



## Media and Research Services



# Special Report No. 9

**Making Africa's voice matter in the UN Security Council: Bridging the gap between ambition and reality in the role of the African three members of the UNSC**

# Making Africa's voice matter in the UN Security Council: Bridging the gap between ambition and reality in the role of the African three members of the UNSC

## I Introduction

Following its 983<sup>rd</sup> session held on 4 March 2021, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) adopted a decision on the unified role of the African three elected members (A3) of the United Nations (UN) Security Council (UNSC). The content of the decision identified both existing best practices for consolidation and new proposals on the workings of the A3 and the coordination with the PSC. Manifesting a renewed interest of the PSC for enhanced role of the A3, the outcome of the 983<sup>rd</sup> session of the PSC offers the basis for examining the ways of bridging the gap between the potential of the role of the A3 and the experience thus far in respect of representing Africa's voice through collective action in the UNSC.

Despite its long pedigree, the most recent background to the quest of Africa for a more institutionalized representation of its collective voice in the decision-making of the UNSC is the establishment of the AU. Both the coming into existence of the AU and its subsequent active engagement to address the peace and security challenges of the continent ushered in a new era in

Africa's role in peace and security diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> Two aspects of the many ways that the AU, particularly through PSC, has transformed peace and security diplomacy in Africa stand out.

First, by assuming increasing responsibility in peacemaking, mediation and peace support operations, the AU has come not only to increasingly set the tone for but also to influence the engagement of international actors on matters of peace and security on the continent.<sup>2</sup> It has become common for international actors to look towards the AU for leadership with respect to the peace and security challenges of continental and global significance.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> When the PSC was inaugurated on 25 May 2004, member states of the PSC made a prophetic statement that inauguration of the Council was an 'historic watershed in Africa's progress towards resolving its conflicts and building durable peace.'

<sup>2</sup> Amani Africa, The Internal Institutional Setup and Working Processes Shaping the Relationship between the AUPSC and the UNSC, Special Research Report No. 5 (December 2019), available at [http://www.amaniafrica-et.org/images/Reports/AUPSC\\_UNSCworkingrelationships.pdf](http://www.amaniafrica-et.org/images/Reports/AUPSC_UNSCworkingrelationships.pdf). [Amani Africa, Special Report No. 5] During the Ministerial UNSC debate on Africa in 1997, then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, observed that there is a new consensus that the primary responsibility for the solution of Africa's problems rests with Africans themselves...This new realization also calls for a re-evaluation of the role of the international community in support of Africa's goals...It challenges us to think precisely how best we can accompany the Africans on their path to lasting peace, stability, justice and sustainable development."

<sup>3</sup> A recent example is a statement that the US Secretary of State issued on 27 February 2021 calling on international partners, especially the African Union to work with US to address the crisis in Tigray. See Press Statement by Antony J. Blinken on 'Atrocities in Ethiopia's Tigray Region', available at <https://www.state.gov/atrocities-in-ethiopia-tigray-region/>

Second, and most importantly, the PSC has become the platform for articulating the collective voice of the member states of the AU for enabling the continent to speak with one voice in global platforms, most notably in the UNSC. This is where the role of the A3 has become particularly critical. It is one thing for the PSC to articulate and pronounce the collective position of the 55 member states of the AU. It is quite a different matter for this collective position to find ventilation, amplification and advocacy within the UNSC, which as provided for in the UN Charter and Article 17 of the PSC Protocol, bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is through the instrumentality of the A3 that the collective voice of Africa is pursued, given expression and represented within the UNSC particularly in respect of agenda items of the UNSC that are of concern for the continent.

This special research report presents a review of the evolution of the role of the A3 and recent experiences relating to not only A3's presentation of a common stand but also coordination between the PSC and the A3. In the following part, the report identifies the two inter-related roles of the A3 and highlights the legal and policy basis for the role of the A3 as representatives of Africa in the UNSC. In reviewing the evolution of the role of the A3, the report in part III discusses the initiatives deployed over the year for enhancing the effectiveness of the role of the A3 and how the current arrangements that shape the role of the A3 have been incrementally developed. In parts IV and V, the report examines the strategic issues that affect how the A3 perform in the UNSC and the challenges in the mechanics of coordination of and with

the A3. Part VI of the report highlights some of the pending issues that require revisiting for follow up on account of their strategic importance. Finally, the report ends with presenting its conclusion.

## II Two complementary roles of the A3

It is within the context of the foregoing changes involving the enhanced agency of the AU in shaping and influencing the engagement of international actors in peace and security in Africa that the Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.598 (XXVI) adopted in January 2016 affirmed the A3's 'special responsibility to ensure that the decisions of the PSC are well reflected in the decision-making process of the UNSC on peace and security issues of concern to Africa.' Accordingly, an important dimension of the role of the A3 is that of espousing, articulating and firmly representing the position of the PSC within the UNSC. However, the role of the A3 goes further than representing the common position of the continent within the UN.

The second and equally important role of the A3 concerns their unique position for facilitating the pursuit of strategic partnership between the PSC and the UNSC in the maintenance of peace and security in Africa. Indeed, a reading of Article 17 of the PSC Protocol, which calls for closer working relationship between the PSC and the UNSC, makes it clear that the A3 serve as **the bridge** between Addis Ababa and New York.<sup>4</sup> It therefore serves as one of the mechanisms for promoting and facilitating

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Forti and Priyal Singh, "Toward a More Effective UN-AU Partnership on Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management," International Peace Institute and Institute for Security Studies, (October 2019), 6-7, [Forti and Singh] available at <https://www.ipinst.org/2019/10/effective-un-au-partnership-on-conflict-prevention>.

policy coherence and coordination between the two bodies. In discussing place of the A3, it is therefore important to take due account of these two aspects of the role of the A3. Indeed, any assessment of the role of the A3 has to analyze both of these two aspects.

Although it was not specific to the role of the A3, it was in 2006 that Egypt shared a concept paper to the PSC making a case for the establishment of a ‘Coordination and Consultation Mechanism between the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council.’<sup>5</sup> Among others, the A3 can play the role of facilitating consultations by the UNSC with the PSC in order to, at the very least, avoid policy dissonance and tension between the two bodies. The importance of this was observed in the major tension that ensued after the decision the UNSC took on Libya in 2011 which was at variance with the clear position of the PSC against a military approach to resolving the crisis in Libya.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, the need for A3 facilitating convergence between the PSC and the UNSC was also observed when the UNSC took a decision on the transition of the AU mission in Mali to a UN mission in 2013.<sup>7</sup> The PSC in a communique it adopted expressed its ‘concern that Africa

was not appropriately consulted in the drafting and consultation process.’<sup>8</sup>

### III Taking stock of the evolution of the role of the A3

The legal foundation for the role of the A3 is to be found in Article 17. The relevant part of this article stipulates that the PSC ‘...shall maintain close and continuous interaction with ...(UNSC’s) African members..., including holding periodic meetings and regular consultations on questions of peace, security and stability in Africa.’<sup>9</sup> For some years since the entry into force of the PSC Protocol, the engagement between the PSC and the A3 within the framework of this provision has been ad hoc and dependent mainly on a member of the A3.<sup>10</sup> It was only after the mid 2000s that the significance of the role of the A3 received increasing practical recognition.

