

SPECIAL RESEARCH REPORT

REVIEW OF AFRICAN UNION'S PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN A NEW ERA OF INSECURITY AND GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY

AMANI AFRICA

Media and Research Services



AUGUST
2 0 2 6



TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. THE CONTEXT OF THE REFORM AGENDA.....	2
2.1. The Deterioration of the Continental Security Landscape.....	2
2.2. The Crisis of Multilateralism and External Dependence.....	3
2.3 The AU's Diminishing Influence in Major Crises.....	4
III. REFORM THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION, NOT NEW NORMS AND POLICIES.....	4
3.1. The Evolution of Africa's Peace and Security Architecture.....	4
3.2. A Comprehensive Normative and Policy Framework for Peace, Security and Governance.....	6
3.3. The Imperative of Implementation: Exercising Caution in Developing New Instruments and Making Existing Ones Work	7
IV. ANALYSIS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS.....	8
4.1. Integration of the African Governance Architecture and APSA.....	9
4.2. Draft Administrative Guidelines on Articles 5 and 16 of the PSC Protocol.....	10
4.3. Re-conceptualizing the ASF.....	12
4.4. Bridging the Gap Between Early Warning and Early Action.....	15
4.5. Reviewing the AU Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns.....	16
4.6. Unconstitutional Changes of Governments.....	18
4.7. Enhancing Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation.....	19
4.8. Towards a More Coherent African Foreign Policy.....	20
4.9. Financing Peace and Security.....	22
V. CONCLUSION.....	24

‘Earlier this year, when President Ruto presented the panel’s report to the assembly, its conclusion was simple. It is not that Africa needs a new architecture. It needs stronger political leadership. It needs better implementation. It needs renewed strategic agency.’

Korir Sing’Oei,
Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs of
Kenya, during Expert Policy Dialogue on
restoring African Union agency peace &
security for informing the APSA Review &
the Luanda Extraordinary Summit, Nairobi,
Kenya, 13-14 July 2026

I. INTRODUCTION

In Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.920(XXXVIII), adopted at its 38th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa on 15–16 February 2025, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) expressed concern over the increasingly complex threats and challenges facing the Continent, as well as the rapidly evolving global and continental security environment. It noted that these developments were placing growing pressure on the AU’s peace and security architecture and reaffirmed that peace and security remain indispensable prerequisites for continental integration and development.

Against this backdrop, the Assembly authorized the Chairperson of the AU Commission (AUC), in consultation

with the Champion for AU Institutional Reform, President William Ruto of Kenya, to appoint a High-Level Panel composed of five eminent African experts to undertake a review of the AU’s peace and security framework. The Assembly further requested the Champion to report back to the next Extraordinary AU Summit following the completion of the review process.

The Panel of Experts convened in Nairobi in early September 2025, supported by a reference group. Over the following months, consultations were held with the Oversight Committee of ten Member States established under Decision 920, first at the end of October and again in November 2025. The Champion also engaged with the AUC in early November, while written submissions were solicited from Member States and other stakeholders. The consultative process culminated on 29 January 2026, when the Champion submitted his report to the Oversight Committee during a meeting held in Addis Ababa.

This Special research report focuses on the peace and security dimension of the current exercise, which is part of a broader institutional reform agenda aimed at enhancing the AU’s overall effectiveness, coherence, and operational efficiency. It analyses the principal recommendations that have emerged from the review process and assesses the extent to which they are likely to enhance the AU’s ability to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts. Where appropriate, it also proposes alternative modalities that may better advance the stated objectives of the exercise.

The special research report is developed to complement and offer expert analysis

on the report on APSA review of the AU Champion on the Institutional Reform of the AU. It benefited from extensive input from an expert dialogue held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 13 to 14 July 2026.

Before turning to the substance of the proposals themselves, however, it is necessary to situate the reform process within the broader context in which it is unfolding. It is equally important to clarify the perspective from which the recommendations are assessed: the AU's foremost challenge is not the absence of norms, policies or institutions, but the more consistent implementation of the extensive framework already in place.

II. THE CONTEXT OF THE REFORM AGENDA

Three interrelated developments are particularly relevant in understanding the context that gave rise to the current exercise: the deterioration of Africa's peace and security environment; the weakening of the multilateral system and its implications for the Continent; and the AU's diminishing role in the management and resolution of major African crises.

2.1. The Deterioration of the Continental Security Landscape

The current security environment cannot be described exhaustively here. Nevertheless, a brief overview will illustrate the scale and complexity of the challenges at hand and the growing pressure they place on the African peace and security architecture, both at regional and continental levels.

Over the past decade, violent conflicts have become more numerous, more

protracted and more complex, resulting in unprecedented levels of human suffering and developmental setbacks. In the Horn of Africa, and indeed across the Continent, the conflict in Sudan represents the gravest manifestation of this deterioration. Beyond its catastrophic humanitarian consequences, it has exposed the limitations of existing mediation efforts, the fragmentation of international diplomacy and the difficulty of generating coherent Continental action in highly polarized political environments.

In the Sahel, insecurity has continued to deepen despite years of regional and international engagement. Terrorism and violent extremism have expanded geographically, state authority remains weak across large areas, and longstanding governance challenges have fueled both growing public discontent and repeated military coups. The subsequent tensions between the central Sahel countries and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have further complicated regional cooperation.

In North Africa, Libya remains politically divided despite a reduction in large-scale violence. In the Great Lakes region, persistent armed conflict and limited state authority in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and wider regional tensions continue to undermine prospects for lasting peace.

Alongside these crises, unconstitutional changes of governments (UCGs) have re-emerged as a significant source of instability, testing one of the AU's most important normative achievements: the rejection of unconstitutional seizures of power. Interstate tensions have also become more pronounced in parts of the Continent. Although none has escalated

into open conflict, they complicate regional cooperation and carry the risk of escalation.

These challenges are unfolding against the backdrop of persistent governance deficits, which provide fertile ground for conflict and instability. They are further compounded by climate change, which exacerbates resource competition and displacement, and by transnational criminal economies that sustain and deepen conflict. Rapid technological change is also expanding the capabilities of armed actors, enabling new forms of warfare and information manipulation, and making crises more complex and difficult to manage.

2.2. The Crisis of Multilateralism and External Dependence

The current reform debate is also unfolding at a time of profound change in the international environment. The multilateral system is under growing strain. Competition among major powers has weakened international consensus on many crises, particularly within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Furthermore, the drawdown of UN peacekeeping operations and reductions in development assistance have created a more uncertain external environment.

These developments have serious implications for Africa. For decades, many continental peace and security initiatives—including peace support operations (PSOs), mediation efforts and institutional capacity-building—have depended heavily on external support. As that support becomes less predictable, the structural vulnerabilities associated with such dependence become increasingly apparent. The challenge is therefore not

simply to mobilize more external support, but to strengthen Africa's capacity to act in a less supportive international environment through greater solidarity, political consensus, innovation and self-reliance.

