

# Celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union

25 May 2014, Addis Ababa

## Perspectives of African Non-state Actors on the Work of the PSC

### I. Introduction

In line with Article 20 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) the PSC has taken steps to '... encourage non-governmental organizations to participate actively in the efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa'. It is against this backdrop that the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, the Tripoli Declaration, the Tripoli Plan of Action, the Maseru Conclusions and the Livingstone Formula are instructive.

The African Union Commission (AUC) at a consultative meeting of civil society organisations (CSOs) and research institutes held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 16 April 2014 designated ACCORD, ISS, OXFAM and WANEP<sup>1</sup> to organise regional consultations of non-state actors<sup>2</sup> as a platform for developing concrete recommendations on how to enhance the relationship between stakeholders and the AU in the promotion of peace and security on the continent in the next decade.

In view of interactions with the PSC and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) over the past 10 years, the regional consultations provided an avenue for non-state actors to share their perceptions and perspectives of the PSC and AU in an all-inclusive process. It was specifically to give a voice to non-state AU stakeholders, create awareness and understanding of the work of the PSC/APSA and enable CSOs to contribute to and review the mechanisms and normative frameworks of the Commission.

The key objectives of these consultations were 1) to assess the PSC in its first 10 years of operation, and 2) to establish how the relationship between the PSC and non-state actors can be enhanced in order to promote peace, security and stability in Africa.

### II. Reflections on 10 years of the PSC

Conflicts are inherent in society, yet it is often when parties to a conflict resort to violence as a means to resolve their disputes that international actors have tended to engage in finding solutions towards making, keeping and building peace.

The causes of conflict are myriad and often rooted in deep-seated, historical grievances, at times referred to as root causes. At the same time, the reasons for resorting to violence may change over time, and events that would otherwise have little impact in times of peace, may trigger violence in cases where existing tensions and grievances remain unresolved. Competition for finite environmental resources can trigger and exacerbate conflicts over natural resources as can the contestation of the outcomes of elections.

It goes without saying that any strategies developed to intervene in a given conflict, whether through the threat of force or via negotiations or mediation, must be cognisant of all these types of causes and dynamics of a conflict.

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1 The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) was the lead convener for Southern Africa, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) for East and Central Africa, OXFAM and Crisis Action for North Africa, and the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) for West Africa.

2 Here non-state actors are defined as African CSOs, media, academics, political groupings, research institutions, think tanks and private sector actors.

Although 10 years would be deemed by some as infancy and thus beg for mild criticism of the PSC which was somewhat patterned after the 68 year old United Nations Security Council (UNSC),<sup>3</sup> others would adopt a rather strong criticism of the APSA framework and PSC whose tenacity and visibility have often been dwarfed by the UNSC in the face of complex peace and security challenges. In light of this, several critical challenges have been identified by the stakeholders involved in the consultation process. These have been grouped into 12 categories:

- Funding constraints
- Inadequate logistical support for peace support operations
- Weak coordination between relevant stakeholders
- Insufficient communication and accessibility around the work of the PSC
- Lack of accessibility to ECOSOCC
- Lack of political will in decision-making
- Lack of appreciation of the comparative advantage of African approaches to conflict resolution
- Widening inequality and lack of socio-economic opportunities
- Threat of terrorism
- Continued proliferation of small arms and light weapons
- Unfinished process of decolonisation and fight for self-determination
- Inadequate post-conflict reconstruction strategies

### **III. Recommendations to the PSC and AUC**

In light of these challenges, non-state actors have identified the following key recommendations to improve the work of the PSC.

#### **1. Funding constraints**

There is a need for ownership of African peace and security initiatives and in this regard, the prioritisation of funding for APSA, especially as it relates to PSC activities is pivotal. With the Peace Fund almost depleted, funding remains unreliable and unpredictable. Therefore, African Member States should conclude the alternative funding proposals for the Union and ensure immediate implementation. Particular pressure needs to be put on Member States to make greater financial contributions to peace support operations and contributions to the Peace Fund. Sanctions should be considered for countries not contributing. The commitment to 12% of the AU budget going to the Peace Fund should be met, as well as drawing on Alfa Konaré's initiative of Member States contributing 5% of their national budgets to supporting AU peace and security initiatives.

#### **2. Inadequate logistical support for peace support operations**

Inadequate human and logistical support for peace support operations continues to pose a challenge to timely and effective engagement. The PSC should enhance its efforts in calling upon Member States to pledge support, and to those that have made such pledges to honour these commitments in a timely manner. Here sanctions could also be considered.

#### **3. Weak coordination between relevant stakeholders**

Non-state actors identified that there is weak coordination between the PSC and other stakeholders working in peace and security – including but not limited to the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/Regional Mechanisms (RMs), the Citizens and Diaspora Organisations Directorate (CIDO), the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC), the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) as well as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), and League of Arab States (LAS) –, which poses serious challenges to the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity.

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3 The United Nations Security Council held its first session on 17 January 1946.