For Africa, which does not have a permanent member in the UNSC, the role of the A3 is of strategic significance. Situations in Africa continue to dominate the agenda of the UNSC. Out of 170 country specific or regional situations, African situations took the lion share of 47.65%.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, Africa accounts for 64.71 % of the total decisions of the UNSC in 2020.<sup>12</sup> Out of the 26 resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter,

<sup>5</sup> AUPSC, Communiqué of the 68<sup>th</sup> meeting (14 December 2006, Addis Abeba) AU Doc. PSC/PR/Comm (LXVIII).

<sup>6</sup> AU PSC, Communiqué of 265<sup>th</sup> meeting (10 March 2011, Addis Abeba) AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.2(CCLXV); Alex de Waal, ‘The African Union and the Libyan Conflict of 2011’, World Peace Foundation, 19 December 2012. A most recent analysis on the fallouts from the Libya debacle including how it affects foreign intervention see Colum Lynch, ‘The Libya Allergy’, *Foreign Policy* (17 March 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Solomon A. Dersso, Annual Review of the African Union Peace and Security Council 2013/2014, (2014), 66-67.

<sup>8</sup> AUPSC, communique of the 371<sup>st</sup> meeting (25 April 2013, Addis Abeba) AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(CCCLXXI) para 10.

<sup>9</sup> Protocol to the AU Constitutive Act on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (2002), Art 17(2).

<sup>10</sup> An example of this is the role played by South Africa during its 2007/8 and 2011/12 membership in the UNSC. For example, in the open debate that it organized in 2007, one of the issues that it sought to address was the extent to which the UNSC incorporates outcomes of bodies such as the AU in its own decisions.

<sup>11</sup> UN, Highlights of Security Council Practice 2020, available at <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/highlights-2020>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

only six relate to situations outside of Africa.<sup>13</sup> The magnitude of these statistics is illustrative of the fact that the UNSC remains a key platform where large number of decisions on peace and security of the continent are taken. Accordingly, how much influence Africa exerts on these decisions depends largely on<sup>14</sup> the extent to which the A3, operating as a bloc, articulate and pursue a common policy position and mobilize support for African common positions within the UNSC with respect, in particular, to African situations on the agenda of the UNSC.

A major turning point in the recognition of the role of the A3 was during South Africa's membership in the UNSC in 2007-2008, which coincided with the start of the annual consultative meeting between the PSC and members of the UNSC in 2007. It was also during this period that the UN commissioned a panel that was led by former Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi to explore modalities of how to support AU peacekeeping operations established under a UN mandate. In its communique of the 307<sup>th</sup> session, the PSC, taking Article 17 of the Protocol forward, stressed 'the need to strengthen the interface and coordination between the Peace and Security Council and the African members of the Security Council, to maximise the effectiveness and impact of the AU contribution in the UN Security Council.'<sup>15</sup>

In 2013, major steps were taken towards both formally operationalizing and harnessing the role of the A3 and putting modalities on the effective functioning of the A3. Declaration Assembly/AU/decl.1 (XXI) of the 21<sup>st</sup> Ordinary session of the AU Assembly of May 2013, like the communique of the 307<sup>th</sup> session of the PSC, stressed the need to build enhanced partnership with the UN to ensure African positions are adequately taken into account by the UNSC while making decisions on matters of interest to Africa.

In specifying the modalities for the effective functioning of the A3, the communique of the 397<sup>th</sup> session of the PSC of September 2013 is of particular significance.<sup>16</sup> First, it called for 'effective involvement of the African members of the Security Council in the drafting of resolutions, presidential statements and statements to the press concerning Africa, including through the designation of African states as pen holders/co-pen holders on African matters, as part of the overall efforts to ensure that lead roles for country-specific situations and thematic issues are fairly distributed among all the members of the Security Council'.<sup>17</sup> Second, it stipulated specific measures on enhancing the role of the A3 including:

- greater consultations between the Peace and Security Council and the African members on the Security Council, to ensure that decisions adopted

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> The other avenue through which Africa influences UNSC decision making is the partnership between the AU and the UN, including the relationship between the AU PSC and the UNSC.

<sup>15</sup> AUPSC, communiqué of 307<sup>th</sup> meeting (09 January 2012, Addis Abeba), AU Doc.PSC/PR/COMM.(CCCVII).

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<sup>16</sup> AUPSC, communiqué of 397<sup>th</sup> meeting (23 September 2013, New York), AU Doc. PSC/ AHG/COMM/1.(CCCXCVII).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, para 8(a)(iv).

by Council are effectively promoted and defended in the Security Council;<sup>18</sup>

- a pledge by all AU member states elected to the Security Council to defend and promote AU decisions in the Security Council;<sup>19</sup>
- the convening of regular meetings, in New York and in Addis Ababa, between members of the Peace and Security Council and AU members on the Security Council, to exchange views and discuss strategy;<sup>20</sup> and
- to strengthen the AU Permanent Mission to the United Nations, including through the establishment of a dedicated standby team to support African members on the Security Council.<sup>21</sup>

Against the background of the foregoing and in pursuit of instituting consultations between itself and the A3, the PSC convened the first high-level seminar on peace and security in 2013 between the PSC and African members in the UNSC on 8-10 December 2013 in Algiers, Algeria. The conclusions of the high-level seminar, expanding on the 397<sup>th</sup> session of the PSC, outlined detailed framework for enhancing the role of the A3 in representing the position of the PSC. These include the following:

- The establishment of the A3 and the African Caucus in New York;
- Appointment of A3 Coordinator;

- Formalization of the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN to serve as Secretariat of the A3;
- Elaboration of draft modalities of coordination between the AUPSC and the A3;
- Consultation between the AUPSC and the A3 in New York;
- Consistent invitation of the Embassies of A3 in Addis Ababa to the AUPSC meetings.

Major progress has been registered in putting in place and operationalizing these various mechanisms.<sup>22</sup> The role of A3 coordinator has been institutionalized. This role rotates between the three members quarterly on an alphabetical order, subject to changes due to election of new members to be part of the A3. As part of the effort to enhance intra-A3 coordination, instead of the quarterly meeting, in 2018 the A3 started meeting at the level of Ambassadors on a monthly basis. Meetings are also held at the level of political coordinators and experts of the A3. These meetings serve not only to compare notes and exchange experiences and information but also to harmonize the respective positions of the A3. Although much of the focus has been on African issues, in recent years efforts are also made to coordinate A3 engagement on non-African issues as well.

Over the years, the coordination among A3 members resulted in the emergence of practices that have solidified its role as a not-so-insignificant power bloc in the UNSC. These practices include the organization of joint meetings

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, para 9 (i).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, para 9 (ii).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, para 9 (iii).

<sup>21</sup> As above, para 9 (iv).

