peace Processes," Institute for Security Studies, June 4, 2018.

151 Jeffrey Feltman, "UN Envoys Should Be Conductors, Not Soloists," Brookings Institution, June 18, 2019.

calling into question the practical limits of subsidiarity. These challenges were evident in the AU's cooperation with the East African Community (EAC) in Burundi and with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in South Sudan.<sup>152</sup> On the other hand, the proactive role of ECOWAS in the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau demonstrates how preventive diplomacy by RECs can be effective when afforded the necessary resources and backed by the unified political will of their membership and the broader international community.

The UN-AU partnership on mediation must therefore account for the heterogeneous nature of the various political institutions involved, their respective mandates and capacities, and their comparative advantages. As the AU's Mediation Support Unit gains traction within the AU Peace and Security Department, the two organizations will have the opportunity to further institutionalize coordination of their mediation efforts.

#### WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

The women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda is another entry point for closer cooperation between the UN and the AU on conflict prevention and crisis management. Both the UN and the AU have worked to mainstream the WPS agenda in debates, resolutions and communiqués, policy processes, and initiatives. Through its nine resolutions on WPS, annual debate on the WPS agenda, regular briefings by senior UN and non-UN officials on WPS, and Informal Expert Group on WPS, the UNSC systematically engages on the agenda.<sup>153</sup> UNSC Presidential Statement 2016/9 focused specifically on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa and highlighted how the two organizations can strengthen their joint efforts.<sup>154</sup>

The AUPSC has accelerated its engagement on

the WPS agenda since the 2014 appointment of the AU special envoy on WPS, including through annual briefings concurrent to the UNSC's annual debate on WPS.<sup>155</sup> Its approach has concentrated on encouraging AU member states to develop, adopt, and implement national action plans to implement UNSC Resolution 1325, an initiative amplified by the recent endorsement of a ten-year Continental Results Framework.<sup>156</sup> In addition, senior leaders from the AU and UN have increasingly been coordinating their actions on the WPS agenda, as seen in recent joint missions by the AU special envoy on WPS and the UN deputy secretary-general to South Sudan, Niger, and Chad.<sup>157</sup>

At both the AU and the UN, the WPS agenda is situated across multiple institutional nodes through which the two organizations need to cooperate. At the AU, the Women, Gender and Development Directorate is responsible for coordinating efforts on gender equality and women's empowerment, in coordination with the special envoy on WPS. The AU's Gender, Peace and Security Programme also helps develop strategies and mechanisms for implementing WPS within the Peace and Security Department. FemWise aims to bridge the gap in terms of women's participation and agency in mediation efforts, and the African Women Leaders Network aims to shift the emphasis to local and community-level efforts.<sup>158</sup> UN Women leads many of the UN's efforts on WPS, but DPPA, DPO, UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and other agencies and departments also play a role, as does the secretary-general's special representative on sexual violence in conflict.

In spite of this progress, there are areas where the UN-AU partnership can advance the WPS agenda. In terms of WPS, the partnership has largely been framed around the inclusion of women in mediation and peace processes. While this is an

152 Gustavo de Carvalho and Priyal Singh, "Talks Remain Ineffective as Burundi's Crisis Continues," Institute for Security Studies, April 25, 2018; Zach Vertin, "A Poisoned Well: Lessons in Mediation from South Sudan's Troubled Peace Process," International Peace Institute, April 2018.

153 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, "Resolution Texts and Translations," available at [www.peacewomen.org/resolutions-texts-and-translations](http://www.peacewomen.org/resolutions-texts-and-translations) . .

154 UN Security Council Presidential Statement 2016/9 (June 15, 2016), UN Doc. S/PRST/2016/9.

155 AU Peace and Security Council, Press Statement, AU Doc. PSC/PR/BR.(DCCCIII), October 19, 2018.

156 As of August 2019, twenty-five AU member states have drafted national action plans, representing 31 percent of all national action plans globally. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, "Member States: National Action Plans for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security," August 2011; AU Commission, "Continental Results Framework Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa (2018–2028)," February 2019; AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué DCCLXXII (May 16, 2018), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCLXXII).

157 Amina Mohammed, remarks to the Security Council on "Women, Peace and Security in the Sahel," New York, July 10, 2018.