Realising that too often, it is unclear who should drive a particular initiative, complementarity and subsidiarity should be practiced with the view of avoiding duplication and overlap of efforts and fostering efficient task-sharing between the UN and the AUC/PSC on the one hand and the RECs/RMs and the AUC/PSC on the other hand. Such an initiative would formalise an agreement and save the resources of the PSC which are often spent in competing to intervene in areas where other international or regional bodies not only have an interest, but the capacity and are better resourced to intervene. This agreement should institutionalise a framework for coordination between the PSC and the UNSC, RECs/RMs and other AU bodies, and should consecrate space for CSOs to observe and monitor their (non-)compliance.

For example, the harmonisation of the continental and regional early warning mechanisms with the full participation of CSOs with relevant expertise is vital towards strengthening monitoring and evaluation, and fostering national, regional and continental conflict prevention measures.

#### **4. *Insufficient communication and accessibility around the work of the PSC***

There is a lack of knowledge on the workings of the PSC.

Against this background, the PSC needs to be pro-active in disseminating information about its mandate, monthly agendas and how it meets its objectives.

More information sharing is needed by the AU about its various organs and how CSOs can engage in advocacy activities. National level workshops could be hosted by the AU for CSOs to discuss their role and potential contribution to the AU and PSC. A UN-type annual interactive session of CSOs could be arranged under the auspices of the AU, coinciding with an AU Summit.

In addition, PSC meetings could be periodically held in the various regions of Africa as an advocacy tool to create and enhance awareness of the work of the PSC among non-state actors at the national and regional level.

Information on key decisions of the PSC must be accessible at all levels and in all official AU languages to encourage broader non-state actor engagement. This is particularly pertinent for Arabic and Portuguese, which are often underrepresented in communication and activities.

Countering negative perceptions about and underreporting of the PSC's initiatives, the PSC should identify and engage a pool of media practitioners across the continent, and globally, to constantly write about the PSC, its sessions and the goals and merits behind its decisions. Such a drive could be incentivised by establishing the practice of a coveted annual award to recognise journalists who write responsibly on issues of peace and security on the African continent.

#### **5. *Lack of accessibility to ECOSOCC***

The current criteria for membership to ECOSOCC is found to be a source of marginalisation for a number of CSOs operating on the continent.

There is a need to review the ECOSOCC statute to guarantee the participation of more CSOs and ensure that ECOSOCC is representative – in character and in deed – of CSOs operating across the continent. CSOs realised that the provision of at least 50% home-generated funding was a limitation to their participation in ECOSOCC against the background that exceptionally relying on domestic funding would undermine their efficacy and impact at the national and continental level. More so, the ECOSOCC Secretariat/CIDO needs to be reinforced to better serve CSOs.

#### **6. *Lack of political will in decision-making***

There appears to be a deficit in political will among Member States to take courageous and bold decisions to prevent, manage and resolve existing conflicts.

Admitting that the institutions and frameworks of the APSA and PSC as one of the main pillars have equipped Africa with the means to avoid civil conflict and wars, non-state actors advanced that most conflicts are triggered by non-enforcement of existing legal instruments and policies. To compound this challenge, non-state actors across the continent are largely excluded from the crafting of such

agreements. However, their involvement would improve their ability to monitor and evaluate the implementation of agreements and report non-compliance to the PSC. This, however, would require the PSC to constantly persuade Member States to meet their obligations whilst in the PSC. The PSC should insist on the independence of the judiciary as well as the upholding of the principles of democracy and rule of law in all its interventions.

Closing the gap between early warning and early action is crucial, particularly in hotspots across the continent. Warnings of instability around the Kenyan elections of 2007 were known well before the violence unfolded. Addressing this requires commitment from all members of the PSC to strengthen preventative capacities.

Moreover, there is a need to ensure the accountability for crimes committed and call for greater efforts towards transitional justice in countries having experienced recent violent conflict and instability. The PSC, in collaboration with non-state actors, should conduct independent investigations with a view to providing justice to victims. In this regard, it should accelerate the operationalisation of the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights.

#### **7. Lack of appreciation of the comparative advantage of African approaches to conflict resolution**

Efforts to prioritise peaceful means to resolve disputes are often side-lined in the interest of achieving a speedy resolution to a conflict. This can lead to the premature abandonment of mediation efforts, which should in fact remain the preferred mechanism to dealing with such crises.

Whereas intervention and peace support operations should be encouraged to ensure the protection of civilians, efforts to address the root causes of a conflict require sustained dialogue and mediation. The PSC should be cognisant of the fact that this may require revisiting ongoing strategies to ascertain that they remain relevant and context-specific.

#### **8. Widening inequality and lack of socio-economic opportunities**

While poverty levels are decreasing, socio-economic inequality and marginalisation are expected to rise in the near future, potentially triggering future conflict and exacerbating existing crises. Moreover, the lack of economic opportunities, especially among the youth, increases the likelihood of them engaging in violence, organised crime and armed conflict.