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<sup>22</sup> Amani Africa, Special Research Report No. 5, 22-23.

including Arria-formula meetings,<sup>23</sup> making joint statements not only in wrap up sessions but also substantive sessions, joint press stakeouts<sup>24</sup> and presenting or initiating joint draft resolutions<sup>25</sup>, and to a limited extent assumption of pen-holding or co-pen holding. In 2020, the A3+1 (Niger, South Africa and Tunisia (A3) and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) delivered 35 joint statements to the Council on country-specific agenda items focusing on the African region and thematic agenda items such as UN peacekeeping operations and children and armed conflict,<sup>26</sup> showing a significant jump as compared to the previous year where the A3 were able to deliver 16 joint statements.<sup>27</sup> The group also adopted common negotiation position with respect to UNSC resolutions 2525(2020) and 2524 (2020). Resolution 2525 limited the extension of the mandate of UNAMID until 31 December 2021 while maintaining its current troop and police ceiling, instead of the proposed extension in the draft resolution until May 2021. Resolution 2524 on the other hand established as successor to UNAMID the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) succeeding UNAMID on the basis

of Chapter VI of the UN Charter as the A3 called for. They also negotiated as a group on a draft resolution on AMISOM, namely Resolution 2568 (2021).

The role of the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN has also been regularized.<sup>28</sup> As envisaged in the conclusions of the first high level seminar of the PSC held in Oran, Algeria, the AU Mission operates not only as an institutional memory for the A3 but also as secretariat of the A3. It supports the coordination meetings of the A3 and provides technical support including through inputs to the A3 for thematic discussions within the UNSC. As a bridge between Addis Ababa and the A3, the Mission also serves as a channel for communicating outcome of PSC sessions and other relevant information from the AU Commission to the A3. In 2020, it has also initiated a retreat for supporting the preparation of newly elected members of the A3. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, a mini-retreat was held on 5 March 2021.

The AU Mission also plays key role in connecting the A3 with the wider African group in New York, which, representing 28 % of UN membership, constitutes a major bloc within the UN. The mission does this through organizing a briefing session for the Africa Group on the activities of the A3. The organization of such exchange between the A3 and the Africa group also serves in operationalizing one of the conclusions from the 2013 high level seminar.

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<sup>23</sup> Examples in this regard include meetings on Maritime Security and Silencing the Guns in Africa.

<sup>24</sup> A case in point in this respect is the joint press stakeout by South Africa, Niger and Tunisia in June 2019 in support of the PSC decision on Sudan with respect of which UNSC members were unable to adopt position supporting the call of the PSC for a civilian transitional authority in Sudan.

<sup>25</sup> Such is the case for example with respect to the draft resolution on Financing AU Peace Operations and on Silencing the Guns.

<sup>26</sup> UN, Highlights of Security Council Practice 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Gustavo de Carvalho and Daniel Forti, "How Can African States Become More Influential in the UN Security Council?" (12 March 2020), available at <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/03/how-can-african-states-become-more-influential-un-security-council/>.

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<sup>28</sup> Amani Africa, Special Research Report No. 5, 23.

Organized through the instrumentality of the AU Permanent Observer Mission, the A3 have in recent years started holding joint briefing sessions with senior officials of the UN Department of Political and Peace building Affairs and UN Department of Peace Operations. This is a useful avenue to deepen and expand the depth and richness of the information and analysis the A3 get on African issues on the agenda of the UNSC.

Similarly, in the coordination between the PSC and the A3,<sup>29</sup> the annual high-level seminar has become institutionalized,<sup>30</sup> forming part of the annual indicative program of work of the PSC.<sup>31</sup> The high-level seminar is now a standing platform for a dedicated review and exchange on the activities of the A3 and coordination between the A3 and the PSC.<sup>32</sup> As stipulated in the Manual on the Working Methods of the PSC, ordinarily it is scheduled to take place during the third quarter of the year, following the election of the new members of the UNSC.<sup>33</sup> The outcome of the high-level seminar is presented as part of the activities of the PSC to the AU Assembly, which endorses the conclusions of the seminar. The Assembly in its decision Assembly/AU/Dec.753(XXXIII) welcomed the last seminar held on 13-14 January 2020 in Libreville, Gabon, on the theme ‘Silencing the Guns in Africa: Creating Conducive Environment for Children in Conflict Situations’ and endorsed the conclusions.’

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<sup>29</sup> AUC, Manual on the Working Methods of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, (2020) para 109-111.

<sup>30</sup> As above, para 103-105.

<sup>31</sup> Amani Africa, The African Union Peace and Security Council Handbook: Guide on the Council’s Procedure, Practice and Traditions (2020), 122.

<sup>32</sup> As above. 7 editions of the high-level seminar have thus far been convened since its launch in 2013.

<sup>33</sup> AUC, Manual on the Working Methods of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, (2020) para 103.

Additionally, the AUPSC has been organizing interactive sessions with the A3 and members of the A3 have been regularly reporting to the AUPSC on their activities in the UNSC. In this respect, the convening of VTC between the troika of the PSC and the A3 is also a development that should be enhanced and regularized.

Other mechanisms of coordination between the PSC and the A3 include the practice of inviting representatives of members of the A3 to the partially open segment of the PSC session. Yet, much remains to be done. From the outcome documents of the PSC for 2020, the coordinator of the A3 has participated and made statements during the 911<sup>th</sup>, 913<sup>th</sup> and 931<sup>st</sup> sessions of the PSC.<sup>34</sup> The participation of the A3 in PSC sessions and the format of their engagement is key for enabling them to be adequately informed of the perspectives of the PSC and draw on those perspectives for their engagement on those African files on the agenda of the UNSC.

In terms of facilitating coordination between the PSC and the UNSC, the A3 occupy a strategic position to play the role of being a bridge between the PSC and the UNSC. This is particularly the case in the support the A3 avails in the preparations for the annual consultative meeting between the two bodies. The A3 play this role via and together with the UNSC’s Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. The A3 form part of the preparatory meetings of the PSC for the annual consultative meeting of the PSC with the UNSC.<sup>35</sup>

Over the years, the A3 has become a force that others within the UNSC reckon with. It has demonstrated its capacity in exerting influence in the decision-making

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<sup>34</sup> 911<sup>th</sup> session was on Somalia and AMISOM, 913<sup>th</sup> session was on the Situation in Darfur and UNAMID, and 931<sup>st</sup> was on the situation in Sudan.

<sup>35</sup> AU Manual on the Working Methods of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, (2020) para 109.

processes of the UNSC. When acting as one and speaking with one voice, its influence can go as far as operating as a de facto veto power. With the A3 acting as one and speaking with one voice, other members of the UNSC including the P5 have come to need to consult with members of the A3.<sup>36</sup> This has also helped in enhancing the influence and profile of individual members of the A3, which would have otherwise been impossible to achieve if each was acting on its own.