Geopolitical competition and other rivalries have also intensified across the continent. Traditional and emerging powers alike are expanding their political, economic and security engagement with Africa, creating new opportunities but also exposing African states to competing external agendas that can undermine regional and continental cohesion and further complicate collective responses to crises. External military, political or financial support affects the calculations of conflict parties, including by sustaining the belief that military victory remains attainable and thereby reducing incentives for compromise.

This does not mean that Africa should disengage from international partnerships. The AU should remain firmly committed to multilateralism, and a strong partnership with the United Nations is both necessary and consistent with Africa's interests, particularly in addressing crises that require international legitimacy and capacities beyond those available to the AU. Bilateral partnerships are equally important, not only in PSOs, where external partners can provide critical operational, logistical and financial capabilities, but also in peacemaking and preventive diplomacy, where they may possess political or economic leverage that the AU does not. The objective should therefore not be to limit external engagement, but to ensure that it supports African leadership, is aligned with AU principles and priorities, and strengthens rather than substitutes for African agency.

2.3 The AU's Diminishing Influence in Major Crises

A third feature of the current context is the AU's decreasing influence in the management and resolution of the continent's major crises, despite having one of the world's most comprehensive peace and security architectures. This is especially evident in the field of mediation. During the late 1990s and the first decade and a half of the 2000s, African-led or Africa centered initiatives were at the heart of many of the continent's major peace processes, symbolized by agreements named after African cities—Accra, Algiers, Arta, Arusha, Libreville, Lomé, Machakos, Ouagadougou, Pretoria, Sodore, Sun City, etc. More recently, however, major mediation efforts have increasingly been led by external actors, with agreements increasingly bearing the names of foreign capitals rather than African cities.

Rather than resource constraints, more fundamental for this evolution are political factors. The main organs responsible for conflict management within APSA have not fully leveraged either the powers entrusted to them or the AU's extensive normative and policy framework. Further compounding the issue is lack of cooperation by member states and weakened commitment to the AU and collective action. In recent years, parties to conflicts have shown a preference for externally-driven mediation efforts, in apparent sign of loss of diplomatic space by the AU. The relationship between the AU and the RECs/RMs has also fallen short of the complementarity and coherence envisaged in APSA.

III. REFORM THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION, NOT NEW NORMS AND POLICIES

A key aspect of the current reform debate concerns the state of the AU's peace and security architecture and whether, as currently designed, it is capable of responding to the Continent's evolving challenges. To answer this question, it is useful to situate APSA—the product of decades of reflection, experimentation and institutional learning—in its historical context. This is essential to appreciating both the richness of the existing framework and the careful deliberation that shaped its development. It also suggests that any future changes to this architecture should be approached with the same degree of thoughtfulness.

3.1. The Evolution of Africa's Peace and Security Architecture

The natural starting point is the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council—not only because it created the PSC, but also because it captured Africa's collective vision of how the continent should prevent, manage and resolve its own conflicts. Adopted in Durban in July 2002 and entering into force in December 2003, the Protocol was the culmination of almost forty years of efforts—dating back to the very creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)—to establish continental mechanisms capable of addressing conflicts on African soil.

The 1963 OAU Charter committed Member States to the peaceful settlement of disputes. At the OAU Summit in Cairo in July 1964, the Heads of State and Government adopted the Protocol establishing the Commission of Mediation,

Conciliation and Arbitration. Although that institution never became operational, it reflected an early recognition that Africa required its own mechanisms for conflict resolution.

In the early 1980s, the proposal to establish an African Political Security Council demonstrated growing ambition, even if it ultimately failed to gain sufficient political support. A major breakthrough came in June 1993 with the adoption of the Cairo Declaration establishing the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, which laid much of the groundwork for today's peace and security architecture. The Declaration formed part of the follow-up to then OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim's July 1990 report—*The Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World and Their Implications for Africa: Proposals for an African Response*—whose recommendations were largely endorsed by the OAU Summit in Addis Ababa that same month.

Viewed from this historical perspective, the PSC Protocol represents both continuity and transformation. It builds upon decades of accumulated experience while fundamentally redefining the continental approach to peace and security.

It established the PSC as a standing decision-making organ, supported by the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise (PoW), the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Peace Fund. It also recognized the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) as integral components of the continental architecture, while acknowledging the complementary contributions of

the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and civil society. These institutions and relationships were designed to provide Africa with a comprehensive framework capable of addressing conflicts across their entire cycle—from early warning and prevention to mediation, PSOs and post-conflict reconstruction—at both regional and continental levels. The Protocol also entrusted important responsibilities to the Chairperson of the Commission and, in a more limited but nonetheless significant way, to the PoW.

To facilitate the effective exercise of these responsibilities, the Protocol incorporated important institutional safeguards. While reaffirming the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, it also recognized their limits. No Member State can prevent the inclusion of an item on the agenda of the PSC, and any state that is party to a conflict is excluded from the Council's deliberations and decisions on that matter, even when serving as an elected member.

The PSC itself was given broad responsibilities. Beyond managing crises once they erupt, it is mandated to anticipate and prevent conflicts, address policies that could lead to genocide, undertake peacemaking and peace-building, authorize PSOs and recommend intervention in grave circumstances involving genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Equally important, Member States expressly agreed that the PSC would act on their behalf and undertook to implement its decisions and extend full cooperation to the PSC and the AUC in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts.

The architecture of partnerships embedded in the Protocol deserves equal emphasis. It identifies the UN as Africa's principal partner, particularly in relation to peacekeeping, while recognizing the contribution of other international actors.

3.2. A Comprehensive Normative and Policy Framework for Peace, Security and Governance

The PSC Protocol should also be understood as the centerpiece of a much broader ecosystem of legal and policy instruments that the Member States have developed over the years. In the field of collective security, the Common African Defence and Security Policy (2004) and the Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact (2005) reaffirm the principle that the security of African states is indivisible and further consolidate the transition towards a human centered understanding of security. Counter-terrorism is addressed through the 1999 OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and its 2004 Protocol. Disarmament is covered through instruments ranging from the 1996 Pelindaba Treaty to the 1997 Kempton Park Plan of Action on anti-personnel landmines, the 2000 Bamako Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and subsequent continental initiatives on biological and chemical weapons.

An equally comprehensive body of norms has emerged in the field of human rights. These include the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention, the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the 1998 Protocol establishing the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, as well as instruments on the rights of children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities, the protection of internally

displaced persons, the right to nationality and the eradication of statelessness, and, most recently, violence against women and girls.

Governance has received similar attention. Alongside the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), the AU has adopted instruments on public service and administration, decentralization and local governance, and the prevention and combating of corruption. Earlier initiatives, such as the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), also deserve renewed attention. Its 2000 Solemn Declaration and 2002 Memorandum of Understanding contain some of the most ambitious governance commitments ever made by African leaders, including the adoption of an inviolate limitation on the tenure of elected office holders.

These instruments cover virtually every dimension of peace, security and governance. The issue of UCGs illustrates the point well. The recent resurgence of military coups has prompted calls in some policy and academic circles for stronger continental norms. Yet the problem is not the absence of norms but their implementation.

