



Security Council

Distr.: General
28 December 2023

Original: English

Letter dated 22 December 2023 from the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa for 2023, as endorsed by the members of the Working Group.

I should be grateful if the present letter and the report could be brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(Signed) Pedro Comissário **Afonso**
Chair
Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and
Resolution in Africa



Annex to the letter dated 22 December 2023 from the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa addressed to the President of the Security Council

Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa for 2023

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted to inform the Security Council of the activities of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa in 2023.

II. Organizational matters

2. The Working Group is a subsidiary organ of the Security Council, established pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 31 January 2002 (S/PRST/2002/2), in which the Council recognized the need for adequate measures to prevent and resolve conflicts in Africa and indicated its intention to consider the establishment of an ad hoc working group to monitor the recommendations contained in the presidential statement and to enhance coordination with the Economic and Social Council.

3. The Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the United Nations, Pedro Comissário Afonso, served as Chair of the Working Group from 1 January to 31 December 2023. The Permanent Representative of Gabon served as Vice-Chair throughout the reporting period.

4. During the period under review, the Working Group held four meetings and facilitated the eighth informal joint seminar and the seventeenth annual joint consultative meeting between members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa on 5 and 6 October 2023, respectively.

III. Summary of the activities of the Working Group in 2023

A. Programme of work

5. On 2 March, the Working Group met to consider the draft programme of work for 2023, as proposed by the Chair.

B. Ensuring predictable, sustainable and flexible financing for the African Union peace support operations

6. On 11 April, the Working Group convened a meeting on the theme “Ensuring predictable, sustainable and flexible financing for the African Union peace support operations”. The members of the Working Group heard a briefing by the Acting Head of the Peace Support Operations Division in the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission, Zinurine Alghali.

7. The aims of the meeting were, inter alia: (a) to provide an update on the progress of the African Union on relevant issues, including burden-sharing, accountability and compliance frameworks, planning and oversight mechanisms, and reporting systems, as well as other main elements of the African Union consensus paper; and (b) to mobilize political will and galvanize momentum towards an agreement in principle on sustainable finance for African Union-led peace support operations.

8. In the concept note framing the discussion, it was noted that a well-funded African Peace and Security Architecture was not simply an African priority but a global public good.

9. The need for sustainable, predictable and adequate financing, including through the use of United Nations-assessed contributions, for the United Nations-mandated, African Union-led peace support operations was a matter that needed to be agreed upon, as mentioned in the statement by the President of the Security Council contained in document [S/PRST/2022/6](#). In addition, the Security Council had adopted two resolutions, namely resolutions [2320 \(2016\)](#) and [2378 \(2017\)](#), in which the Council had stressed the need to enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing for African Union-led peace support operations authorized by the Council and under the Council's authority, consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In its resolution [2378 \(2017\)](#), the Council had recognized that ad hoc and unpredictable financing arrangements for African Union-led peace support operations might impact the effectiveness of those operations.

10. In the same resolutions, the Security Council had encouraged the African Union to finalize its human rights and conduct and discipline compliance frameworks for the African Union peace support operations, enhance its financial accountability systems and report on progress in and benchmarks and timelines for the implementation of the Peace Fund. The African Union had made significant progress in the implementation of those requirements.

11. In February 2023, the thirty-sixth Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union had adopted a consensus paper on sustainable, predictable and adequate financing of African Union peace and security activities and approved the immediate use of the Peace Fund and its crisis reserve facility, specifically to support the deployment and operations of the East African Community Regional Force and to contribute to filling the gap in financing for the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia.

12. Mr. Alghali highlighted that the African Union had noted three key realities in its consensus paper: (a) that no single organization could provide the complete response; (b) that the African Union and its regional organizations had demonstrated a clear comparative advantage as first responders with the political will to undertake offensive operations in high-risk environments; and (c) that there was a need for financing mechanisms that were predictable and sustainable rather than voluntary and ad hoc.

13. The States members of the African Union had decided to revitalize the Peace Fund with an endowment of \$400 million to fulfil the funding commitment (as decided in 2015) of 25 per cent from the African Union peace and security activities budget, which included not only African Union-led peace support operations but also mediation, preventive diplomacy and institutional capacity support.