#### IV Dealing with strategic issues

- *Managing Security Council dynamics*

In recent years, the UNSC has witnessed rising divisions, undermining the ability of the Council to mobilize effective responses to crises. ‘The empirical reality makes it abundantly clear,’ wrote a recent permanent representative of an A3 member, ‘that relations between the major powers have become tenser and potentially more dangerous than they have been since the end of the cold war.’<sup>37</sup> The axis of this division is not limited to the traditional fault line between the P3 and Russia and China. It also involves divisions within the P3 as well. Though African matters used to be less contentious in the UNSC, both deepening divisions among the P5 and Africa’s

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<sup>36</sup> Meeting with a diplomat of the A3 in New York (October 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Tekeda Alemu, The conundrum of Present Ethiopian Foreign Policy – in Search of a Roadmap for Ethiopia’s Foreign and National Security Policy and Strategy, (January 2019). [Alemu, The conundrum of Present Ethiopian Foreign Policy] available at <http://www.cdrcethiopia.org/index.php/resorces/publications/download/2-cdrc-digest/25-cdrc-digest-january-2019>

changing geopolitics have increasingly come to affect issues of concern for Africa.<sup>38</sup> Richard Gowan observed that the ‘rift between China, Russia and the Western members of the Security Council that opened up over Libya and Syria in 2011 and 2012 have now spread to diplomacy over crises from Venezuela and the Central African Republic to Iran.’<sup>39</sup> Out of the 13 resolutions that were not adopted unanimously in 2020, nine related to African situations.<sup>40</sup>

This has adverse consequences both in terms of how the UNSC deals with African files and importantly on the cohesion of the A3.<sup>41</sup> As each camp in the P5 seeks to mobilize support for its position, there is mounting pressure put on the members of the A3 to side with different camps. As a diplomat of a leading member of the P5 informed Amani Africa during a research visit to New York, one of the strategies that they resort to is to peel off a member of the A3.<sup>42</sup> That is how, for example, the US secured the adoption of the resolution on the arms embargo against South Sudan.<sup>43</sup> On this issue, A3 members continue to vote separately. In 2020, while Niger and Tunisia voted in favor of renewal of sanctions, South Africa, like Ethiopia the previous year, abstained. The matter is up for renewal again in April 2021 and it is

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<sup>38</sup> Amani Africa, The Impact of COVID19 on Multilateral Cooperation and Implications for Peace and Security in Africa, Special Research Report No 7 (June 2020), 3.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Gowan, A Decade After Failing to Stop Massacres in Sri Lanka, What has the UN Learned?, (19 March 2019), World Politics Review, available on <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/27664/a-decade-after-failing-to-stop-massacres-in-sri-lanka-what-has-the-u-n-learned>

<sup>40</sup> UN, Highlights of Security Council Practice 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Crisis Group, A tale of Two Councils, Africa Report No. 279 (24 June 2019) 17. [A Tale of Two Councils]

<sup>42</sup> Meeting with a diplomat of a P5 member in New York (October 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Resolution 2428(2018), available at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13421.doc.htm>

worth watching if the A3 would overcome their differences and vote as a bloc.

Beyond the divisions in the Council, there is also a serious power dynamic that the A3 have to contend with. Apart from holding huge influence on account of their permanent membership and holding of veto power, the control of the pen on drafting of UNSC outcome documents on African issues by the P3 severely limits the scope for the A3 to meaningfully influence the contents of the outcome documents.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, ‘the P3 are willing to push through resolutions concerning Africa with little or no A3 support if they otherwise have the votes.’<sup>45</sup> This underscores the imperative for the A3 not only to work as a bloc but also to mobilize support for their common position from other members of the UNSC for their position to have the necessary impact.

The other UNSC dynamic that the A3 members have to manage is the position of China and Russia on some peace and security issues and situations relating to countries they consider to be their allies they should protect. In this respect, it was rightly pointed out that ‘Whereas the AU is prepared in a number of cases to be innovative in its preventive diplomacy agenda, in the Security Council some (particularly Russia but in some cases China as well) insist on a more cautious approach and argue that some matters which the AU is prepared to address, as a collective concern, are “internal matters” of the state concerned.’<sup>46</sup> A case in point is AU’s approach to unconstitutional changes of government. Recently, this was observed in relation to the 2019 decision of the PSC suspending

Sudan after the military’s seizure of power and subsequent attacks on civilians. The two permanent members ‘rejected a unified call by the A3 for the Council to support the PSC decision explicitly on the basis that the Council should not interfere in Sudan’s internal affairs.’<sup>47</sup> Regarding the ongoing situation in Tigray region of Ethiopia, it is reported that the UNSC was unable to agree on a statement of its 4 March meeting despite support from the A3 due to opposition from Russia and China.<sup>48</sup>

- ***Constant recharging of the consensus about the role of the A3 and specific files***

The policy positions articulated, the institutional arrangements put in place and the practice that is consolidating show that there is general consensus about the two dimensions of the role of the A3. In the words of the 2016 AU Assembly decision, this consensus is encapsulated in the ‘special responsibility’ that the A3 bear. The voting patterns of the A3 reflect that the A3 have as a matter of course embraced and increasingly mirror in living up to this ‘special responsibility’ through supporting common African positions in the UNSC and facilitating coordination between the PSC and the UNSC. One good measure for gaging this is the voting patterns of members of the A3. It is worth noting in this regard that the A3 bloc has split its votes in only 8 out of 298 possible instances between January 2010 and August 2019.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Crisis Group, A Tale of Two Councils, 6-7.

<sup>45</sup> As above, 12.

<sup>46</sup> Security Council Report, Working Together for Peace and Security in Africa: The Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council, Special Research Report No. 2 (2011), 27.

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<sup>47</sup> Crisis Group, A Tale of Two Councils, 5.

<sup>48</sup> UN Alleges War Crimes in Ethiopia’s Tigray, Urges Eritrea exit, *Al Jazeera* (5 March 2021), available on <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/5/un-alleges-war-crimes-in-ethiopia-tigray-urges-eritrea-pullout>

<sup>49</sup> Forti and Singh, 7.

The emergence of relatively solid consensus on the role of the A3 within the AU, which is receiving further expression in the practice of the A3 however requires regular efforts to sustain and further deepen it. The annual high-level meeting that the PSC convenes offers one avenue to accomplish this. It serves for reviewing the activities of the AU and lessons learned in the role of the A3. It also offers enormous potential for planning how best the A3 pursue their role in respect of the various African files on the agenda of the UNSC and the lessons learned from the experience of the A3 during the past year for enhancing or updating existing practice or policy relating to the role of the A3 in pursuing common policy positions on African files. This is particularly the case if it is well planned and organized with high-level participation.

Of particular importance for the role of the A3 is the consensus building necessary, both at the level of the PSC and among the A3, in respect to the consideration of specific African files in the UNSC. While the A3 and the AU Mission could help in providing information about the issues relating to each file, the PSC working with the AU Political Affairs and Peace and Security Department needs to provide clear policy guidance on the issues of interest for follow up by the A3. This has to be done in good time to enable effective coordination and harmonization of positions and planning for negotiating with other members of the UNSC.

- *Negotiating the dual identity of members of the A3*

It is worth noting that the A3 have multiple identities. In the context of discussions on the role of the A3 within the framework of the AU, the A3 are regarded as

representatives of Africa. This arises from, among others, the fact that the election of the A3 to the UNSC is a result of endorsement by the collective membership of the AU. It is accordingly very rare for the election of African candidates to the UNSC to be contested.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, as noted above, the special responsibility of the A3 in representing the common African position derives from not only AU Assembly Decisions but also the PSC Protocol itself particularly in terms of its Articles 7(3) and 17.

However, it would be inaccurate to consider the membership of the A3 in the UNSC as being primarily for representing Africa. Each member of the A3 is in the UNSC with its national flag. Despite variations in approach, each is also there to seize the opportunity that membership in the UNSC presents for advancing its national interest. On this, there is nothing that separates the members of the A3 from other members of the UNSC. Unlike other members of the UNSC, pursuit of national interest is not the major defining character of the identity of the A3. One thing that sets the A3 apart from others is the collective identity that they bear as bearers of the African flag as well.