It is often argued that the definition of UCGs remains too narrow because the 2000 Lomé Declaration did not anticipate the so-called 'civilian coups', such as the removal of presidential term limits through controversial constitutional amendments. However, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance already broadened the definition by including 'any amendment or revision of the Constitution or legal instruments which is an infringement on the principles

of democratic change of government.’ The use of the words *inter alia* further makes clear that the list is illustrative rather than exhaustive, providing the PSC with considerable latitude to respond to evolving situations.

The 2014 Malabo Protocol, although not yet in force, goes even further. It expands the definition to include constitutional amendments inconsistent with the Constitution, introduces substantial last-minute changes to electoral laws without broad political consensus as an additional category of UCGs, and classifies UCGs as an international crime falling within the jurisdiction of the future African Court of Justice and Human Rights.

One can hardly argue that Africa lacks norms in this area. The central challenge is to ensure that the extensive commitments already undertaken are implemented consistently and credibly.

3.3. The Imperative of Implementation: Exercising Caution in Developing New Instruments and Making Existing Ones Work

This is not to suggest that the framework is perfect or that it addresses every conceivable challenge. No legal or institutional architecture can anticipate all future developments. Peace and security threats evolve continuously, shaped by changing political realities, technological innovation, climate change and shifting geopolitical dynamics. The purpose of a normative or policy framework is not to prescribe detailed rules for every eventuality, but to establish sufficiently broad principles and institutions capable of adapting to new circumstances.

The UN experience is instructive in this regard. The UN Charter contains no explicit reference to peacekeeping operations, yet the Organisation developed peacekeeping as one of its principal instruments through interpretation and practice rather than constitutional amendment. Institutional evolution occurred because the Charter provided a sufficiently flexible framework to accommodate new realities.

The AU should approach its own normative framework in much the same spirit. The emergence of new challenges does not automatically imply the need for new legal instruments. In many instances, the existing framework already provides considerable room for interpretation, adaptation and innovation. Article 7 of the Protocol, for example, gives the PSC, in conjunction with the AUC Chairperson, extensive powers and concludes with a broad provision allowing the PSC to decide on any other issue having implications for the maintenance of peace, security and stability on the Continent. The immediate priority should therefore be to make better use of what already exists.

This is ultimately a choice of focus. Rather than redirecting scarce political and financial capital towards new normative processes, with the risk of dispersing efforts and reopening delicate political compromises that may be difficult to reproduce in today’s environment, the priority should therefore be to focus first on implementation: to examine what existing mandates and decisions allow the AU to do, identify where practical obstacles have limited their application, and concentrate political and institutional effort on addressing those obstacles.

Implementation, however, is not simply a matter of having the right rules. It also

depends on how political and institutional authority is exercised. The Commission and its Chairperson possess significant convening power and room for initiative within their existing mandates. The challenge is to ensure the full use of that space—engaging Member States, setting agendas, acting early and making effective use of the political room for maneuver that existing mandates provide. Member States, for their part, need to follow through on the commitments they undertake, while AU institutions need to ensure that decisions are systematically followed up and their implementation assessed. Clearer expectations, professional standards and accountability can help reinforce these responsibilities and ensure that non-performance is not simply absorbed into routine.

This is also a question of institutional culture. Over time, caution, procedural habits and a proliferation of meetings and processes can unintentionally displace political judgment and action. Changing this requires investing in professional capacity, preserving institutional memory, encouraging initiative and creating incentives for officials to focus on outcomes. The objective should not be to diminish the importance of process, but to ensure that process serves political purpose rather than becoming an end in itself.

This has important implications for the current reform debate. The objective should not be to produce more instruments, processes and guidelines for their own sake, but to strengthen the AU's capacity to use its existing authority effectively, act with greater coherence and focus more consistently on results. Normative evolution will remain necessary where genuine gaps

are demonstrated, but it should go hand in hand with attention to leadership, institutional culture, implementation and accountability. Otherwise, the AU risks becoming overly absorbed in meetings, consultations and policy refinements while conflicts continue to inflict immense human suffering. Such a disconnect would inevitably undermine the Organization's credibility and legitimacy.

Encouragingly, the report of the Champion largely avoids proposing major new normative or institutional frameworks requiring lengthy negotiations or ratification. Its emphasis is instead on strengthening implementation through practical measures. Where it proposes additional guidelines, frameworks or review processes, however, these should be tested against a simple question: what concrete problem do they solve that cannot be addressed through existing instruments and authority? Wherever possible, reform should favor immediate, practical and action-oriented measures, with clear responsibility for delivery and appropriate mechanisms for accountability, recognizing that the principal obstacle is rarely the absence of guidance but rather the political will, initiative and creativity to implement what has already been agreed.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The report puts forward a broad range of recommendations, each preceded by a discussion intended to frame the issues and explain the rationale for the proposed reforms. The present analysis focuses primarily on the recommendations relating to peace and security. Each recommendation is briefly examined on its own merits and, the special research

report suggests, practical alternatives capable of achieving the same objective.

4.1. Integration of the African Governance Architecture and APSA

The report rightly emphasizes that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing the governance deficits that often lie at the root of conflict. It therefore calls for closer integration between the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and APSA through joint assessments, integrated responses and harmonized standards. It further identifies the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as the principal continental governance monitoring mechanism and recommends that the Chairperson invite Member States to nominate an independent panel of five experts, supported by an AUC task force, to prepare a harmonized AGA-APSA implementation plan aimed at strengthening coherence and eliminating institutional silos.

A few clarifications are here in order.

First, APSA was never conceived as a purely security architecture. From the outset, the PSC Protocol—including its preamble, objectives and principles—recognized that sustainable peace depends on addressing the political and governance conditions that give rise to conflict. The PSC, together with the Chairperson of the Commission, is mandated not only to respond to crises but also to anticipate and prevent them, and to promote democratic practices, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Governance considerations are therefore embedded within APSA rather than existing alongside it.

Second, the creation of AGA was not intended to correct a supposed blind spot in APSA. Rather, it responded to practical developments. The rapid expansion of AU governance instruments and institutions—with the initial impetus provided by the OAU in the early 1990s—created the need for a coordination platform capable of promoting coherence across an increasingly complex policy, normative and institutional landscape.

Third, the perception that governance and peace and security operate in separate institutional universes owes much to the way APSA has functioned in practice rather than to the way it was designed. Historically, the flow of information to the PSC has been dominated by the Peace and Security Department (PSD). For understandable reasons—particularly during APSA's formative years, when the AU deployed several PSOs and mediation processes—the PSC naturally concentrated on issues requiring immediate action. As a result, the Political Affairs Department (PAD) played only a limited role in routine PSC deliberations, except on electoral matters. This imbalance was reinforced by a wrong understanding of Article 10(4) of the PSC Protocol, which provides that the Chairperson of the Commission shall be assisted by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, who 'shall be responsible for the affairs of the Peace and Security Council.' In practice, this inadvertently conflated the PSC with the PSD. Even so, the PSD and the PSC continued to address governance issues, particularly in relation to UCGs and structural prevention. This was notably illustrated by the PSC 432nd meeting of 29 April 2014 on 'Unconstitutional Changes of Government and Popular Uprisings in Africa: Challenges and Lessons Learnt', which remains one of the AU's strongest

pronouncements on governance. Among other measures, the PSC requested the Commission to collect the constitutions of all Member States in order to identify provisions inconsistent with good governance and constitutionalism that could constitute threats to peace, security and stability.