14. With regard to the human rights, accountability, conduct and discipline compliance framework for the African Union peace support operations, the African Union had joined the United Nations and European Union tripartite project aimed at enhancing the African Union Compliance and Accountability Framework for Peace Support Operations. The project had provided programmatic funds, technical capacity and additional staff to support the continued efforts in enhancing the Framework, the better alignment of the Framework with United Nations standards continued to be an iterative process.

15. The African Union had adopted additional policies and guidelines on conduct and discipline for peace support operations, on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in peace support operations, on child protection in

African Union peace support operations and on mainstreaming child protection into the African Peace and Security Architecture. In addition, applicable conduct and discipline standards had been mainstreamed into the memorandums of understanding with troop- and police-contributing countries and throughout the full cycle of operations from predeployment to liquidation. Furthermore, the African Union had finalized the strategic framework for compliance and accountability.

16. Mr. Alghali recalled that the use of United Nations-assessed contributions to support African Union-led peace support operations authorized by the Security Council was not new. It had been done in Darfur and in Somalia, which were considered exceptions. He stressed the need for a more structured and systematic African Union-United Nations partnership that supported effective regional responses to global security threats, which were of strategic interest to and necessary for both organizations.

17. Members of the Working Group expressed appreciation for the efforts of the African Union to address security challenges on the African continent and acknowledged that the African Union was well placed to address them. Some members noted that the African Union had been able to conduct offensive operations in high-risk environments, in particular where the Security Council had been unable to garner consensus. They highlighted that the African Union had deployed 27 peace operations since the adoption of the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in 2002. Other members agreed that, as the African Union-led peace support operations could be more effective in certain situations, it was essential for the United Nations to combine its comparative advantage with regional partners.

18. Some members noted that the African Union had improved its financial accountability mechanisms and that therefore the request for funding through United Nations-assessed funds was reasonable, in particular as any funding would still be subject to the United Nations accountability mechanisms.

19. In that context, members of the Working Group looked forward to reviewing the recommendations in the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on the financing of African Union peace support operations and expressed their willingness to resume discussions on that matter, including on financing through United Nations-assessed contributions. Some members declared their support in principle for the use of United Nations-assessed funds on a case-by-case basis, in line with the key conditions outlined in Security Council resolutions [2320 \(2016\)](#) and [2378 \(2017\)](#).

C. Modalities through which discussions and recommendations of the Working Group could add immediate value to the work of the Security Council

20. On 31 May, the Working Group discussed modalities through which discussions and recommendations of the Working Group could add immediate value to the work of the Security Council, including recommendations from other outcome documents, such as joint communiqués between the Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

21. The aim of the meeting was to find ways to ensure that the Working Group was “fit for purpose” to support and advise the Security Council in addressing peace and security in Africa. The Chair noted that the Working Group had solidified its importance as the focal point and facilitator of regular exchanges between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. The relationship between both Councils had evolved to cover thematic, institutional, procedural, methodological and burden-sharing aspects, among others.

22. The Chair highlighted several avenues for strengthening the work and advisory role of the Working Group: (a) the monthly meetings between the incoming President of the Security Council and the incoming Chair of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union should be maintained and improved; (b) the monthly programme of work of both Councils should be aligned, where possible; (c) the agendas for the annual joint consultative meetings should be focused and streamlined; (d) a unified reporting calendar on follow-up actions arising from joint communiqués should be established (with respective monitoring and evaluation metrics); and (e) a practical formula should be found for issuing joint field missions to ensure that both Councils were represented without making the missions unworkably large.

23. All members expressed support for the Chair's idea of improving aspects of the relationship between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and considered the idea valuable. One member stressed that coordination between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union should be more strategic and not limited to the monthly meetings between the presidencies. Some members suggested that discussions on specific countries ahead of mandate renewals could improve coordination.