Recognition of these multiple expectations helps not only in setting realistic expectations but also in working out modalities for negotiating the tension that at times arises between the national priorities of an A3 member and its responsibility to represent the position of the PSC in the UNSC. Although it may not happen very often, each member of the A3 may face

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<sup>50</sup> One rare occasion in which the candidacy of African membership in the UNSC was contested was during the 2020 election. See Security Council Report (29 May 2020), Security Council Elections 2020, 2-3.

the challenge of deciding to advance a position of national interest that may be at variance with AU's position.<sup>51</sup>

In this respect, the existence of clarity on the issues in respect of which an A3 member may pursue a position that is different from the position of the AU will be helpful in developing ways of mitigating the adverse impact such national position on the role of the A3 in representing common African positions.

Differences also arise between A3 members when policy positions between the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the AU are at variance. Accordingly, 'the inability of African organizations to coordinate their positions on particular crises in a clear and timely manner means that there is not always an African regional consensus from which to build broader international support,'<sup>52</sup> based on a common position of the A3.

- ***Managing intra-A3 differences***

The other important issue that deserves attention is managing intra-A3 differences. It is not uncommon for members of the A3 to have policy differences resulting from ideological or other sources of divergence. At times, this may be a result of regional geo-strategic tension which may often put the countries in constant rivalry. Other times it is a result of historical international relations of individual members of the A3.<sup>53</sup> This may also result from lack of common policy position

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<sup>51</sup> In a meeting held in New York in October 2019, Amani Africa was informed that the challenge of divergence of positions of the A3 arises even when there is a PSC communique.

<sup>52</sup> Paul D. Williams and Solomon A. Dersso (February 2015), *Saving Strangers and Neighbors: Advancing UN-AU Cooperation on Peace Operations*, (New York: International Peace Institute), 14.

<sup>53</sup> As a report of Crisis Group observed, '(h)istorical ties also matter. Côte d'Ivoire has, for example, sometimes sided with France rather than other A3 members during its term.' Crisis Group, *A Tale of Two Councils*, ii.

among African states as is often the case with respect to the situation of Western Sahara.<sup>54</sup>

For A3 members to achieve the benefits that come from a strong common position, they should be able to agree on modalities for managing their difference without impeding cooperation and pursuit of common positions in all other areas relating to African files in the PSC. Sometimes this can be achieved through building a fire wall between the issues on which they have deep difference and matters on the agenda of the UNSC. At a minimum, they can be able to work towards minimizing the adverse impacts of their differences on their role as A3.

This of course depends on frank discussion between the representatives of the countries involved and the determination to work together without forgetting differences. A good example of this is the cooperation between Ethiopia and Egypt during their membership in the UNSC. Despite expectations to the contrary, the two agreed to show that they are able to work together and cooperate, despite their differences. As a representative of one of them put it, 'we agreed as much as possible not to display our differences in public and try to assist each other on a whole lot of other issues.'<sup>55</sup>

- ***Timely response to communications from the A3 and provision of guidance by the PSC***

The cohesion of the A3 and their capacity to defend and articulate African position also depends on the existence of clear guidance from the AU/PSC. During a research visit to NY in October 2019, one of the recurrent issues of disaffection was the lack of response from the PSC for requests sent from the A3 when the A3 tried to reactivate the resolution on AU financing on which voting was suspended at the last minute in December

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<sup>54</sup> Forti and Singh, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Presentation by Dawit Yirga delivered during Amani Africa Forum, held on 27 February 2019 (on file with Amani Africa).

2018.<sup>56</sup> Where there is a clear AU/PSC position, it offers A3 the foundation to adopt a unified stand.

The absence of such clear position or delay in the response of the AU/PSC to requests from the A3 could make the emergence of a unified position by the A3 more difficult. It also exposes the A3 to pressure from other members of the UNSC, particularly the P5. This combination of lack of clear AU position and pressure from members of the P5 for action raises the risk of A3 taking divergent positions.<sup>57</sup>

The importance of a clear AU/PSC policy position has been highlighted even in the face of UNSC's lack of cohesion and resistance from some members with respect to the situation in Sudan in June 2019. Faced with this unwillingness of the UNSC to support the position of the PSC, including its call for transfer of power by the army to transitional civilian authority in Sudan, the A3 held a joint press conference expressing unified support for the position of the PSC and commending it for the leadership it has shown on the issue. Such joint public pronouncement has the role of exposing members of the UNSC that resist A3 backed actions by the Council. Significantly, it also has the potential 'to force other council members to reconsider their approaches.'<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the common position that the AU, the PSC and

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<sup>56</sup> See the post-script in - <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2018/12/vote-on-draft-resolution-on-the-financing-of-au-peace-support-operations.php>

<sup>57</sup> This is the position that the A3 have found themselves in with respect to the situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Media reports show that the A3 supported a UNSC statement relating to the 4 March UNSC meeting on Tigray despite their earlier reluctance when the UNSC met on the situation in February. UN Alleges War Crimes in Ethiopia's Tigray, Urges Eritrea exit, Al Jazeera (5 March 2021), available on <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/5/un-alleges-war-crimes-in-ethiopia-tigray-urges-eritrea-pullout>

<sup>58</sup> Forti and Singh, 7.

the A3 took on the situation in Sudan in June 2019 also 'contributed to the Council members reaching agreement on a press statement, which was issued on 11 June.'<sup>59</sup>

## V Expanding the mechanisms for coordination and consultations

- *Elevating the role of the PSC*

In 2020, the UNSC adopted 33 decisions consisting of 29 resolutions and 4 presidential statements relating to African matters. In discussing the role of the PSC, it is worth reflecting on the following questions. On how many of these UNSC decisions did the PSC provide substantive inputs or guidance to the A3? How many of these are informed by PSC session deliberations and outcome documents?

It is true that the interaction between the A3 and the PSC has grown over the years. As noted earlier, a key development in putting in place coordination mechanism is the convening of the VTC meeting between the troika of the PSC and the A3. Admittedly, this interaction lacks consistency and planning as well as focused engagement. All indications are that there remain more room for

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<sup>59</sup> Security Council Report, AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur: Briefing and Consultations, What's in Blue (13 June 2019), available on <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2019/06/au-un-hybrid-operation-in-darfur-briefing-and-consultations-2.php>

improvement in terms of the space and time allocated as well as mechanisms for attending to A3 matters at the level of the PSC.

*Periodic meetings and regular consultations as standing agenda of PSC program of work*

One area for improvement relates to what Article 17(2) calls the holding of periodic meetings and regular consultations. The convening of a VTC between the troika of the PSC and the A3 is a practice that should be institutionalized. Additionally, there is a need for the PSC to follow up on one of the conclusions of the 5<sup>th</sup> High-Level Seminar calling for the alignment of the program of work of the PSC with that of the UNSC to enable it set the tone and provide inputs for the A3.

It is possible for the PSC to make consultation with the A3 a standing agenda item of its monthly program of work. This will be an opportunity not only for the PSC to brief the A3 on the outcome of its sessions on African files on the agenda of the UNSC but also to discuss strategies and policy options on those items on the agenda of the UNSC that are of concern for Africa.