Fourth, the merger of the PSD and PAD under the 2017 institutional reform may have reinforced the perception that integration is primarily an organizational issue. In reality, organizational restructuring does not automatically produce policy coherence. One unintended consequence may instead have been to subordinate long-term governance priorities to the pressures of day-to-day crisis management, allowing the urgent to crowd out the important.

Fifth, governance reform and conflict management operate on different time horizons. While peace and security institutions often respond to immediate crises, governance reforms are necessarily long-term processes. The two agendas should reinforce one another, but they cannot always proceed at the same pace.

Going forward, the AU may wish to consider the following three ideas.

First, the AU could reconsider whether housing governance and peace and security within a single department best serves either agenda. There is merit in revisiting the earlier institutional arrangement under which the PSD and PAD operated separately while striving to coordinate closely. That arrangement better reflected the different time horizons of the two agendas. The original separation—in 2002—was deliberate: one department focused on immediate

political and security challenges, the other on long-term governance.

Second, greater emphasis should be placed on operational rather than institutional integration. This could include regular reports on long-term governance trends and the implementation of AGA to enable the PSC to exercise more effectively its mandate to monitor democratic governance on the Continent. By systematically linking governance assessments from the APRM and other long-term political and socio-economic indicators with CEWS, the AUC could alert the PSC to mounting institutional crises before they escalate into open conflict. Alternatively, such reports could be prepared by the Independent Rapporteur envisaged by the Assembly in its February 2010 decision on the prevention of UCGs.

Finally, the Commission should make greater use of the country-specific reports it is required to submit to the PSC by systematically incorporating governance analysis and other early indicators of crisis. This would require a process ensuring that, while coordinated by a lead department, reports to the PSC reflect a genuinely AU-wide perspective by integrating relevant contributions from other departments and organs.

4.2. Draft Administrative Guidelines on Articles 5 and 16 of the PSC Protocol

The report recommends that the Office of the Legal Counsel prepare draft administrative guidelines to facilitate the implementation of Articles 5 and 16 of the PSC Protocol. The rationale behind this recommendation is understandable. Experience over the past two decades has revealed important challenges in

the implementation of both provisions. However, it is less evident that the preparation of additional administrative guidelines is the most appropriate response.

(a) Article 5(2) of the PSC Protocol was deliberately designed to ensure that membership of the PSC is based not only on geographical representation but also on the capacity, commitment and political credibility of the States entrusted with one of the AU's most demanding responsibilities. It sets out a number of eligibility criteria, some of which are objective and readily verifiable—for example, participation in PSOs, being up to date with assessed contributions to the AU, contributing to the Peace Fund, not being under suspension following an UCG, and maintaining adequately staffed permanent missions in Addis Ababa and New York, even though what constitutes 'adequately staffed' may be open to interpretation. Other criteria, such as commitment to the AU principles and willingness to assume responsibility for regional and continental conflict resolution initiatives, necessarily involve a degree of political judgment.

It is worth recalling that Article 5(4) already establishes a mechanism for assessing compliance with these criteria. It provides that the Assembly shall periodically assess the extent to which PSC Members continue to meet the eligibility requirements and take action as appropriate. As drafted, the provision assumes that the Assembly has already verified compliance with the criteria at the time of election.

The priority, therefore, should be to ensure that the Assembly exercises more systematically its responsibility, while recognizing that this is ultimately

a political rather than a legal or technical question. The PSC had already identified this need in May 2017, when, at its Kigali retreat, it agreed that the Committee of Experts should make proposals for reviewing Member States' compliance with the requirements for effective PSC membership under Article 5(2) of the PSC Protocol.

A practical measure that could strengthen transparency would be to require Member States seeking election to the PSC to submit a detailed self-assessment demonstrating how they satisfy each of the criteria set out in Article 5(2), with the document being made public. This would provide a more objective basis for the election process while introducing a measure of political accountability.

(b) The recommendation concerning Article 16 raises similar considerations. Article 16, which governs the relationship between the AU and the RECs/RMs, forms part of a broader normative framework, most notably the 2008 Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the AU and the RECs/RMs, which is a binding legal instrument.

That framework reflects the historical evolution of relations between the continental institution and regional groupings. During the OAU's early years, emphasis was placed on preserving the Organization's political primacy and unity, a concern linked to the divisions that preceded May 1963 and reflected in Resolution CM/Res.5(I) of August 1963. Over time, however, the growing political and operational role of the RECs/RMs led to the progressive recognition of their comparative advantages and responsibilities, first in the Cairo Declaration

and later in the PSC Protocol. The current framework seeks to balance the AU's continental leadership—clearly affirmed in Article 16(1) and reiterated throughout the MoU—with regional initiative through harmonization, subsidiarity, complementarity, comparative advantage and close consultation. It extends beyond the operationalization of APSA to the broader prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

The difficulties encountered over the years have undoubtedly exposed ambiguities in the practical application of these principles, particularly regarding leadership in specific crises, the division of responsibilities between the AU and the RECs/RMs, and the implementation at regional level of PSC decisions on UCGs. Yet these challenges do not necessarily reflect deficiencies in the normative framework itself. As noted above, no legal instrument can anticipate every contingency in an environment as politically fluid and operationally complex as conflict management.

Instead of developing additional administrative guidelines, greater emphasis should be placed on the consistent implementation of the existing framework. As envisaged in the MoU, this includes systematic information-sharing, regular political and technical consultations, joint assessment and planning, stronger institutional presence at each other's headquarters, and effective participation by the AU and the RECs/RMs in each other's decision-making meetings. Where necessary, the existing arrangements should also be used to establish, early in a crisis, who is best placed to lead and how the different actors will work together. Strengthening these practices would likely do more to improve

cooperation than further interpretative guidance.

Should the AU nevertheless decide to develop administrative guidelines, they should be narrowly circumscribed and strictly limited to addressing clearly identified practical ambiguities. They should not add another layer of procedures or alter the authority already vested in the PSC, the Chairperson of the Commission and other APSA mechanisms. Their value, if any, should lie solely in facilitating implementation of the existing framework and reducing delays or ambiguity in the handling of actual crises.

4.3. Re-conceptualizing the ASF

The report welcomes the ASF Interim Strategic Review, which was directed by the 15th meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security (STCDSS)—a request endorsed by the Executive Council in July 2023, and calls for its completion. While the Review provides a useful update on the status of the ASF and a sharp analysis of the challenges encountered, it appears, understandably, to remain within the dominant paradigm that has shaped the ASF since its inception—namely, that the AU should maintain the capacity to deploy PSOs, including large-scale multidimensional missions.

