

**A BETTER PARTNERSHIP?
UN-AU COLLABORATION FOR PEACE OPERATIONS
23 February 2007, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations**

MEETING NOTE

On 23 February 2007, the Henry L. Stimson Center and the Center on International Cooperation convened a workshop to discuss inter-institutional cooperation between the AU and UN in peace operations in Africa, identifying lessons learned and potential areas for improvement. Meeting participants included representatives from the UN Secretariat and the African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the UN; representatives of national governments and permanent missions to the United Nations; and members of the policy and academic communities from New York and Washington. All participants spoke in a personal rather than official capacity.

This discussion comes at a time of steady growth in peace operations, particularly in Africa, that increasingly require international, regional and sub-regional institutions to work in concert on the continent. The AU is central to these operations, leading peace support missions in Darfur, Somalia, and Burundi. Combined, the UN and AU maintain over 60,000 troops, military observers and civilian police in Africa, working together in Addis Ababa and incrementally so on the ground in Darfur. While these organizations have taken some political and operational steps towards institutionalizing their cooperative relationship, these efforts remain largely event-driven and *ad hoc* in nature.

Workshop participants offered insight into past and current AU-UN collaboration, with emphasis on gleaning lessons from the organizations' evolving partnership in support of the African Union Mission in Sudan. Following brief updates from representatives of the UN Secretariat and the African Union's Permanent Observer Mission to the UN, participants responded to a series of questions regarding the performance and future of the AU-UN relationship. The discussion spotlighted four main issues:

- 1) **A common approach to and understanding of AU-UN collaboration in peace operations has not been established:** Political initiatives to enhance AU-UN coordination date back to the "Brahimi Report" of 2000, the development of operational structures such as the UN's "Assistance Cell to the AU" in Addis Ababa and the recent adoption of the AU-UN "Framework for Cooperation". In varying degrees, however, each has failed to adequately incorporate a shared understanding of the best overall strategy and ultimate goals for capacity building in AU peace operations. The AU, for example, has sought greater emphasis from UN efforts on human security and conflict prevention. A more effective relationship will require better understanding of each party's appropriate role and the establishment of an international framework for consultations on these matters.
- 2) **AU and UN cooperation on peace operations is a critical necessity:** The AU and the UN stand to retain their current responsibilities for promoting security and development throughout Africa in the years and decades ahead. A more sustained, strategic partnership

between the two organizations – one that recognizes their shared priorities – would strengthen the respective peace support activities of each. Given the difficulties that the present *ad hoc* approaches to AU-UN cooperation present, efforts to make this relationship more systematic and predictable are needed for both the shorter- and longer-term goals of peace-building in Africa.

- 3) **Communication channels between the highest decision-making levels of both the AU and UN are relatively uncoordinated:** Lack of coordination at the level of the United Nations Security Council and the AU's Peace and Security Council decision-making structures results in a misunderstanding of working cultures, incoherent policies between the two organizations, as well as divergent and often conflicting expectations; and
- 4) **Emphasis is needed on mission planning and funding:** A glaring deficiency in building AU capacity lies in the financial and operational tools to support AU mission managers to deal with mission planning and implementation. The release of funding for AU peace operations is often contingent upon the creation and approval by donors of a mission plan, for example. Without pre-mission funding, however, the creation of a coherent mission plan is arduous and often delayed.

The development of a better AU-UN partnership will not proceed in a vacuum. As recent developments have highlighted, building long-term AU peacekeeping capacity will run in parallel with the need to support existing and new AU operations – even as the UN faces its own overstretch in peace operations. Striking this balance will not be easy, but three areas are worthy of immediate attention and could facilitate an improved partnership:

- 1) A clear institutional division of labor based on respective capacities and political realities must be established. Drawing on the respective strengths and weaknesses of the AU and the UN, these organizations should better define burden-sharing mechanisms for peace operations on the continent, clarify each institutions' roles and thus, support more predictable responses in the future;
- 2) Based on these defined roles, the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council should develop better methods of communication to ensure the harmonization of both existing operational needs and longer-term capacity-building goals;
- 3) Establishing concrete and predictable funding mechanisms to support AU-led peace operations would go a long way in bolstering its capacity to respond in a timely and adequate manner. In the past, lack of finance has hindered the AU's ability to either initiate or sustain on-going peace operations. Expanding awareness in Washington and other capitals about the AU's actions on the ground is one crucial step for bolstering international financial support. Current efforts to coordinate the AU's various partners also needs to be expanded. New capacity-building opportunities may also exist within International Financial Institutions and corporations with development interests in Africa.

This workshop represents the first of what is hoped to be a series of more focused discussions on enhancing AU-UN coordination in peace operations. Kind thanks are due to the Government of Canada for hosting the workshop at its Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York.

The workshop is part of the Henry L. Stimson Center's project on A Better Partnership for African Peace Operations, supported by the United States Institute for Peace.

The workshop is supported by the Center on International Cooperation at New York University as part of its program on International Security Institutions.