158 UN Women provides technical and financial support to some of these initiatives. United Nations, "Coming Together, Females from All Backgrounds Can 'Move Mountains,' Deputy Secretary-General Tells African Women Leaders Network," Press Release, UN Doc. DSG/SM/1134-WOM/2128, February 27, 2018.



essential component of WPS, it is a narrow framing of an agenda that cuts across all aspects of peace and security.<sup>159</sup> One tangible area for progress is the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, which the UN and AU established a framework for in 2014.<sup>160</sup> During the April 2019 UNSC debate, South Africa was a strong advocate for advancing this agenda. While a number of missions now have women protection advisers who focus on addressing sexual violence in conflict, and gender advisers have been appointed in almost all UN peacekeeping missions, these posts risk falling victim to the politics of the UNSC and Fifth Committee. To avert this risk, both the UN and the AU need to improve coordination on joint efforts to increase political will to implement and finance the WPS agenda.

### ELECTORAL SUPPORT

Election-related assistance is another area where the UN and AU maintain a strong and long-standing working relationship. The two organizations have developed an informal division of labor, with the AU organizing election-observation missions on the continent while UN peace operations and country teams provide election-related technical assistance.<sup>161</sup>

This informal division of labor is guided in part by rules and regulations and in part by practice. Signatories to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance are required to invite the AU Commission to dispatch an observation mission, and the AU has deployed a mission to all national elections on the continent since Kenya's 2007–2008 election-related violence.<sup>162</sup> By comparison, the UN General Assembly has established stricter parameters for the organization's potential support to election processes, which has decreased its role in election observation in favor of technical assistance throughout the election cycle.<sup>163</sup>

In terms of institutional cooperation, the UN's

Electoral Assistance Division remains in close contact with its counterpart in the AU's Department of Political Affairs and has helped the AU Commission establish its own election observer database.<sup>164</sup> The UN and AU also provide joint support to RECs/RMs' election observation missions and their platforms and coordination mechanisms for national election management bodies.

Going forward, there is even greater opportunity for the two organizations to improve their collaboration. Compared to the UN, the AU can more consistently play both a political and a technical role. The AU Commission can more easily convene national governments and political parties during an election process while simultaneously overseeing impartial observation missions and conducting quiet diplomacy. The AU Commission is also striving to move beyond short-term election observation missions to provide more comprehensive support throughout the election cycle, an area where it can learn from the UN.<sup>165</sup> The UN, on the other hand, can learn how to better merge its conflict-management expertise with constructive political engagement in elections (including through more facilitation among national actors during the election process).

### PEACEBUILDING AND POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Cooperation on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) has been described as the “weakest substantive link in the partnership” and therefore presents one of the greatest opportunities for advancing the UN-AU partnership.<sup>166</sup> The comparatively limited integration between the two organizations' approaches, institutions, and programmatic activities was acknowledged by the UNSC in Resolution 2457 (2019).<sup>167</sup>

159 Cheryl Hendricks, “Progress and Challenges in Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture,” *Africa Development* 42, no. 3 (2017).

160 Pramila Paten, remarks to the AU Peace and Security Council, Addis Ababa, July 23, 2019.

161 Interviews with UN and AU officials, New York and Addis Ababa, March–April 2019; DPPA, “Elections,” available at <https://dppa.un.org/en/elections>.

162 *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance*, Addis Ababa, January 30, 2007, Article 19, para. 2.

163 UN General Assembly, *Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/49/675, November 14, 1994; Interviews with UN officials, New York, April 2019.

164 Interviews with UN officials, New York, April 2019.

165 UNDP and AU, Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division workshop, Addis Ababa, March 2019.

166 Interview with AU official, Addis Ababa, April 2019.

167 UN Security Council Resolution 2457 (February 27, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2457, para. 10.