This assumption deserves closer examination.

It is useful to recall the evolution of the OAU/AU's approach to PSOs. The OAU founding instruments made no provision for peacekeeping. The OAU's first experience came in Chad in 1981 through the Inter-African Force, but that mission exposed the severe political, financial and logistical

constraints facing the Organisation. As a result, the 1993 Cairo Declaration adopted a cautious approach. It envisaged only limited observer missions, both in scope and duration, while affirming that large-scale peacekeeping should remain primarily a UN responsibility.

The PSC Protocol marked a significant departure from that approach. Influenced above all by the lessons of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the AU embraced a far more ambitious vision. The Protocol authorizes PSOs across the full spectrum of conflict situations and even envisages intervention in exceptional circumstances. The ASF became the principal instrument through which this ambition was to be realized.

This vision, however, rested on two assumptions that did not materialize. It assumed that Member States would be willing and able to provide the financial, military and logistical resources required for major operations. It also assumed that the UN would provide predictable support whenever the AU undertook PSOs on behalf of the international community. Neither assumption has held in practice. African financing has remained very limited, while UN support has been negotiated on a case-by-case basis and has often been uncertain or politically contested.

The renewed emphasis on African PSOs over the past decade has also been driven by the expansion of terrorism and violent extremism. These threats have generated demands for more robust military responses than traditional UN peacekeeping can normally provide. Yet this evolution should not lead to unrealistic expectations regarding what military operations alone can achieve. Most of the

crises confronting the Continent are rooted fundamentally in governance failures. Military action may contain violence or create space for political processes, but it cannot resolve the underlying causes of conflict.

While the AU should retain the capacity to respond to exceptional situations requiring rapid African action, it should however resist the temptation to define its future role primarily through the conduct of large-scale PSOs. Such operations demand capacities that continue to reside principally within the UN.

Practically, the AU should devote greater attention to areas where its own added value is greatest.

First, it should play a much more strategic role in shaping and supporting UN peacekeeping operations deployed in Africa. Given that these missions are established to address African conflicts and that their success or failure directly affects the Continent, the AU has a legitimate interest in influencing their mandates, strategic direction and political engagement. The Commission should consider undertaking strategic reviews of UN missions ahead of mandate renewals or other significant developments, including remotely where field-based reviews are impractical, to provide the A3 (the African members of the Security Council) with well-grounded African assessments of their political and operational challenges. The African members should also take the lead in bringing operational and political challenges confronting these missions to the Security Council, ensuring that issues such as restrictions on freedom of movement are addressed on their merits rather than subsumed into broader geopolitical disagreements, with the

PSC and Commission reinforcing these efforts through clear and timely positions. Furthermore, the AU should make fuller use of its normative framework on governance, human rights and the rule of law to help connect UN peacekeeping to the longer-term African efforts needed to address the underlying causes of conflict.

Second, the AU should continue to press the UN to assume fully its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, including deploying peacekeeping operations when these are needed and ensuring that they are properly resourced. This is also the approach articulated by the PSC at its 1341st meeting, held on 27 April 2026. In the communiqué adopted on that occasion, the PSC reaffirmed the centrality of the AU–UN partnership in peace and security and called on the UN Security Council to fully assume its responsibilities for the promotion of peace and security in Africa, including by deploying and adequately resourcing UN peacekeeping operations where required.

Third, where the AU undertakes PSOs directly, these should generally be limited in scope, clearly focused and time-bound, closer in spirit to the approach envisaged in the Cairo Declaration than to the aspiration of replicating large multidimensional UN missions. Such operations are more realistic in light of available resources and existing capacity. Significantly at the same session, drawing on more than two decades of experience with AU PSOs and recognizing the persistent financial and logistical constraints they face, the PSC called for greater emphasis on lean, targeted and time-bound missions. AU operations should also be designed from the outset around the political purpose and

strategy they are intended to serve, with a credible transition to longer-term political arrangements.

Fourth, the ASF framework could also provide a basis for thinking more strategically about Africa's maritime space. The growing presence of external military actors along African coastlines and in surrounding waters raises longer-term questions about the Continent's ability to maintain an autonomous security presence in its maritime environment. At the same time, maritime security and access to the sea are matters of legitimate strategic interest to all African countries, whether coastal or not, and can become entangled with wider regional sensitivities. While recognizing the sovereign right of African countries to enter into bilateral security and defence arrangements with external partners, Africa should also remain an active collective actor in the security of its maritime space. AU-mandated regional maritime task forces, drawing on coastal and other interested Member States, could provide such a framework, enabling all African countries to contribute to the security of the Continent's maritime approaches. Such a presence need not seek military parity with external powers to have strategic significance; it would affirm African agency, provide an additional channel for dialogue and cooperation, and help ensure that African states are not merely responding to a maritime security environment shaped by others.

Fifth, the AU should devote greater attention to innovative and cost-effective forms of flexible security cooperation, as contemplated in the context of the 2013 Nouakchott Process on security cooperation and operationalization of APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region. These include joint procurement of equipment,

pooling of assets such as strategic airlift, casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) and medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), joint border patrols, and intelligence cooperation. Such initiatives, which can be implemented in variable formats (two, three, or more countries, depending on political readiness), are likely to deliver greater operational impact at significantly lower financial cost than maintaining the ambition of conducting large-scale PSOs.

Finally, the AU should invest more efforts where its comparative advantage is most widely recognized: preventive diplomacy, mediation, and political accompaniment. These are areas where African legitimacy and proximity provide unique strengths that no external actor can easily replicate.

4.4. Bridging the Gap Between Early Warning and Early Action

One of the themes of the report is the need to bridge the long-recognized gap between early warning and early action. To this end, it recommends stronger integration among the various components of the AU's early warning ecosystem—including the Commission, CEWS, the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), civil society organizations and the ASF. It further proposes the institutionalization of compliance and accountability mechanisms and the development of an Early Action Guideline for the PSC, establishing triggers, thresholds and corresponding response options. The goal is to make the transition from warning to action more systematic and predictable.

The difficulty, however, is that the gap between early warning and early action is fundamentally political rather than technical. Africa rarely suffers from a

shortage of early warning. Most major crises—including UCGs, electoral violence, governance crises and even armed conflicts—develop in full public view. The real challenge is that Member States are generally supportive of prevention in principle but become considerably more cautious when it becomes practical and specific. In such circumstances, additional procedures, guidelines or institutional mechanisms are unlikely by themselves to overcome the political constraints that inhibit timely action.

Greater emphasis should therefore be placed on making more effective use of the PSC Protocol existing provisions. The architects of the Protocol were fully aware of the political difficulties associated with preventive diplomacy and deliberately equipped both the PSC and the AUC, as well as other APSA components, with significant preventive authority.