24. Other members highlighted the importance of information-sharing between the two Councils, in particular on assessments, which could be shared either formally or informally. Some members encouraged the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to conduct joint assessments for "hotspot" areas, while others suggested that joint visits should be expanded to include subregional organizations, as well as the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, to enhance the understanding of all entities on a matter.

25. Other suggestions to increase African Union involvement included inviting the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations to participate more often in Security Council discussions; more frequent briefings to the Security Council by the African Union and other relevant officials from the continent on African matters; increased exchanges at the expert level to improve coordination and working methods; and more visits by the Security Council to Addis Ababa and by the Peace and Security Council to New York.

26. One member cautioned that, while more frequent meetings and visits might be useful, it should be remembered that they required a great deal of effort and were very time-consuming. Another impediment was the different working methods of the Councils, such as the inability of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to meet for decision-making while it was travelling. The use of virtual meetings was recommended as a possible solution, but one member disagreed because of the sensitivity of the matters under discussion.

D. Preparations for the annual joint consultative meetings

27. From 3 to 6 October, the Working Group held joint consultative meetings with the Committee of Experts of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on preparations for the eighth informal joint seminar and the seventeenth annual joint consultative meeting between members of the Security Council and members of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, which were held on 5 and 6 October, respectively, in Addis Ababa.

28. The Working Group and the Committee of Experts negotiated the joint communiqué that was adopted by the two Councils at the conclusion of the seventeenth annual joint consultative meeting and subsequently published in document [S/2023/751](#).

29. The Chair of the Working Group (Mozambique) co-chaired the eighth informal joint seminar with the Chair of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union for the month of October (Congo), while the President of the Security Council for the month of October (Brazil) and the Chair of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union for the same month (Congo) co-chaired the seventeenth annual joint consultative meeting.

E. Implementation of the Secretary-General's reports on causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

30. The Working Group heard briefings by the Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ivan Šimonović, and the Senior Advisor on international partnerships, the African Union Border Programme and regional security mechanisms in the office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union Commission, Frederic Gateretse-Ngoga. The Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, Cristina Duarte, also delivered opening remarks.

31. Ms. Duarte noted that conflicts in Africa were the result of a combination of external and internal factors that affected each country differently. External factors included international terrorism, geopolitics, global economic interests and climate change, while internal factors could be summarized as the absence of the State from both physical and functional perspectives, which had a direct impact on peace and security on the continent. Those shortcomings had continued to undermine the capacity of African countries to deliver services in an effective, efficient and equitable way, in particular in remote areas and marginalized urban centres.

32. Ms. Duarte observed that, while the number of terrorism casualties had decreased around the world, it had increased in Africa. By 2022, four African countries had accounted for more than one third of the world's terrorism-related deaths. The increase was directly linked to the role played by terrorist groups in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and other parts of the continent as service providers in health care, education and other public services, replacing State absences in those sectors.

33. Similarly, the spike in unconstitutional changes of government following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was a direct result of the deterioration of the socioeconomic conditions in the continent as a consequence of the erosion of public trust caused by the inability of State institutions to respond effectively to the needs of their population.

34. Against that background, preventing a rise in conflict in Africa required building effective and efficient public institutions that could support African countries in providing public services in a more comprehensive and equitable way.

35. Mr. Gateretse-Ngoga stated that the Peace and Security Council of the African Union was currently seized of 15 conflict situations, including in countries engaged in war or experiencing tensions. The impact of the pandemic, economic and financing crises and climate change had continued to exacerbate an already difficult situation. In that context, there was a need to promote peace, security and stability as a prerequisite for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, to redouble commitment to coordinated action on ensuring service delivery, to address the governance deficit by strengthening political institutions and to enhance State legitimacy at the national level.

36. Mr. Šimonović underscored the need for integrated approaches as well as engagement with regional economic communities, regional mechanisms, international and regional financial institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector, among others, in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in

Africa. On that point, the Peacebuilding Commission had unique value as a platform for linking all relevant stakeholders engaged in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

37. Mr. Šimonović noted that, in recent years, requests for peacebuilding projects had increased, while voluntary funding had diminished, creating a need for innovative funding sources. One such source was the use of United Nations-assessed contributions towards peacebuilding.

