



Media and Research Services



Insights on the Peace & Security Council

Amani Africa Seminar Report on the Role of the African Non-Permanent Members (A3) of the UN Security Council

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On 27 February 2019 Amani Africa Media and Research Services (Amani Africa) held a seminar on the role of African members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) (A3) in facilitating coordination between the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) and the UN Security Council (UNSC). Convened under the general theme of **‘Representing the position of the Peace and Security Council in the UNSC: A perspective on the experience of A3 members of the UNSC’**, the seminar examined the current state of affairs relating to the role of the A3, using the experience of Ethiopia as the most recent past non-permanent member of the UNSC as case study.

The forum brought together representatives of AU member states including representatives of PSC members, the UN Office to the AU, and various embassies in Addis Ababa and civil society organizations.

The seminar started with a welcoming remark from Dr Solomon Ayele Dersso, Founding Executive Director of Amani Africa. Given Africa’s longstanding interest in and commitment to the multilateral world order anchored on the UN Charter, he highlighted the unique place that the A3 occupy for informing, shaping and strengthening the multilateral system. Apart from noting the clear legal recognition under the PSC Protocol and Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.598 (XXVI) adopted in January 2016 of the role of the A3 in leading on African issues and advancing the policy positions of the AU within the UNSC, Dr Dersso underscored the important position of the A3 for facilitating the pursuit of strategic partnership between the PSC and the UNSC in the maintenance of peace and security in Africa.

In opening the seminar Ambassador Fred Ngoga, Head of the AU’s Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division underscored the increasing importance in the role of the A3. As Ambassador Fred pointed out the strategic value of the A3 in ‘representing the cause of Africa on different issues as demonstrated in the resolutions that they jointly sponsored, as illustrated by the resolution that the UNSC has just adopted on Silencing the Guns’. He also noted the role of the A3 in facilitating the partnership between the AU and the UN. In terms of current developments, he noted with appreciation the joint efforts of the AU and the UN such as the joint field visits by senior leaders of the two organizations and the recent mediation in Sudan on the Central African Republic.

The main speaker of the seminar was Dawit Yirga, Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the UN in New York

during Ethiopia's tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC (2016-2018). In his presentation, Dawit highlighted how the dynamics in the UNSC shape the role of the A3. The major features of the work of the UNSC that Dawit identified include: the rise of geo-political tension among major powers involving a Cold War like atmosphere in the UNSC that puts the A3 under enormous pressure and affects discussions on even geo-politically less strategic issues; the use of procedural votes to settle differences; increasing number of thematic discussions constituting about 30% of the UNSC agenda; increasing use of Arria Formula meetings (from 2 in 1992 to 21 in 2018), which are being used as testing ground for bringing controversial issues to the UNSC; and increasing number of AoB discussions, which increasingly involve substantive discussions.



On the A3, Dawit shone light on the effort that has been mobilized for the effective operationalization of the role of the A3. Highlighting the necessity of dedicated attention for using the A3 mechanism, which was not working properly as initially envisaged, he pointed out the conscious effort made to regularly convene the coordination meetings of the A3 with active role of the AU Office to the UN, to start a new initiative of

inviting senior UN officials to brief the A3 on African issues and to pursue common positions on African issues and increasingly on non-African issues such as the non-procedural vote on Syria. Major achievements registered include the role the A3 played in the adoption of Resolution 2337 on the Gambia, in having the interest of the region reflected in Resolution 2349, in the fruitful coordination that facilitated the adoption of Resolution 2378, making of joint statements, the tabling of joint draft resolutions, such as the one on Silencing the Guns most recently adopted in the UNSC under the UNSC presidency of Equatorial Guinea.