First, the Chairperson of the Commission should make use of the authority conferred by Article 10.2 (a) of the PSC Protocol to bring to the attention of the Council any matter that, in his or her judgment, may threaten peace, security or stability on the Continent. This authority is not dependent on prior authorization by Member States and provides an important institutional avenue for ensuring that emerging crises receive political attention. Its exercise should naturally be guided by political judgment and caution, but it remains one of the most underutilized preventive tools available to the Commission.

Second, the PoW should be leveraged much more proactively. The Panel was created precisely to strengthen conflict prevention by providing independent political advice and engaging in preventive diplomacy. Its members are selected

because of their moral authority, political experience and ability to engage with leaders. Significantly, the PSC Protocol envisages that the Panel acts not only at the request of the PSC or the AUC Chairperson, but also on its own initiative. The Commission should therefore encourage and facilitate a more active use of this mandate, including public or private interventions whenever situations show signs of escalating towards conflict, with a clearly defined objective, reporting route and follow-up, and arrangements for continuity or handover when a situation requires more sustained political engagement by an envoy, high representative or regional mechanism.

Third, the provisions of the PSC Protocol concerning regular interaction with independent African institutions should be implemented more consistently. The Protocol envisages regular briefings to the PSC by the ACHPR, other relevant institutions, and civil society. These provisions were included precisely because such actors often enjoy greater political space than the Commission and the PSC to raise sensitive issues and draw attention to emerging risks. More systematic engagement with these bodies would enrich the PSC's deliberations and strengthen the political case for preventive action. The APRM should similarly be used more deliberately as source of preventive insight, particularly where governance deficits, constitutional violations or exclusionary political practices are creating conditions for instability.

Fourth, the AUC should make more strategic use of the regular reports it is required to submit to the PSC under the Protocol. These reports can be used not merely to describe crises once they have emerged, but also to highlight

deteriorating political trends, identify potential flashpoints and recommend preventive measures before violence occurs. This requires strengthening the analytical capacity behind early-warning products so that they provide decision-makers not simply with information, but with clear options for early action.

More broadly, effective prevention depends less on formal procedures than on sustained political engagement. It requires continuous dialogue with Member States, regular visits to countries showing signs of instability, the patient building of confidence with national authorities and, where appropriate, the discreet deployment of respected envoys capable of engaging political actors before positions harden. Preventive diplomacy is ultimately an exercise in statecraft rather than institutional engineering.

Bridging the gap between early warning and early action is unlikely to be achieved through a single procedural innovation. The AU already possesses a robust institutional framework for prevention. The more pressing challenge is to use that framework with greater initiative and consistency.

4.5. Reviewing the AU Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns

The report recommends a review of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa, which was adopted by the Assembly in January 2017. This recommendation is both timely and appropriate.

There can be little doubt that the AU has fallen short of achieving the objective of silencing the guns. The repeated postponements of the target date

illustrate the magnitude of the challenge. Conceived as one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063, the initiative originally envisaged a conflict-free Africa by 2020. When that objective proved unattainable, the Assembly, in December 2020, extended the implementation horizon to 2030. Yet, as stressed above, the security situation across the Continent has continued to deteriorate, making it increasingly unlikely that the objective will be achieved within the revised timeframe.

This should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that the initiative itself has failed. From the outset, ‘Silencing the Guns’ was never intended as a literal prediction that all violent conflicts in Africa would end by a specified date. Rather, the target date was conceived as a political horizon designed to galvanize continental action, mobilize public opinion and sustain momentum around the objective of building a more peaceful Africa. On that score, it belongs to a long tradition within the OAU/AU of using symbolic milestones to stimulate political mobilization. The declarations by the 1999 Algiers Summit and the August 2009 Tripoli Special Session, respectively, of the Year 2000 as the OAU’s Year of Peace, Security and Solidarity in Africa and 2010 as the Year of Peace and Security in Africa were inspired by a similar logic: not to suggest that peace could be achieved within a single year, but to focus political attention and collective action on that objective.

Against this background, reviewing the Master Roadmap offers an opportunity not simply to update an existing document but to rethink its strategic purpose. Although the current Roadmap addresses various dimensions of peace, implementation has often gravitated towards security-related activities—particularly the control

of small arms and light weapons and other immediate manifestations of violence. Important as these are, they address the instruments and consequences of conflict more than its underlying drivers.

A revised Roadmap should therefore become the overarching strategic framework through which the entire AU system contributes to the objective of ending violent conflict and sustaining peace. Instead of being viewed primarily as a peace and security document, it should be conceived as a genuinely AU-wide agenda involving not only the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, but also the Commission as a whole, other AU organs and specialized institutions, as well as the RECs/RMs, with strong partnerships with the UN and other international partners.

Such a Roadmap should first identify concrete measures through which each part of the AU can contribute to structural prevention by strengthening governance, supporting inclusive economic development, addressing youth unemployment, advancing gender equality and reinforcing the rule of law. In other words, it should ensure that structural conflict prevention is systematically mainstreamed across the AU work.

Second, it should set out practical priorities for preventive diplomacy and mediation. Rather than prescribing detailed operational responses to every crisis, it should identify broad strategic objectives, measurable commitments and institutional responsibilities, drawing inspiration from the 2009 Tripoli Plan of Action. The framework should be sufficiently specific to facilitate monitoring and accountability while retaining the

flexibility required to respond to rapidly evolving political situations.

Finally, a renewed Silencing the Guns agenda should place much greater emphasis on societal mobilization, drawing inspiration from the 2010 'Make Peace Happen' Campaign and its Flame of Peace. Building a peaceful Africa cannot be the exclusive responsibility of national authorities and intergovernmental institutions. Universities, research centers, civil society, religious leaders, the private sector and the media all have a critical role to play. African think tanks and research institutions, in particular, should be encouraged to document more systematically the human, economic and developmental costs of violent conflict. By demonstrating what conflict costs African societies—and what peace can deliver—they can help generate broader political commitment to prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. They should also establish more systematic and coordinated mechanisms to monitor actions—and inaction—by the AU, the RECs/RMs, Member States and international partners, thereby fostering greater accountability and informed public scrutiny.

The value of reviewing the Master Roadmap therefore lies less in producing another policy document than in transforming 'Silencing the Guns' into the organizing principle for a genuinely integrated African peace agenda. If implemented in this spirit, the revised Roadmap could help align the activities of the AU's various institutions behind a common strategic objective and restore the political momentum that originally inspired the initiative.

4.6. Unconstitutional Changes of Governments

The report rightly acknowledges the efforts undertaken by the AU to address UCGs, while noting that the phenomenon continues to pose a serious challenge to the AU's normative framework. It recommends that the AUC Chairperson continue to deploy good offices and make full use of existing mechanisms to engage countries under suspension and support them in developing credible roadmaps for a return to constitutional order.

This is an important recommendation. Facilitating a return to constitutional governance is essential not only for restoring stability within the concerned countries but also for mobilizing meaningful support to help resolve the challenges confronting them. The AUC's engagement with transition authorities can undoubtedly be strengthened. At the same time, expectations should remain realistic. In Central Sahel, military authorities have demonstrated a clear determination to remain in power for the foreseeable future and, in any event, current security conditions may not allow the holding of elections in the short-term.