While the UN's approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace and the AU's PCRDR framework both emphasize holistic and integrated approaches to peace and development, the AU's approach focuses on countries emerging from conflict and places greater emphasis on the immediate period of stabilization.<sup>168</sup> By contrast, the UN's approach places greater emphasis on conflict prevention and is oriented toward a wide range of countries, including those not in conflict. At the institutional level, there has not historically been sustained engagement between the UN Peacebuilding Commission and the AU. However, the July 2018 meeting between the commission and the AUPSC marked the beginning of annual engagement between the two bodies.<sup>169</sup> The planned AU Centre for PCRDR in Cairo, along with the newly reconfigured AU Development Agency, are expected to help link the member states, AU, and RECs/RMs, although the details of their strategic and operational direction are not yet clear.<sup>170</sup>

The UN Peacebuilding Support Office and the AU Peace and Security Department's Crisis Management and Post Conflict Reconstruction Division occasionally interact both at the headquarters level and in the field. In September 2017, they signed a memorandum of understanding on peacebuilding that prioritized "conflict prevention, political dialogue, national reconciliation, democratic governance and human rights."<sup>171</sup> However, this memorandum has received considerably less sustained follow-up within the partnership. The Peacebuilding Support Office and AU Commission have also signed memoranda of understanding related to individual projects supported by the Peacebuilding Fund in some countries, but these are project-based and do not necessarily reflect shared political approaches.<sup>172</sup> But while the UN maintains an extensive operational infrastructure for peacebuilding work,

the AU is comparably behind in terms of capacity and resources;<sup>173</sup> the AU's quick-impact projects in Somalia and its co-deployment of a technical support mission with the Gambian government are two of its first tangible efforts in this area.<sup>174</sup>

Advancing the partnership on peacebuilding and sustaining peace requires the organizations to address several questions. First, how can they better align the UN's sustaining peace agenda and the AU's push for post-conflict stabilization, particularly in regions like the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel? Second, how do the organizations balance the UN's project-oriented approach with the AU's shift toward flexible co-deployments with government institutions? Third, are there practical ways the AU (including through the AUPOM) can increase its coordination with the UN Peacebuilding Commission, especially on planning joint programmatic activities in line with countries' identified priorities? Finally, are there opportunities for joint UN-AU fundraising for peacebuilding and PCRDR initiatives?

## YOUTH, PEACE, AND SECURITY

Collaboration between the UN and AU on the youth, peace, and security (YPS) agenda is starting to gain momentum, building on recent policy developments. These include the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015), the first ever Resolution on YPS, as well as Resolution 2419 (2018) on the inclusion of young people in mediation and negotiation processes. The development of these resolutions included consultation in all five regions of Africa. The YPS agenda is also being institutionalized across the UN Development Group and championed by the UN secretary-general's youth envoy.

The AU has followed suit in advancing its own YPS agenda, most notably through the establishment of a Youth4Peace program spearheaded by

168 UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; UN General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (May 12, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/70/262; UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary General*, UN Doc. A/72/707-S/2018/43, January 18, 2018; African Union, "Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRDR)," July 2006; AU Commission, "African Peace and Security Architecture," December 2015, pp. 40–41.

169 United Nations, "United Nations-African Union Partnership in Peacebuilding," available at [www.un.org/peacebuilding/policy-issues-and-partnerships/partnerships/un-au-partnership](http://www.un.org/peacebuilding/policy-issues-and-partnerships/partnerships/un-au-partnership).

170 AU Assembly Declaration 710 (July 2, 2018), AU Doc. Assembly/AU/7(XXXI).

171 United Nations, "Joint Communique on United Nations-African Union Memorandum of Understanding on Peacebuilding," September 18, 2017.

172 Interview with UN official, New York, March 2019.

173 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/73/809-S/2019/448, May 30, 2019.

174 AU Commission, "Policy Brief: African Union's Quick Impact Project Implementation: Lessons Learned from Somalia," October 2018; Chido Mutangadura, "Will the Gambia Be a Turning Point for AU Peace Efforts?" Institute for Security Studies, May 13, 2019.

the Peace and Security Department. This program has the support of the AU's African Governance Architecture Secretariat (which has developed its own youth engagement strategy) and its Youth Division (part of the Human Resources, Science and Technology Department). This program aims to build the capacity of young peace practitioners on the continent while fostering youth engagement within the African Peace and Security Architecture. The AU Commission chairperson's welcome appointment of a special envoy on youth in 2018, in conjunction with the establishment of a Youth Advisory Council, has also legitimized and strengthened the YPS agenda at the AU.