In this regard, the proposals on additional avenues for a closer coordination between the PSC and the A3 outlined in the communiqué of the most recent session of the PSC, drawing on the inputs of those who contributed to the session including the A3, the AU Mission to the UN and

the UN Office to the AU, is a welcome development.<sup>60</sup> Most notable of these is the paragraph, addressing the issues in the foregoing paragraphs, in which the PSC

Decides to ensure monthly consultations between PSC Troika and A3, and to ensure timely provision of updates and strategic guidance to the A3 on peace and security issues ahead of the UN Security Council meetings, as well as to synchronize to the furthest extent possible the monthly programmes of work of both, the PSC and the UN Security Council.<sup>61</sup>

This entails that there is a more targeted and programmed approach in the consultations and flow of exchanges between the PSC and the A3. In this respect, one of the mechanisms for operationalization of this decision is to make the consultations between the Troika and the A3 a standing agenda item of the monthly program of work of the PSC. Similarly, for African files, which the UNSC plans to discuss with a view to adopting an outcome document including mandate renewals or reviews of UN operations in Africa, the PSC should make a space in its schedule for considering and providing guidance on such files well ahead of the convening of UNSC session on those files.

In terms of providing guidance to members of the A3, the PSC could also build on one of its emerging practices

<sup>60</sup> AU PSC, communiqué of 983<sup>rd</sup> meeting (4 March 2021, Addis Abeba), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(CMLXXXIII).

<sup>61</sup> As above, para. 6.

involving the inclusion of specific request for the A3. From the 2020 data on the activities of the PSC, it emerges that there were seven instances in which the PSC addressed its decisions to the A3 for their follow up in the UNSC. The PSC tasked the Chairperson of the AU Commission to transmit the conclusions of its deliberations as contained in PSC outcome documents to the A3 in four occasions.<sup>62</sup> In other three instances, the PSC also made specific reference to the A3 in its communique with the view to provide guidance on the position that need to be reflected in the UNSC.<sup>63</sup> A good example in this regard is its call to the A3, at its 961<sup>st</sup> session held on 3 November 2020, to champion PSC's call for the appointment of a UN Special Representative for Libya of an 'African extraction'.

#### *Dedicated mechanism of the PSC on A3 and UNSC matters*

Given the strategic importance of getting the common position of Africa reflected in the policy processes of the UNSC relating to matters of concern for Africa meaningfully, the PSC may also consider establishing a dedicated mechanism such as a PSC sub-committee that works with a team of the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department (PAPS) experts both on African issues in the UNSC and coordination with the A3. The existence of such a dedicated mechanism will help fill in the current gap in receiving, processing, presenting options for the

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<sup>62</sup> 911<sup>th</sup> meeting on election in Somalia and the future of AMISOM; 923<sup>rd</sup> meeting on the situation in Somalia and renewal of mandate of AMISOM; 949<sup>th</sup> meeting on the report of the Chairperson of AU Commission on the situation in Somalia and implementation of AMISOM mandate; and 968<sup>th</sup> meeting on the situation in Darfur and UNAMID transition.

<sup>63</sup> These include the 935<sup>th</sup>, 928<sup>th</sup>, and 961<sup>st</sup> meetings of the PSC.

PSC on requests that are received from the A3 on specific areas requiring PSC's inputs and responding to those requests timely.

Indeed, one of the proposals at the most recent session of the PSC is the constitution of mechanisms for attending to A3 related matters. One such new mechanism is the proposal for the establishment of 'a focal point from PSC Members to be in charge of cooperation and coordination between the PSC and the A3 and following up on the issues of PSC and UNSC dialogue and cooperation'.<sup>64</sup> Given that one of the members of the PSC is also a member of the UNSC, one of the logical things to do is to designate the PSC member on both Councils as a focal person as proposed in our previous report.<sup>65</sup> The focal point can in particular be critical, among others, in helping the PSC to plan, in consultation with the A3, consideration of items on which the A3 need to receive guidance ahead of the meeting of the UNSC on such items and in following up requests received from the A3.

#### *Participation of A3 representatives in PSC sessions – recognizing the special role of A3 representatives in Addis*

One of the challenges that members of the A3 face is lack of understanding of the factors and background to PSC decisions. This affects their ability to explain PSC positions to other members of the UNSC, particularly where there are divisions on a particular agenda of the UNSC that is of concern for Africa. As a previous

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<sup>64</sup> AU PSC, communiqué of 983 meeting (4 March 2021, Addis Abeba), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(CMLXXXIII) para. 10.

<sup>65</sup> Amani Africa, Special Report 5, 22-23.

member of the A3 told Amani Africa, because there is no formal channel for knowing the dynamics in the PSC and how the PSC arrived at its position, they try to use informal lines of communication whenever they can.<sup>66</sup> Clearly, this is not most optimal.

Building on existing practice of inviting members of the A3 in PSC sessions, it is important to enhance meaningful and substantive exchanges between the PSC and the representatives of the A3 in Addis Ababa. It is therefore important that recognition is given to the special role of representatives of the A3 in Addis Ababa in serving as a bridge between the PSC and the representatives of the A3 in New York. Central to this is the full implementation of the provisions of the Manual on the Working Methods of the PSC.<sup>67</sup>

There is also a need for members of the A3 to strengthen their diplomatic capacities in Addis Ababa for them to have a dedicated arrangement for closely following the activities of the PSC in order to equip their representatives in New York with information on the perspectives of the PSC. Similarly, it is of significance that PSC member states also strengthen their diplomatic capacities in New York.<sup>68</sup> This has to be complemented

with the establishment of modalities for regular exchange of information between the embassies of the A3 in Addis Ababa and those in New York. Additionally, whenever possible, the AU may explore the possibility of having at least one of the members of the A3 to be elected as a member of the PSC.

#### *Coherent communication by the PSC and AU Commission and alignment of policy positions between the AU and RECs*

Although it is not a recurrent issue, there were instances in which lack of coherent communication from the PSC and the AU Commission undermined both the cohesion of the A3 and effective representation of a common African position. Such has been the case in respect of the draft resolution on the financing of AU peace operations through UN assessed contributions in 2018.<sup>69</sup> It is accordingly imperative that divergent communications are avoided. Flowing also from the earlier observation on the challenges that policy divergence between the AU and the RECs presents to the A3 is the need for the AU and RECs to align their policy positions with respect to African files on the agenda of the UNSC.

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<sup>66</sup> Meeting with a political coordinator of A3 member in New York (October 2019).

<sup>67</sup> It stipulates that the 'PSC invites the A3 to all of its meetings on crisis and conflict situations, with a view to provide a platform for the A3 representatives based in Addis Ababa to understand the position of the PSC on different situations so as to communicate to their counter parts in New York.' para. 110.

<sup>68</sup> This is also a legal obligation that flows from membership in the PSC. See Amani Africa, *The African Union Peace and Security Council Handbook* (2020), 27-28.

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<sup>69</sup> Meeting with a political coordinator of A3 member in Addis Ababa (October 2019).

- **The role of the A3**

*Preparation for membership in and presidency of the UNSC*

Effectiveness of members of the A3 depends a great deal on thorough preparation for their membership in the UNSC and the arrival of the team responsible for UNSC matters in New York ahead of the assumption of membership in the UNSC.<sup>70</sup> Delays that have been observed in having the full complement of the team of some members of the A3 often affects effective engagement of the A3 in what is already very short two years term.