Important as this dimension is, the challenge of UCGs extends well beyond the management of ongoing transitions. A more comprehensive approach is required.

First, greater emphasis should be placed on the consistent application of the existing normative framework. One of the AU's strengths has been the clarity of its legal position on UCGs, as reflected in various instruments, notably the Lomé Declaration, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,

and the Malabo Protocol. That normative clarity has, however, sometimes been weakened by inconsistent implementation. The different approaches adopted in response to recent UCGs have created perceptions of double standards that inevitably undermine the credibility of the AU's position.

Second, where political realities compel departures from existing norms, decisions should be explicitly presented as exceptions rather than as implicit revisions of established rules. The PSC's decision of 17 June 2014 to readmit Egypt following the 2014 presidential election provides a useful precedent. While lifting Egypt's suspension, the PSC was careful to emphasize that its decision reflected the specific circumstances of the case and should not be interpreted as modifying the AU's norm on the non-eligibility of perpetrators of UCGs to participate in elections aimed at restoring constitutional order.

Third, closer coordination between the AU and the RECs/RMs is essential. Countries suspended by the AU have, in some instances, continued to participate fully in the activities of their respective regional organizations. In other cases, the AU and the RECs/RMs have applied different levels of firmness or lifted sanctions at different times. Such divergences weaken the coherence of the continental response. The principle of AU primacy, as recognized in the PSC Protocol, should therefore be implemented more consistently through closer consultation and coordinated decision-making.

Fourth, the AU should devote considerably greater attention to prevention. Preventing UCGs ultimately requires addressing the governance deficits that create the

conditions in which military intervention becomes politically possible or publicly tolerated. The AU already possesses an extensive normative framework to support democratic governance and the rule of law. Moreover, the PSC Protocol explicitly mandates the PSC to monitor progress towards democratic governance. Strengthening the implementation of these provisions will yield greater long-term impact than focusing predominantly on post-coup responses.

Fifth, the AU should adopt a more proactive role in coordinating international engagement in UCGs instances. Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that diverging positions and competing initiatives by external partners complicate transition processes and weaken African leadership. The more systematic establishment of International Contact Groups, under AU leadership, would help harmonize external engagement and ensure that international support is aligned behind a common African political strategy.

4.7. Enhancing Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation

The report recommends strengthening the PoW through the appointment of highly respected members, improved technical and operational support, greater gender balance, and closer collaboration with other AU institutions engaged in preventive diplomacy and mediation. It also calls for the establishment within the AU Commission of a dedicated structure capable of supporting mediation efforts and sustaining political dialogue.

These recommendations are well founded. The PoW was created precisely because the drafters of the PSC Protocol

recognized the limitations of the AUC and the PSC. The PSC, by its very nature, reflects the political positions of Member States, while the AUC must maintain day-to-day working relations with those same states. There was therefore a need for an independent body composed of eminent African personalities able to exercise moral authority, speak candidly and intervene with greater political flexibility. As indicated above, the Protocol explicitly envisages the Panel acting not only at the request of the PSC or the AUC but also on its own initiative.

Returning to this original vision is probably the single most important reform that could be undertaken. The AUC Chairperson should use the relative discretion available in the appointment process to select individuals of the highest calibre and continental stature. At the same time, the Panel should be encouraged to exercise fully the independence granted to it. Urging it to issue public statements and undertake initiatives in its own right would strengthen preventive diplomacy while also giving the AUC and the PSC greater political space to engage on sensitive issues without being directly exposed to potential political backlash.

The Panel should also devote greater attention to country-specific crises. In recent years, much of its work has focused on thematic issues. While these remain important, the Panel was primarily conceived as an instrument for preventive diplomacy in concrete conflict situations. Its interventions should be supported by stronger political and conflict analysis and should have clear objectives, reporting lines and follow-up, including a defined point at which responsibility can be handed over to an envoy, regional mechanism or other appropriate actor.

More broadly, mediation remains one of the areas in which the AU enjoys a genuine comparative advantage. It should build on past experience and proven tools. These include the adoption of framework communiqués defining clear roadmaps for resolving crises, as illustrated by the PSC communiqué of 24 April 2012 on Sudan and South Sudan; the establishment of international contact groups to align external actors behind a common African political strategy; and the appointment of panels or committees of eminent African personalities. These mediators should enjoy sufficient political independence, but also require institutional authority, analytical support, adequate resources and sustained political backing, to engage parties candidly and creatively while remaining guided by the PSC and closely coordinating with the AUC. Where regional organizations are also engaged, the AU should seek a common African political strategy and clear division of labour while mobilizing external support. Mediation should also anticipate implementation and follow-up.

4.8. Towards a More Coherent African Foreign Policy

The report recommends the development of an African Foreign Policy Framework and welcomes the decision of the Assembly to entrust a panel of experts with preparing proposals for consideration by the AU.

Growing rivalry among major powers, the erosion of multilateralism and international law, declining development assistance and increasing competition for Africa's strategic resources have made the external environment considerably more complex than it was only a decade ago. In this evolving landscape, the continent's

influence will depend less on the military or economic weight of individual states than on their ability to act collectively in defence of common interests.

At the same time, expectations regarding a common African foreign policy should remain realistic. The AU is an intergovernmental organisation rather than a supranational authority, and foreign policy remains a core attribute of national sovereignty. Member States maintain diverse strategic partnerships, face different security priorities and pursue distinct national interests. These differences are likely to persist for the foreseeable future and inevitably limit the degree of diplomatic uniformity that can realistically be achieved.

The objective should therefore not be complete uniformity, but greater strategic coherence. Fortunately, the AU does not need to start from a blank page. Over the years, it has developed a substantial normative and institutional framework to support common external action. This includes the Constitutive Act, the Common African Defence and Security Policy, the Banjul Formula governing external partnerships, the establishment of the group of the African members of the UNSC (A3) and the related Oran Process, as well as the growing practice of adopting Common African Positions on major international issues.

To make better use of what already exists, the AU could take following steps.

First, the preparation and adoption of Common African Positions should be the norm on major international issues affecting the continent. Once adopted by the relevant organs, they should guide African engagement in multilateral forums

and external partnerships. The AUC should regularly review their implementation, report on progress, identify gaps in implementation and engage, discreetly but systematically, with the concerned Member States to promote greater policy convergence.

Second, the existing mechanisms supporting the work of the A3 should be further strengthened. The A3 has demonstrated the value of coordinated African diplomacy, particularly when supported by clear mandates from the PSC and close engagement with the AUC. This progress should be consolidated through timely political guidance from Addis Ababa and greater accountability. As African candidates for the Security Council seek AU endorsement, they could be invited, both during their candidatures and at the conclusion of their mandates, to provide an assessment of how they have advanced agreed African positions.

Third, greater coherence is required in Africa's engagement with external partners. The principles underpinning the Banjul Formula remain sound and should guide African representation in partnerships with external actors, while allowing carefully justified exceptions where circumstances so require. The AUC should also engage both Member States and partners more proactively whenever bilateral initiatives risk undermining agreed continental positions or institutions.