Direct engagement between the AU special envoy on youth and the UN envoy on youth presents an opportunity for the two institutions to formally interface and advance a more collective approach to YPS. These direct interactions have already begun in earnest following an April 2019 visit by the UN youth envoy to Addis Ababa.<sup>175</sup> Joint efforts on youth have also emerged under the umbrella of the Silencing the Guns initiative, including a July roundtable sponsored by the UN, AU, and government of Kenya.<sup>176</sup> During its UNSC presidency in October 2019, South Africa convened a debate on "Peace and Security in Africa: Mobilizing Youth towards Silencing the Guns by 2020," at which the AU's special envoy on youth briefed the council.<sup>177</sup>

Through these efforts, the YPS agenda has become increasingly streamlined as a crosscutting theme in peace and security initiatives across the continent, and the AU has increasingly referenced UN policies on YPS.<sup>178</sup> While these developments are positive, the YPS agenda could be further accelerated through greater institutional linkages, particularly at the working level and through more direct and regular interaction between the AU Commission and the UN Secretariat. While the youth envoys will play a central role in advancing the YPS agenda in both institutions, greater focus at the policy level could help integrate the agenda throughout the partnership.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The UN-AU partnership on peace and security has strengthened in recent years, particularly on conflict prevention and crisis management. From the institutionalization of more meaningful interaction between the UNSC and AUPSC to improved operational coordination between the UN Secretariat and AU Commission, key opportunities and entry points for more robust cooperation can be identified. In spite of these opportunities, the UN and AU must proactively address persistent and emergent political and institutional challenges to sustain momentum. The following recommendations are intended to guide UN and AU stakeholders in considering how to address these challenges.

**Strengthen council-to-council engagement:** By engaging with each other, the UNSC and the AUPSC can increase their understanding of member states' positions, share analysis, and consider potential joint responses to crises. To further this engagement, the councils should strengthen their political and institutional linkages, with a focus on clear, tangible outcomes. Doing so requires more frequent and strategic engagement at the UNSC (especially through the monthly presidents, the A3, and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa), at the AUPSC (through the monthly chairs and A3 delegations), and between the two councils. Expert-level study visits by the two councils, which have smoothed engagement at the ambassadorial level, should be regularized. The two councils could also attempt to organize joint missions at the expert level, allowing them to explore a range of configurations and logistics without facing significant political pressure to finalize the arrangements on the first attempt.

The A3 should strengthen its leadership role in advancing the two councils' partnership, including by informally tracking joint communiqués (on

175 Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, "UN Youth Envoy Visit to Belgrade, Pristina and Addis Ababa," available at [www.un.org/youthenvoy/2019/05/un-youth-envoy-visit-to-belgrade-pristina-and-addis-ababa/](http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2019/05/un-youth-envoy-visit-to-belgrade-pristina-and-addis-ababa/).

176 DPPA, "This week in DPPA, 6–12 July 2019," available at <https://dppa.un.org/en/week-dppa-6-12-july-2019>.

177 UN Security Council, 8629th Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8629, October 2, 2019.

178 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," 2018; United Nations, "Adopting Resolution 2419 (2018), Security Council Calls for Increasing Role of Youth in Negotiating, Implementing Peace Agreements," UN Doc. SC/13368, June 6, 2018.

both country and thematic issues), regularly reaching out to the AUPSC chair, and more frequently having informal conversations with other member states on relevant files. The A3 could do this through diplomatic engagement in New York or Addis Ababa at the mission-to-mission level. They could also organize informal interactive dialogues where AUPSC member states or AU Commission officials could engage the UNSC in a closed-door setting, especially on country-specific issues and the renewal of peacekeeping mandates. Finally, the A3 should amplify their presence on the UNSC through more media stakeouts and public briefings following the presentation of common A3 positions.

**Work toward a collective approach to conflict prevention and crisis management:** The UN and AU can build upon a range of existing avenues for collaboration on conflict prevention and crisis management. One area that could be strengthened is day-to-day, informal collaboration. This could involve more frequent director-level interaction, joint planning of activities, and development of shared objectives.

A second area for growth is common messaging on joint initiatives and successful interventions. This could include joint lessons-learned exercises at headquarters and at the country level and common messaging from senior leadership in both institutions highlighting the tangible impact of their collective work. While some of this impact is captured in the UN secretary-general's annual report on the UN-AU partnership, more systematic showcasing of joint efforts would support senior leadership's push to focus more on conflict prevention.

