



Summary on the theme

7th Tana Forum | 21-22 April 2018 | Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

“Ownership of Africa’s Peace and Security Provision: Financing and Reforming the African Union”

Since its transformation from the Organization for African Unity (OAU) in 2002, the African Union (AU) has had an ambitious agenda for peace and security and for greater socio-economic integration of the African continent. Today, the AU faces a rapidly changing security environment, one in which the continent’s myriad challenges are either moderated or exacerbated by the inter-connectedness of the global policy environment and the plurality of actors within the peace and security landscape. Furthermore, the ownership of the means to secure the continent’s stability and security continues to shape how much, and how well, the organization is able to effectively tackle emerging peace and security challenges.

It is within this backdrop that the issue of the AU’s ownership of the security agenda, as encapsulated in the operationalization and consolidation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), is still largely contested. Greater responsibility and ownership would be a game-changer in terms reversing the trend of heavy dependence on external partners and actors. For this to happen effectively, the AU needs to put in place measures and systems that support and contribute to a shared understanding of ownership, financing and accountability in member states and on the continent.

The need for institutional reform

At the heart of this quest for ownership is the urgent imperative for the institutional reform of the AU in order to improve its performance and governance structure. It is clear that a robust, proactive and effective AU is required to address the plethora of security and developmental challenges affecting the continent. Such a vastly improved organization, as African leaders have themselves recognized, can only be achieved with fiscal autonomy from external partners. In July 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda, these views culminated in a milestone decision by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government to reform the organization (Assembly/AU/Dec.606 (XXVII)).

The Kigali decision can be viewed as the result of two key transformations that occurred after the formation of the AU in 2002. In the first instance, the new organization experienced a normative shift from a principle of non-interference to a principle of non-indifference. Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act highlights “the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war



crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity". This bold stance aims at ensuring greater ownership, not only of the narratives on which peace and security decisions are made, but also in the processes involved in achieving quick and positive results as stipulated by the reform agenda.

The second transformation was the establishment of a formal institutional framework for conflict management, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), following the adoption of the Protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council (PSC) in 2002. Since then, the APSA has become the first continent-wide regional peace and security system, anchored in aspirations of soliciting African solutions to African problems.

With the emergence of these new peace and security norms, in addition to current efforts towards fiscal autonomy, the amplification of the AU's agency vis-à-vis the rest of the international community is more within reach today than any other time in the continent's past. That the AU is increasingly called upon by its Member States to undertake political, military, observation and peace missions, alone or in conjunction with the United Nations, is not in doubt. To date, the organization has featured prominently in Burundi (AMIB, 2003); Sudan (AMIS, 2004); Comoros (MIOC, 2004); Somalia (AMISOM, 2007); and in Mali (AFISMA, 2012). With the UN, the organization has also been part of the hybrid mission in Darfur (UNAMID, 2007).

Because the common denominator of these missions is that they are externally funded, the political legitimacy and credibility of the AU and the question of African ownership is undermined. While an increasing number of African countries are showing willingness to participate in various missions, competition between the AU and the five regional blocs as to who should take the lead (e.g. in Mali), or the failure of the AU to speak with one voice (e.g. in Libya and Ivory Coast), are perennial obstacles to the achievement of full-fledged ownership of peace and security activities on the continent.

The Libyan crisis is a classic example of a situation where the AU's proposal for a political solution, in itself not based on unanimity amongst member states, was disregarded in favour of a military offensive launched by NATO. More importantly, the Libyan crisis demonstrated that beyond rhetoric, the AU does not have the capacity to respond effectively to the crises facing the continent. Invariably, the crisis rendered the notion of "African solutions to African problems" moot.

When it comes to financing the AU, two interrelated concerns come into bold relief: i) the low level of fiscal subscription by Member States through contributions, and ii) the high level of dependency on development partners. The low funding by member states is, without question, the outcome of a set of circumstances linked to a recurrent lack of political will and



commitment, problems of enforcing compliance against defaulters, and an overreliance on donors to fund national budgets among other challenges. As it finds itself relying more and more on external donors, the choices and priorities that the AU is in a position to pursue are limited. The AU must also confront the different and sometimes conflicting interests and agendas of its external benefactors.

Financing and reforming the AU: What's in it for the continental peace and security agenda?

At the Kigali Summit, African Heads of State and Government considered the far-reaching proposals by a committee chaired by President Paul Kagame, and agreed in principle to a radical reform agenda to streamline the AU's activities into four key priorities: political affairs, peace and security, Africa's global representation and voice, and economic integration.

The Kigali decision was not the only step taken towards contemplating a future of secured financial autonomy of the AU. It was preceded by a report developed by Dr. Donald Kaberuka, the former President of the African Development Bank. To reverse the current trend whereby 80% of the AU's financing is supplied by development partners, the Kaberuka Report proposed the imposition of a 0.2% duty on the import of eligible items from outside Africa. Through this scheme, it is estimated that the AU should be able to cover the cost of 25% of on-going Peace Support Operations (PSOs) on the continent and aid the revitalization of the virtually moribund AU Peace Fund.

Only through sustainable long-term financing can the AU follow an independent agenda that speaks to the common priorities of its Member States. The pressing question now is whether or not this initiative will be implemented faithfully and successfully bearing in mind that previous efforts have floundered due to the lack of implementation.

Guiding questions for the 7th Tana Forum

The 7th Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa, scheduled to take place on 21-22 April 2018, will focus on the theme: **"Ownership of Africa's Peace and Security Provision: Financing and Reforming the African Union"**. The choice of the topic, in many ways, reflects the urgent need to discuss, debate and establish a thorough understanding of the principle of ownership by the AU in delivering its mandate, particularly in the peace and security landscape. The Forum will attract high-level participants drawn from diverse spheres and sectors to examine the changing roles and functions of Member States and external actors in the pursuit of peace and stability in Africa.



The Tana Forum will explore innovative proposals on the practical realities of implementing the new reform agenda faithfully and sustainably. In addition, the discussions will also feature the following issues and themes:

- What are the likely implementation bottlenecks, and how can they be overcome?
- What should be considered to effectively and faithfully secure compliance by AU Member States?
- Beyond financing, what more needs to be done to ensure that AU Member States own their security agenda and effectively address Africa's peace and security challenges?
- What is required to enable the AU achieve full ownership of the continent's peace and security provisions even under a regime of fiscal autonomy?

End.



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