Fourth, the Commission should strengthen its strategic support to Member States by preparing policy papers or white papers on key external partnerships and emerging international issues. Such documents would not seek to prescribe national foreign policies but

rather articulate shared African interests, identify common negotiating objectives and provide a useful reference for both Member States and external partners.

Fifth, the Chairperson of the Commission should systematically articulate African positions on major international developments whenever continental interests are directly affected. Such interventions should consistently be anchored in the defence of international law, the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and effective multilateralism. While they cannot substitute for national diplomacy, they can help project a more coherent and credible African voice on the international stage.

Sixth, greater coherence in Africa's external engagement should be accompanied by a deliberate effort to reduce the Continent's strategic vulnerabilities arising from external dependencies. Africa remains heavily dependent on external providers for critical infrastructure, technologies, essential goods and other strategic inputs. Such dependencies can become vulnerabilities during geopolitical tensions, when external actors may exercise leverage, or when crises elsewhere lead countries to prioritize their own needs, as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated. The objective should not be self-sufficiency or disengagement from global markets, neither of which is realistic or desirable, but greater resilience and room for strategic choice. This requires strengthening continental production capacity in critical sectors, expanding intra-African trade and supply chains, and reducing excessive dependence on a limited number of external sources. The AU has already developed a number of policies and structures that can contribute to this objective; these

should be pursued more urgently, with the Commission taking initiatives to accelerate their implementation. A more integrated continental market, combined with targeted investment in African manufacturing and strategic infrastructure, would strengthen economic resilience and provide a firmer foundation for a more autonomous and coherent collective action on the global stage.

4.9. Financing Peace and Security

The report devotes considerable attention to the financing of the AU's peace and security activities. It rightly notes that PSOs continue to rely heavily on external partners and recalls the proposal to increase the endowment of the AU Peace Fund from US\$400 million to US\$1 billion. It recommends, among other measures, the convening of an extraordinary ministerial meeting to strengthen the Peace Fund, greater mobilization of resources from African financial institutions, and renewed efforts to secure the effective implementation of UNSC Resolution 2719.

There is little doubt that increasing the financial resources available for peace and security is a strategic necessity. A continent that seeks greater ownership of its peace and security agenda cannot indefinitely depend on external financing to address its most pressing security challenges. Sustainable and predictable African funding would not only enhance operational capacity but also strengthen political autonomy and allow the AU to define its priorities with greater independence. Every effort should therefore be made to increase the resources available to the Peace Fund and to improve the predictability of financing for the AU's peace and security activities.

At the same time, three considerations deserve particular attention.

First, financial resources, important as they are, are not in themselves the principal determinant of the AU's effectiveness. The AU's influence will depend at least as much on its ability to deploy its political capital strategically, respond rapidly to emerging crises and use its available resources where they can have the greatest impact. This reinforces the importance of prioritizing preventive diplomacy, mediation and political engagement, areas in which the AU possesses a recognized comparative advantage and where relatively modest investments can often produce significant results.

Second, while the AU cannot continue to outsource the financing of Africa's security, neither should it expect African financial institutions and the private sector to assume responsibilities that primarily belong to Member States. Peace and security are fundamentally sovereign responsibilities. Institutions such as the African Development Bank and other continental financial institutions already make an essential contribution to peace by financing development, infrastructure, regional integration and poverty reduction. Their primary mandate should not be diluted by requiring them to compensate for insufficient political commitment by Member States to finance the AU's core peace and security responsibilities.

Finally, the implementation of Resolution 2719 should remain an important objective. It is entirely legitimate for the AU to seek predictable UN financing for AU-led PSOs authorized by the Security Council and undertaken in situations where the UN is unable or unwilling to deploy its own

operations. Nevertheless, expectations should remain measured. Experience since the adoption of Resolution 2719 has demonstrated considerable caution within the UNSC regarding its operational implementation. While the AU should continue to engage actively with the UN to operationalize the resolution, it should avoid making this the central pillar of its financing strategy.

More fundamentally, the AU should resist the temptation to define its financial priorities primarily around large-scale PSOs. As argued earlier, these operations should remain exceptional rather than becoming the principal instrument of African crisis response and, given the scale of the administrative, logistical and financial capabilities they require, should generally be undertaken by the United Nations. The AU's comparative advantage lies above all in political action, conflict prevention and mediation. Accordingly, scarce financial and political capital should be directed first towards strengthening these functions, while maintaining the capacity to undertake small scale deployments and, in exceptional circumstances when no viable alternative exists, to engage in large-scale PSOs.

The central objective should therefore be not simply to mobilize more resources, but to ensure that available resources are aligned with the AU's comparative advantages and strategic priorities, with clearly defined outcomes. Financial sustainability is indispensable, but it must be accompanied by strategic discipline if it is to translate into greater effectiveness.

V. CONCLUSION

Africa today faces one of the most demanding peace and security environments since the establishment of the AU. Armed conflicts, terrorism, UCGs, humanitarian crises and interstate tensions are unfolding against the backdrop of global uncertainty and a weakening multilateral order. The human, economic and developmental costs are immense. Already in 1993, in the Cairo Declaration, African leaders observed that *'No single internal factor has contributed more to the present socio-economic problems in the Continent than the scourge of conflicts in and among our countries.'* More than three decades later, that assessment remains as relevant as ever. Addressing violent conflict is the continent's most urgent task if it is to realize Agenda 2063's vision of *'an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.'*

Yet, as serious as the situation is, Africa possesses a remarkable asset: more than three decades of institution-building, norm-setting and practical experience. The ambitions expressed in the *Statement of Commitment to Peace and Security*, adopted at the PSC Solemn Launch on 25 May 2004, remain well within reach. In that Statement, African leaders pledged not to shrink from decisive action, declared that no conflict in Africa would be beyond the AU's reach, and affirmed that where grave human rights violations occur, the PSC should be the first to condemn and the first to act.

Realizing that ambition requires closing the gap between commitments and implementation. The challenge is no longer to design the architecture for

peace and security, but to bring it fully to life. While political will and adequate resources remain indispensable, so too do imagination, creativity and initiative in applying existing instruments to evolving challenges. None of the crises confronting Africa today fundamentally requires new normative frameworks; they require timely political action. The continent should avoid becoming absorbed in prolonged consultations, expert processes and successive meetings while conflicts continue to inflict immense suffering on the ground. Africa cannot afford such a disconnect.



The expert panel during the meeting held on 13-14 July in Nairobi, Kenya



MEDIA AND RESEARCH SERVICES

ABOUT AMANI AFRICA

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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Amani Africa acknowledges with gratitude the support it received from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in undertaking the research and the production of this Special Research report. We also thank the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway.



Ambasáid na hÉireann
Embassy of Ireland



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

ADDRESS

On the Corner of Equatorial Guinea St. and ECA Road, Zequala Complex,
7th Floor, Addis Ababa
Tel: +251118678809
Mobile: +251944723204 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia