

Report on the challenges faced by AU led Peace Support Operations

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Tomorrow (May 23) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is scheduled to consider the African Union Commission's report on the challenges faced by AU led Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and on mechanisms to address them. The military staff committee and the Peace Support Operations Division are expected to brief the Council.

The session is expected to identify challenges faced by mandated, authorized, endorsed and hybrid peace operations in Africa. A wide range of challenges are expected to be addressed including those that are recurring in all forms of operations as well as the ones that are distinct to a specific type of operation. Issues related to leadership, funding, coordination and division of labor, with a particular focus on the relationship between host nations and troop contributing countries are expected to feature in the briefing. The impact of such factors on the sustainability of mandates and their effective operationalization are also expected to be addressed.

The AU has mandated and managed and/or authorized some ten PSOs since its first mission to Burundi. The largest, most deadly and expensive mission of the AU to date is AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) since 2007. AU has also authorized and provided political and technical support for the establishment and operationalization of three ad hoc security forces against terrorist groups including the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram and the Regional Coordination Initiative for the Elimination of

the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) which are all deployed based on the cooperation of affected countries in the respective regions. Moreover, the AU jointly with the United Nations (UN) has managed the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur for more than a decade (UNAMID).

PSOs in Africa are increasingly tasked with broad and complex mandates including protection of civilians, stabilization, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency and long term post conflict reconstruction operations. The international security system is gradually relying more on the response of the AU and its sub-regional institutions, particularly in the context of high security threats and counter terrorism operations in the continent. This has been largely the case for AMISOM and is central to the mandate of the MNJTF and the G5 Sahel. However, the delivery of these mandates highly depends on the financial and technical partnership of the UN and other multilateral and individual partners. Apart from dependency on such external sources, a major challenge has been the delivery of the logistics and equipment that matches the nature of the activities of the operations and in a timely manner. The protracted nature of the deployment timeline of PSOs is the other factor that is posing challenge in securing sustainable funding. The human and capital cost of such counterterrorism operations is also very high.

Challenges related to resource and funding have mainly contributed to the decision of drawdown and the eventual exit of peacekeeping operations such as UNAMID and AMISOM. Both missions have been in place for more than ten years however the situation on the ground remains volatile and highly insecure. PSC may also address the challenges associated with the exit process particularly in relation to such long standing operations and the kind of vacuum their withdrawal might create. In line with agreed upon timeline UNAMID's military component will be reduced to 4,050 by 30 June 2019 and AMISOM's uniformed personnel has already been reduced to

20,626. The unpredictable political and security recent developments in Sudan are likely to have impact on the troop withdrawal. In this regard, a major concern is the serious threat that the security risk that arises from the implementation of the withdrawal of PSOs without the presence of a trained and prepared national force that is able to take effective control. In order to prevent the risks of the reversal of the security gains, there is a need for strengthening national security mechanisms.

In these and other operations, perhaps the most crucial challenge has been the lack of political strategy for addressing the conflict issues. The absence of such strategy means that PSOs are deployed for a prolonged period of time caught up in the protracted task of trying to manage the conflict situation and hence making the planning of their exit difficult.

The other related challenge in various PSOs is the coordination among the various stakeholders involved in the implementation of the missions. There have been disagreements between nations that send troops and those that fund missions. Countries that either contribute troops or whose citizens are directly affected by peacekeeping missions often have limited say in how missions are designed and mandated given that funding and technical support is provided by other countries or partners. The interest and relationship with the host country adds an additional layer of complexity. The same is true of the relationship between the mission leadership and the sector contingents.

The mismatch between the mandate of PSOs and what their capacity and resources also remains a major challenge facing AU mandated and/or authorized missions. The challenge faced particularly by hybrid peacekeeping missions such as UNAMID is related to the asymmetrical relationship between the AU and UN. Although the AU has the political leverage in mobilizing African states for troop contribution and in managing the

engagement with the government of Sudan, it however depends entirely on UN budget and resources. Although hybrid missions have deepened UN and regional organization cooperation in peacekeeping operations, in reality however the relationship between the two organizations in managing the mission has not necessarily been even.

The second aspect of tomorrow's briefing session is expected to focus on providing solutions to the multifaceted challenges faced by the various forms of AU led PSOs. Based on these categorizations and recommendations that will be provided by the MSC and PSOD, the PSC is expected to agree on ways to address challenges faced by the various PSOs. One of the recommendations or area of intervention is expected to address the issues related to prolonged PSOs and on ways to prevent open ended mandates by strategizing on definite exit timeline.

With regards to responding to the financial challenges the launch of the AU Peace Fund in November 2018 which aims at mobilizing 400 million USD by 2021 including for the financing of PSOs is another option that may be explored. So far, around 105 million USD has been mobilized towards the Peace Fund.

The progress that is being made in strengthening Africa's ownership in PSOs through the reinvigorated Peace Fund may also facilitate the political engagement with UNSC. Particularly in relation to the pending UNSC resolution which establishes that the AU mandated or authorized PSOs should in principle be financed on a case by case basis through UN assessed contributions. In its recent resolution 2457 (2019) the UNSC stated its 'intention to consider steps that can be taken to enhance practical cooperation with the African Union in the promotion and maintenance of peace and security in Africa in line with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter'. During the briefing Ramtane Lamamra High representative of the AU for Silencing the Guns by 2020 reiterated the importance of UN's favorable response to the critical and the long-standing calls for the funding of UN assessed contributions to be accessed by

AU-led PSOs.

The expected outcome of the session was not known at the time of the production of this Insight. The PSC may however consider to adopt a communiqué that identifies tasks and responsibilities for addressing the challenges that AU PSOs face and assigns the AU Commission to develop action plan for a coordinated and sustained effort for addressing the challenges. In the communiqué, the PSC may request for AU Commission reports on current missions to include analysis of the steps taken both at the strategic and operational levels to address the forgoing challenges as they relate to the specific missions. It is also expected that the outcome of the session will provide key recommendations based on the experiences and lessons learnt from past and ongoing PSOs.