38. Members of the Working Group agreed that the Peacebuilding Commission, as a platform for forging partnerships with international financial institutions, was well positioned to connect discussions across different pillars and garner international support to address the underlying causes of conflicts in Africa.

39. In that context, a member highlighted the need to reform the international financial system and its institutions, provide conducive conditions for attracting international financing, technical assistance and capacity-building of States, de-politicize development assistance, end unilateral sanctions and coercive measures, ease the debt burden of States and ensure sustainable access to investments and technologies.

40. Some members underscored the need to address the root causes of conflicts in Africa, strengthen governance systems and improve public service delivery. They noted that post-conflict countries needed enormous financing and resources to navigate political transitions, achieve development and reconstruction and improve people's lives. Therefore, investing in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and reconciliation processes was paramount.

41. Some members welcomed the African Union initiative on silencing the guns in Africa and noted that Agenda 2063 and the New Agenda for Peace had provided an opportunity for collective re-engagement by member States.

42. One member called for strengthening the mandates of United Nations peace operations, as with the recently renewed mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, under which support for the extension of State authority was prioritized. Other members hoped that the resolution on United Nations-assessed contributions to African Union-led peace support operations would be adopted.

43. Some members were concerned about the security impact of climate change in Africa and called for practical and achievable steps to alleviate those challenges.

44. A number of members advocated advancing strategies that enhanced governance structures and elevated public service standards across the continent. The strategies should include strengthening public institutions, promoting transparency, addressing corruption, ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, ending impunity and fostering inclusive decision-making processes.

45. Some members underlined the full and meaningful participation of women as decision-makers and actors as essential for durable peace. Similarly, the voices of young people must be heard.

46. Members of the Working Group stressed the importance of investing in education, health care, social services and decent economic opportunities to address poverty. Equally important was building trust between citizens and their Governments to reduce the risk of social unrest and conflict.

47. Lastly, a member emphasized the need for strict respect for the principle of division of labour among the main United Nations bodies as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and cautioned against duplication of mandates. In that

connection, development issues needed to be dealt with by specialized bodies including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

IV. Conclusion

48. The Working Group continued to evolve and improve its role as an advisory body to the Security Council in matters related to the African continent, expanding its thematic areas and fostering better understanding and knowledge-sharing between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

49. The Chair of the Working Group gave priority to the need to align the working methods with the broader mandate of the Working Group, an approach that was essential to its effectiveness as a forum to support the central role of Africa in the maintenance of international peace and security, was responsive to the continent's needs and leveraged the comparative advantages in an increasingly changing global and complex security threat landscape in Africa and beyond.

50. The Working Group continued to promote the collaborative avenues offered by its role as a joint convener of the annual joint consultative meetings and as a central platform for a structured partnership between the African Union and the United Nations, encouraging a more pragmatic and open dialogue at the leadership and expert levels aimed at ensuring a better understanding of the differences in perspectives on critical issues such as the support for African Union-led peace support operations, emerging threats such as climate-related crises, peace and security, and the responses to the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government and to transnational terrorism leading to violent extremism.

51. During the year, the Working Group provided members with insights into the differences in mandates between the two Councils and into their working methods and responsibilities, paving the way to a better allocation of lead roles and improved delineation and synchronization of actions and interventions.

52. The members reiterated their support for the role of the Working Group in advising and supporting the Security Council, suggesting more strategic coordination, focused agendas and shared assessments to increase the value of the Working Group's contributions.

53. The Chair sought to strengthen and promote the diversity of voices and narratives and to foster cross-institutional dialogue with relevant stakeholders who share the common goal of supporting the quest of Africa to silence the guns, such as the Peacebuilding Commission and the Office of the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, research institutions in turn adding value to the work of the Working Group.

54. The intense workload of the Council, in addition to the need to avoid duplication and encroachment upon the agenda of the Council, is one of the challenges identified by the Chair in optimizing the advisory role of the Working Group. Nevertheless, the members welcome the in-depth discussions, including the participation of the affected countries, which offer opportunities for the Working Group to make meaningful contributions.