A third area for expanding the partnership would be to mainstream a more comprehensive approach to conflict prevention throughout the institutions' joint work. The 2019 UN development system reforms present an opportunity for the UN country teams and resident coordinators to help in this regard by better aligning how the partnership works at the headquarters level with collective efforts in different countries and regions. Specifically, the partnership could be aligned with the country-level efforts of UNDP and the peace and development advisers (where applicable), as well as the AU and RECs/RMs' continental early-warning systems. Better efforts to align these efforts

could strengthen joint analysis, expand programming opportunities, and identify potential obstacles to working together.

**Create a dedicated team within the AU Peace and Security Department to support the partnership:** A more institutionalized mechanism for coordinating the UN partnership within the AU Peace and Security Department could support more sustained and regular interaction between the AU Commission and its UN counterparts. By advancing from simply housing a focal point toward having a dedicated team responsible for advancing the partnership both substantively and administratively, the AU could more consistently monitor engagement, activities, and priorities under its partnership with the UN. This team would also help alleviate the rapid influx of additional work that often accompanies partnership meetings. In addition, it would enable the Peace and Security Department to engage more proactively and consistently with other departments within the AU, including the Partnerships Office in the Office of the AU Commission Chairperson, as well as with UNOAU.

**Better align the AU and UN's work on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development:** Given the UN's investment in peacebuilding and the AU's investment in post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD), both organizations should explore whether and how to learn from one another and expand collaboration in these areas. One area of focus could be improved operational collaboration. For example, the partners could explore making engagement between the AUPSC and AUPOM and the UN Peacebuilding Commission more systematic. Another could be assessment of progress since the signing of the September 2017 memorandum of understanding between the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and the AU Peace and Security Department's Crisis Management and Post Conflict Reconstruction Division, especially in light of the UN's upcoming review of its peacebuilding architecture in 2020. In addition, member states involved in the annual consultation between the AUPSC and Peacebuilding Commission should articulate long-term objectives for this meeting and identify ways to incorporate the discussions into their regular work. Finally, these discussions could reflect on how the UN can

engage the planned AU Centre for PCRDR and how to strengthen linkages between the UN's peacebuilding architecture, the AU, relevant RECs/RMs, and other bilateral and multilateral development partners.

Additionally, the AU and UN should explore the substantive convergences and divergences between peacebuilding, PCRDR, and sustaining peace, especially in terms of the organizations' country-specific programming. These discussions could be expanded to consider emerging thematic priorities shared by both organizations, including cross-border programming, the impact of climate change on security, youth, peace, and security, and national reconciliation and transitional justice. Understanding these shared priorities could help the organizations identify existing programmatic interventions and opportunities for joint programming.

**Build momentum for the Silencing the Guns initiative:** As the AU accelerates toward championing the Silencing the Guns (STG) initiative in 2020, both organizations should sustain political and operational support. This could entail reinforcing the efforts of the AU Commission and the UN to operationalize the AU's STG roadmap and action plan and identifying avenues to link this initiative with those of UNSC and AUPSC member states. In particular, the AU could provide more

concrete guidance to its member states on ways they can implement the STG initiative domestically, specifically in terms of the long-term governance and development priorities that lie at its core. Such policy guidance could both sustain political momentum and encourage member states to retain a holistic perspective that goes beyond arms control. Another area of engagement could be for the UNSC Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa to identify avenues for mainstreaming UNSC Resolution 2457 into other UNSC outcome documents.

**Expand diplomatic capacities to support the partnership in New York and Addis Ababa:** Recognizing that the partnership has grown in recent years, the UN, the AU, and their member states should invest more in their diplomatic capacities in New York and Addis Ababa. Member states nominated or elected to the AUPSC should increase their diplomatic capacities in both Addis Ababa and New York before joining the council. Similarly, member states elected to the UNSC should simultaneously increase their diplomatic presences in Addis Ababa, including through opening dedicated missions to the AU. The AU Commission, for its part, should expand the AUPOM so that both organizations can more consistently engage on a larger number of issues.