Despite the successes registered over the past years with Ethiopia playing active coordination role, Dawit's presentation also noted various challenges in the role of the A3. One such challenge is sustaining a common position by A3 members. Thus despite coordination among the A3 on South Sudan according to IGAD and AU positions or on the draft resolution on financing of UN authorized AU PSOs co-sponsored by nearly 90 UN member states, external pressure on A3 members such as Cote d'Ivoire led to last minute changes undermining A3 common positions. Another challenge is the lack of clear position at the level of the AU Commission or lack of timely communication of AU positions or the communication of mixed messages from the AUC as was the case in respect to the financing resolution. The need for enhancing the staffing of the AU Observer Mission to the UN for it to substantively support the role of the A3 has also been noted. Other challenges highlighted include lack of consistency in organizing briefings to the African Group in New York, the lack of regular consideration by the PSC of

some of the African issues on the agenda of the UNSC and hence the resultant lack of guidance from the PSC and the lack of understanding of the institutional and working method dynamics of the UNSC.

The presentation elicited probing questions and insightful discussions. Regarding the coordination between the AU and the UN, the importance of activities for enhancing the knowledge and understanding of PSC members on the workings of the UNSC was underscored. It was noted that this gap has been recognized on the part of the AU and that there is new initiative for convening capacity enhancing workshops in partnership with Amani Africa, including notably at preparing members states on how to use continental tools and mechanisms to enhance informed decisions making processes. Participants observed the apparent division of labor between the UN and the AU, with the AU being able to mobilize troops for responding to situations where there is no peace to keep where the UN lacks comparative advantage. On the resolution on financing of the AU, the need for the PSC to provide guidance and to seize the opportunities for it to be considered under South Africa's presidency of the UNSC. The necessity of engaging the US, as the key actor for favorable consideration of the resolution, was also highlighted.

In other aspects the partnership between the UN and the AU has been strengthened through regular consultations. As pointed out by Ambassador Fred there will be increased number of upcoming joint field visits. The recently concluded mediation process of the Central African Republic is also an outcome of this renewed partnership. AU's leadership and UN's support have contributed to the success

of the mediation process. This collaboration could be applied in other areas as well including prevention and peace building. The AU has intention of continuing the discussion during the high-level peace and security seminar to elaborate on mechanisms to support and sustain the implementation of peace agreements, and this will also highlight the role the UN.

On the coordination between the PSC and the A3, it was observed that Members of the A3 have been regularly reporting to the AUPSC on their activities in the UNSC. The A3 have made efforts to align their position to the decisions of the AUPSC and the AU Assembly. Moreover, the annual High Level Seminar has served as a useful platform for enhancing the collaboration between the two bodies. However concerns have been expressed on the weak level of participation in the High Level Panel.

In terms of other items that affect the role of the A3, the discussions noted the important role of the AUPSC and the AU permanent mission in the UN. The AUPSC needs to enhance coordination and substantively support the work of the A3 by proactively shaping the UNSC agendas through the A3. The coordination between the UNSC and AUPSC could be improved by aligning the agenda and as some speakers pointed out by electing the same members in both councils. The PSC should also be more strategic in prioritizing thematic discussions at annual meetings and ensure to have a more focused outcome document that can be used for implementation and for reference purposes. As things currently stand, members of the UNSC are resistant to the use of the outcome of the

annual consultative meeting as reference in UNSC resolutions.

On the AU permanent observer Mission, one of the achievements registered was that its role has now become integral part of the A3 coordination meeting. It was observed during the discussions that the observer mission serves as a bridge between the A3, AUPSC and the African group in New York. It was however noted that the regular briefing by A3 to the Africa group is taking place intermittently due to the weak coordination capacity of the AU mission. This gap needs to be addressed by the AU headquarter to ensure timely information sharing and communication between Addis and New York. The mission should also be properly staffed to carry out its mandate effectively.

The seminar was concluded with Dr. Solomon thanking both Dawit Yirga and Ambassador Fred and for their presentations and all the participants for engaging in the seminar. He also thanked the Embassy of Switzerland and the Embassy of Germany for the continued support to Amani that made the convening of the Seminar possible.





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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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