There is also a good practice of full participation of the newly elected member/s of the A3 nearly six months ahead of the start of their membership in the UNSC. To complement this practice, which eases newly elected members into their role by introducing them to some of the African issues on the agenda of the UNSC and the rhythm of the workings of the A3, existing members of the A3 can also organize a briefing to new members to enable the latter to hit the ground running when assuming their seats in the Council. Of particular significance in this respect is the new practice of convening a retreat that the AU permanent Observer Mission to the UN has started in 2020.

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<sup>70</sup> Meeting with a researcher on UNSC affairs in NY (October 2019).

In terms of expanding the impact of the A3, assuming the presidency of the UNSC avails a unique opportunity. Realizing the potential of this opportunity depends, among others, on three factors. The first is adequate planning and thorough preparations to ensure substantive outcome on those items of concern for Africa. The other and related factor is coordination and joint planning both at the level of the A3 and between the A3 and the PSC. The last factor is mobilization of support and collaboration from the wider membership of the UNSC.

*Expanding the provision of Information and analysis to the A3*

At the level of the A3, the practice whereby senior officials of the UN Secretariat brief the A3 on African files on the agenda of the UNSC is better complemented with similar briefing from senior officials of the AU Commission and the concerned Special Representative and Special Envoy of the AU.

*Collaboration with other members of the UNSC*

One of the recent developments in the working arrangements of the A3 is the move towards institutionalization of collaboration with other members of the UNSC. This is particularly the case for elected UNSC members from the Caribbean. Accordingly, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has joined the A3 as part of an A3+1 formula in the UNSC for supporting common

positions of Africa on issues relating to peace and security in the Africa.

Given the weight of the A3 as a major voting bloc, others may wish to establish similar arrangements with the A3. While such close working arrangements with other members of the A3 is important, there has to be clarity on the modalities for participation in the A3+ formula.

#### *Pen holding and co-pen holding*

The role of pen holders or co-pen holders gives UNSC members unique influence in UNSC decision-making process. They take lead in requesting meetings in respect of the issues on which they hold the pen. They also draft outcome documents on those issues and organize field visits. The 2021 list of UNSC pen holders shows that the representation of Africa remains weak. While Kenya is the pen holder on peace and security in Africa, Niger holds the pen on Guinea Bissau and co-holds the pen with Ireland on West Africa, including the Sahel. It is a trend in recent years for an African member to hold (or co-hold) the pen on these files.

In its most recent session on the role of the A3, the PSC underscored the importance of the A3 to lead on African files in the UNSC both as pen holders or co-pen holders.<sup>71</sup> This is obviously an enormous responsibility and brings with it huge burden. Accordingly, the PSC endorsed the

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<sup>71</sup> AU PSC, communiqué of 983<sup>rd</sup> meeting, para. 4.

proposal that the A3 agree on division of labor in taking lead on various African issues and collaborate on playing the role at the very least of co-pen holder on some, if not all, of the African files.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, there is a need for backstopping the technical capacity of the members of the A3 particularly in as far as the drafting of documents and crafting of inputs for draft UNSC documents.

#### *Role of outgoing members of the A3*

During the course of their two years stay as members of the UNSC, A3 members accumulate experience, knowledge and institutional memory both in terms of the workings of the UNSC and that of the A3. The existence of a mechanism for tapping into this experience and knowledge of outgoing members of the A3 can prove particularly useful both in supporting the new members and in boosting the position of the A3 as a group.

#### *Sustained support from capitals*

For representatives of the A3 in New York to play their role effectively and avoid the risk of being overruled due to direct engagement that other countries make with their capitals, they should maintain very close interaction with their capitals. In one recent incident, the Ambassador of Tunisia, a member of the A3, was dismissed over lack of coordination with its foreign ministry regarding the position he took in the UNSC.<sup>73</sup> Although this is an extreme case, it highlights the critical importance of close

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Al Jazeera, Tunisia Fires UN Envoy, reportedly over Trump Palestine Plan (8 Feb 2020), available on <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/8/tunisia-fires-un-envoy-reportedly-over-trumps-middle-east-plan>

coordination with and sustained support from capital. This is good both for enabling capital to be adequately informed of developments in New York and for representatives of the A3 to maintain full backing of their capital for their role in the UNSC.

#### *AU-UN joint assessment and review*

The extent to which the UNSC and the AUPSC adopt coherent positions such as on peacekeeping operations depends on whether they rely on joint assessment and review. Where such is absent, it leads to policy divergence and discontent. One such recent experience, for example, that led the PSC to express its displeasure about the approach that the UN took relates to the future of AMISOM. In its communique of the 978<sup>th</sup> session, the PSC regretted ‘that the UN Security Council did not take into account the views of the AU with regard to the Independent Assessment, particularly the AU’s request for an AU-UN joint leadership and expanded scope in undertaking the Assessment’.<sup>74</sup> Such incidents sour the relationship between the PSC and the UNSC, with at times adverse consequences on the effectiveness of responses for addressing the situation on the ground.

The foregoing illustrates the necessity that there is clarity on how the A3 champion joint assessment and review within the UNSC as a basis for policy coherence between the PSC and the UNSC. A related matter that deserves the attention of the A3 in advancing policy coherence through joint processes is in helping the AUPSC and the UNSC agree on the modalities for the undertaking of joint filed missions.

- ***Enhancing the role of the AU Permanent Mission to the UN***

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<sup>74</sup> AU PSC, Communique of the 978<sup>th</sup> meeting (09 February 2021, Addis Ababa), PSC/PR/COMM.(CMLXXVIII), para. 17.

The role of the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN has also been regularized. It operates not only as an institutional memory for the A3 but also as secretariat of the A3. Not only supports the coordination meetings of the A3 but also provides technical support by providing inputs to the A3 for thematic discussions within the UNSC. As a bridge between Addis Ababa and the A3, the Mission also serves as a channel for communicating outcome of PSC sessions and other relevant information from the AU Commission to the A3. Also of note is the role that the Mission plays in connecting the A3 with the wider African group in New York, which constitutes a major bloc within the UN. This it does through organizing a briefing session for the Group on the activities of the A3.

The importance of the capacity of the Mission cannot be emphasized enough for both its role in supporting the A3 and complementing their capacities so that the full potential of the A3 is realized. This in particular includes not only in documenting best practices and lessons learned but also importantly in helping the drafting of UNSC outcome documents on which the A3 are taking a lead and providing substantive inputs during negotiations on resolutions.

#### *Revamping the annual high-level seminar*

The high-level seminar is not a routine event. As a strategic platform, adequate preparations should go into preparing it including the presentation of statistically supported information and analysis on how African peace and security issues and African files on the agenda of the UNSC are dealt with at regional, continental and UN levels and on the experience of the A3 and the coordination between the A3 and the PSC. This should also serve as a platform not only to bring together the PSC and the A3 representatives in New York but also those

from Addis Ababa and the capitals of the members of the A3. The participation in the high-level seminar at the highest levels also signals the importance that member states attach and helps in enhancing their active participation and ownership. Also of particular significance is putting in place a way of following up on the outcome and conclusions of the high-level seminar to ensure the integration of the lessons learned and agreed processes into the workings of the A3 and the coordination between the A3 and the PSC.