## Annex: Chronological Overview of Select Resolutions and Communiqués

**UNSC Presidential Statement 2007/7 (2007):** This statement recognized the comparative advantage of the AU and subregional organizations in rapidly responding to conflicts on the continent. It highlighted the importance of the UNSC collaborating with the AUPSC and called for the additional sharing of information and best practices between the two bodies.

**UNSC Resolution 1809 (2008):** This resolution recognized the importance of strengthening regional and subregional organizations' capacity to prevent conflicts and manage crises and highlighted their lack of predictable, sustainable financing. It expressed the determination of the UNSC to strengthen its cooperation with the AU, in particular on conflict prevention.

**UNSC Presidential Statement 2010/21 (2010):** This statement reiterated the need for further collaboration between the AU and UN. It welcomed recent improvements in the relationship, noting the inaugural meeting of the Joint Task Force and the establishment of the UN Office to the AU. It reemphasized the importance of implementing the Capacity Building Programme, African Standby Force, and early-warning system.

**AUPSC/PR/COMM.(CCCVII) (2012):** This communiqué recognized the establishment of informal and formal cooperation mechanisms at all organizational levels and welcomed further partnerships between the AU and all relevant UN bodies. It also highlighted the need for the partnership to recognize African ownership of continental peace initiatives, apply the subsidiarity principle, and acknowledge the comparative advantage of the AU and its regional mechanisms in rapid response. It stressed the need for further reform to strengthen AU engagement with the A3 and the AU Observer Mission and to increase financial independence.

**UNSC Resolution 2033 (2012):** This resolution welcomed more regular and meaningful interaction between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission through the Joint Task Force. It also supported more regular briefings between UN and AU officials on peace and security matters of

mutual concern and a stronger working relationship between the UNSC and AUPSC, including through annual consultative meetings, joint field missions, and greater collaboration on shared country-specific strategies.

**AUPSC/AHG/COMM/1.(CCCXCVII) (2013):** This communiqué welcomed the recent development of consultative mechanisms and innovative joint approaches to conflict situations. However, it noted concern at the lack of a shared strategic vision. It called for greater standardization of existing consultative mechanisms, more sustainable support for AU-led missions, and increased collaboration between the AU, A3, and UNSC.

**UNSC Resolution 2320 (2016):** This resolution commended the role of UNOAU in the partnership and contextualized the partnership within the recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO). To this effect, it reiterated that the partnership should be underpinned by consultations between the UNSC and the AUPSC on their respective comparative advantages, burden sharing, and joint analysis. It referenced the planned AU Peace Fund, and specifically the UNSC's willingness to consider AU proposals on the financing of peace support operations, in line with prior AU Assembly decisions to fund 25 percent of the cost of these operations (phased in incrementally over a five-year period).

**UNSC Presidential Statement 2016/8 (2016):** This statement welcomed the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture, the appointment of an AU high representative for the African Peace Fund, and the 2016 African Peace and Security Architecture Roadmap. It also welcomed progress by the UN and AU on implementing UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security and called for both organizations to better mainstream gendered approaches in their policymaking. It called for greater investment in peacebuilding and post-conflict engagement through the creation of a Mediation Support Unit within the AU Commission and greater UN-AU



coordination on peacekeeping transitions.


**AUPSC/PR/COMM.2(DCXXVIII) (2016):** This communiqué called for more UN assessed contributions and internal funding for AU peace support missions and for the UN Secretariat to support the AU Commission in the area of peace and security. It highlighted the importance of the A3 on the UNSC and urged their continued unity.

**UNSC Resolution 2378 (2017):** This resolution referred to the UN-AU Joint Framework, specifically as it relates to UN peacekeeping reform. To this effect, it highlighted the importance of accelerating the operationalization of the African Standby Force as the overarching framework for African peace support operations. The resolution also

requested the secretary-general, in coordination with the AU, to develop a framework for more effective reporting between the Secretariat, the AU Commission, and the two councils.

**UNSC Resolution 2457 (2019):** This resolution acknowledged the range of measures taken to implement the AU's Silencing the Guns initiative. It also highlighted the importance of the two joint UN-AU partnership frameworks to mobilizing support for the implementation of the Silencing the Guns roadmap. Accordingly, it reiterated the UNSC's intention to consider how to enhance practical cooperation with the AU in the promotion and maintenance of peace and security in Africa.





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