There is a need for a more comprehensive approach that considers economic as well as peace and security cooperation efforts. The PSC should be cognisant of this challenge and actively seek to overcome the widening gap between the rich and the poor through its policy formulation. In this regard, the PSC should seek increased collaboration with and provide support to CSOs working with vulnerable groups, such as women and children.

#### **9. Threat of terrorism**

There is a lack of knowledge and common understanding around the nature and motivation of various armed groups using terror to pursue their interests. More in-depth analysis and understanding of this phenomenon is essential.

In addressing this challenge, the PSC should call on Member States to provide technical support for enhanced cooperation on border security management and improve intelligence gathering and exchange. This includes increased knowledge on the sources of support for terrorist activities. To tackle the threat of terrorism there needs to be a regional strategy where the PSC works closely with the RECs and RMs, who play a central role.

#### **10. Continued proliferation of small arms and light weapons**

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to thwart concerted efforts towards conflict management and resolution in Africa. In this regard, the PSC should press Member States who have not signed and/or ratified the global Arms Trade Treaty to do so, and mobilise the collection and burning of illegal arms across the continent.

## **11. Unfinished process of decolonisation and fight for self-determination**

Despite the successes of the OAU/AU, specifically the OAU Liberation Committee, 50 years on, not all Africans enjoy the right to self-determination, including the people of Western Sahara.

Against this background, the PSC should press the UNSC to expedite the process of a referendum in Western Sahara on its future status. Furthermore, the PSC should call upon AU Member States who have not yet recognised the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination to do so.

## **12. Inadequate post-conflict reconstruction strategies**

Actors operating in post-conflict environments often need to act quickly in order to produce immediate and visible results, hence many organisations active in these areas resort to blueprint strategies. There is a need for alternatives to such operational checklists by developing new tools for anticipating, understanding and dealing with threats to peace and security.

In this regard, the PSC should focus on the following:

- Post-conflict management should consider compensation for victims and the provision of psycho-social support. CSOs can provide valuable support with regard to the latter.
- As part of security sector reform efforts, peace support operations should support national armies and engage youth rehabilitation programmes to dissuade youth from joining rebellions which may be a lucrative way of meeting their socio-economic needs.
- Ensure that personnel in peace support operations do not contribute to the distortion of post-conflict reconstruction efforts, e.g. by engaging in illicit trade and other forms of misconduct including abuse of power relations with the local population.
- To enhance and support peacebuilding efforts, the PSC should ensure the effective and comprehensive implementation of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes, particularly as they relate to ineffective demobilisation efforts and the subsequent continued proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

## **IV. Commitments from non-state actors to the PSC and AUC**

- Given the lack of knowledge of the breadth of CSOs on the continent, and hence limited interaction with the PSC, non-state actors pledge to contribute to the mapping of authentic and active CSOs working across the continent as per the Maseru conclusions and in line with Article 20 of the PSC Protocol. This mapping report will be submitted to the AUC for inclusion in its databases.
- Consultations revealed that non-state actors had limited knowledge on some of the issues and thus had the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the width and breadth of PSC interventions. Going forward, non-state actors commit to educate themselves on the work, structures and procedures of the PSC and to engage more.
- In this regard, we will also contribute to the dissemination of evidence-based research, as well as outreach and capacity building initiatives to African citizens and their formations on AU peace and security related issues. Here 'research' includes the collection of data (e.g. on conflict triggers) through surveys, GIS time series mapping, policy analysis, and information gathering. A first specific commitment has been made to host a training workshop in Tunisia on addressing the knowledge gap.
- Community outreach is yet another under-utilised tool that non-state actors can employ to bring the work of the PSC to the people of Africa. It will therefore enhance advocacy and awareness raising through roadshows, peace caravans, among others.
- At the national level, peace and security efforts shall be supported by non-state actors who commit to call upon their national governments to respond to issues of human rights violations, the ratification of international treaties and the provision of adequate funding to the AU, to name a few.

- Non-state actors commit to enhanced participation in PSC open sessions as well as other fora to increase the awareness of the PSC of a given conflict. This would include bringing the voices of all stakeholders to the attention of the PSC, particularly those of victims of conflicts and other vulnerable groups.
- To contribute to reducing the threat of asymmetric warfare, CSOs commit to providing support to the PSC, Member States, RECs and RMs, through research and information gathering on the ground.
- Finally, we pledge to provide expert support to the PSC, Panel of Wise and regional panels of the wise and similar mechanisms, specifically in fact-finding missions and mediation efforts. In addition, we commit to strengthening and promoting continental and regional early warning mechanisms by sharing information from the ground.

## **V. Concluding Remarks**

Participants appreciated the opportunity given by the AUC to non-state actors to input into the strategic planning of the PSC. To build on the momentum created by this process, participants encourage an annual review and coordination between the AUC, and PSC in particular, and non-state actors.

## ANNEX

# Regional Consultations of African Non-state Actors on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Peace and Security Council May 2014

## List of Participants

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