## VI Pending issues

There are some important pending issues that require revisiting for effective follow up. Financing of AU led or mandated peace operations authorized by the UNSC through UN assessed contributions is one of the key strategic pending issues in the relationship between the PSC and the UNSC. In pursuing this agenda within the framework of Article 17 (2) of the PSC framework, members of the A3 played critical role since the early 2000s. A lot of progress has been achieved in this regard over the years. These include:

- The report of the Romano Prodi Panel in 2008 that called for predictable and reliable financing,
- The HIPPO report of 2015 which recommended the use of UN assessed contributions on a case-by-case basis to support AU led peace support operations,
- Res 2320, which stressed ‘the need to enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing for African Union-led peace support operations authorized by the Security Council’,

- Res 2378 which expressed the Council’s intention to consider partially funding AU-led peace support operations authorized by the Council through UN-assessed contributions “on a case-by-case basis”.

In this process, the role played by AU Assembly and the PSC is also critical. These include:

- The adoption by the PSC of the common African position on the UN review of peace support operation, and
- AU Summit decisions in 2015 and 2016 on financing of the African Union and the revitalization of the AU Peace Fund.

The process towards the adoption by the UNSC of a framework resolution on financing of AU led or mandated peace operations authorized by the UNSC through UN assessed contributions on a case-by-case basis has reached a critical stage. There is a draft A3 resolution co-sponsored by nearly 90 UN member states, which was put in blue for voting in December 2018.

While the process stalled for a number of reasons,<sup>75</sup> there is now an opportunity for reactivating the consideration within the UNSC of this resolution, which has enormous potential for taking the strategic partnership between the

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<sup>75</sup> See Crisis Group, *The Price of Peace: Securing UN Financing for AU Peace Operations*, Africa Report No. 286 (January 2020).

PSC and the UNSC to the next level. The Obama administration was inclined to support the resolution. When it was time to consider the draft resolution, the US, under the Trump administration, threatened to veto after the resolution was put in blue in December 2018.<sup>76</sup> It is worth recalling that in an attempt to reactivate the process in July 2019, the A3 adopted a novel approach in pursuing this issue by undertaking, together with the AU Permanent Mission, a visit to Washington DC to lobby officials of US State Department, National Security Council and members of Congress from both parties.<sup>77</sup> However, these efforts did not succeed either. With the change in the US administration, there is now better possibilities to initiate meaningful engagement on this file. It is also possible to secure support from the EU elected members of the UNSC, Ireland and Norway.

Another pending issue relates to finalizing negotiation on the modalities for joint field mission of the UNSC and the PSC. There were some proposals that previous members of the A3 have developed to help bridge the difference between the UNSC and the PSC. It may also be worthwhile to revisit these. To this end, the A3 and the PSC may wish to schedule a consultation session focusing on finding a common position on this issue.

Finally, enhancing the effectiveness of the annual joint consultative session is another area that deserves the reflection of the PSC and the A3.

## VII Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing that the A3 occupy a special place in advancing the policy positions of Africa within the halls of one, if not the most important platforms on the world stage. The importance of their role and the enormous potential of this role has become evident over the years. Despite the significance of the progress registered in institutionalizing the role of the A3 in representing the position of the AU and facilitating coordination and partnership between the PSC and the UNSC, there remains enormous room for improvement and realizing the full potentials of the A3.

The review of the policy documents and pronouncements of the PSC on the role of the A3 reveals that various proposals have been put forward over the years. The practice during the past decade shows that implementation of these proposals has been ad hoc. Accordingly, ensuring implementation of these proposals on the mechanics of the performance of the A3 and the coordination with the PSC is necessary to realize the potential of the role of the A3. This report, apart from putting forward some additional proposals for complementing and filling in the gaps in existing ones, has also presented modalities for operationalization of the various proposals on the workings of and coordination with the A3.

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<sup>76</sup> As above, 7.

<sup>77</sup> As above, 9.

There are various strategic issues that directly affect the role of the A3. These are to be found at the levels of the UNSC, the A3 and the PSC. While some of these may not be amendable for resolution, the analysis in this report revealed that effectiveness of the A3 requires that mechanisms are found and deployed to manage these issues. In terms of managing the pressure resulting from the polarization between the P5, the PSC, noting with concern the rise of geo-political rivalry between major powers of the world and its impact, particularly on Africa's peace and security landscape and multilateralism, urged the A3 to ensure that they are not 'entangled in the rivalry between great powers.'<sup>78</sup> Ethiopia's experience shows how this can be achieved pragmatically through the pursuit of a principled position with predictability and consistency while explaining why it adopted certain policy positions that is at odds with the wishes of the rival powers in the UNSC. As Ethiopia's Permanent Representative during its tenure at the UNSC put it, this is how, apart from the Syrian chemical weapons issue 'Ethiopia managed to address the Palestinian issue as well as matters relating to Western Sahara.'<sup>79</sup>

Similarly, there are issues relating to the mechanisms of coordination which also deserve attention at the level of the PSC, the AU Commission and the A3. The 983<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the PSC held earlier this month on 4<sup>th</sup> of March has canvassed significant areas of the issues highlighted in this report, particularly as they relate to issues with respect to the mechanics of coordination. Of particular significance are the following:

- Need for PSC to continue providing timely guidance to A3;

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<sup>78</sup> PSC, communiqué of the 928<sup>th</sup> meeting (27 May 2020, Addis Abeba), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXXVIII) para. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Alemu, The conundrum of Present Ethiopian Foreign Policy, 3.

- A3 to agree on division of labour in leading on African issues at UNSC, as penholders or co-penholders;
- PSC to ensure monthly consultations between PSC Troika and A3;
- PSC to ensure timely updates and guidance to A3 on African peace & security issues ahead UNSC meetings;
- PSC to sync monthly Program of Work with UNSC's as far as possible;
- AUC to urgently strengthen institutional capacity of AU Permanent Observer Mission to UN through financial & human resources;

In order to ensure the implementation of these, there is a need for follow up on each of these and for identifying modalities for their operationalization. As highlighted above, some of these such as the meeting between the Troika and the A3 can be operationalized by including it on the program of work of the PSC. The establishment of division of labor between A3 members requires the support of the AU Mission.

With respect to enhancing the capacity of the AU Mission to the UN, what has been missing for quite some time is following up on repeated calls for addressing the capacity limitations of the Mission. It is important in this regard that the PSC requests the development of concrete plans attached with the required resources with implementation timeline and reporting back on implementation.

In the context of Kenya's new membership in the UNSC and the changes in the UNSC, one of the strategic pending items for follow up by the A3 is the issue of

financing of AU led or mandated peace process authorized by the UNSC. This however requires a thought plan for reactivating the resolution. First, there is a need for the A3 and the PSC to be on the same page both on issues from the draft resolution to be revisited and the process for its reintroduction and consideration by the UNSC. This should start with a review of earlier efforts and identification of the issues that require common agreement. Second, there is a need for the AU to finalize the development of a technical document establishing firm clarity on the issue of the 25% AU contribution, on the implementation of the AU Peace Fund, and issues relating to oversight and accountability. Third, the A3 then can agree on a roadmap for resuming negotiation.



## MEDIA AND RESEARCH SERVICES

### ABOUT US

Amani Africa is an independent African based policy research; training and consulting think tank with a specialization and primary focus on African multilateral policy processes, particularly those relating to the African union.

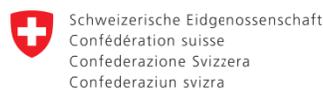
We support the pan-African dream of peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa through research, training, strategic communications, technical advisory services, and convening and facilitation.

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