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## Strengthening United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) Coordination on Peace Missions

### Executive Summary

General and focused debates on United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) coordination on issues of peace and security have for a while been and continue to be a topic of importance. The topic of UN-AU coordination dates back to the 2005 World Summit, where UN member states approved the development and implementation of a ten-year AU capacity building plan that would be supported by the UN. The ten-year plan was followed by the introduction of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which is a resolution aimed at strengthening UN-AU coordination on peace and security. Pergnatis (2015, p.4) asserts that institutionally and operationally coordination between the United Nations and the African Union are in no way exhaustive. Andrews and Holt (2007), Derblom, Frisell and Schmidt (2008), Boutellis and Williams (2013) and Coleman and Williams (2017) all highlight the partnership and coordination on peace missions between the UN and the AU; lauding past and present coordination efforts whilst re-calling for an enhanced and structured future coordination. It is without a doubt that strengthened coordination between the two organisations would make the resolution of African conflicts even more effective. It is with this background knowledge that both the UN and AU place an emphasis on strengthening their coordination on peace missions. Notwithstanding the already established resolutions, mechanisms and institutions that promote UN and AU coordination on peace missions, this policy brief aims to openly discuss how strengthening of UN and AU coordination on peace missions can be enhanced further. In this policy brief, policing is divided and discussed in three categories- resolutions, practices and processes that would help strengthen UN-AU coordination on peace missions.

## Introduction

The complexities of resolving African conflicts which are typically difficult to resolve due to their diverse, deep-rooted and complicated nature led to the desire for strong coordination between the UN and the AU on African peace missions. Dating back to the Congo crisis of 1960-1964 (at that time the Organisation for African Unity (OAU)) when the UN placed the mandate of crisis management in Congo on the AU, the relationship of the two organisations has subsequently evolved seeing the two coordinating on a variety of peace missions. This policy brief is not intended to analyse or critique the coordination of the two organisations, but it is rather intended to suggest a review of resolutions particularly resolution 2320 that is aimed at fostering UN-AU coordination. Additionally, the policy brief suggests the adoption or enhancement of practices and processes that can strengthen already existent resolutions, institutions and mechanisms that have been established by the two organisations to promote and enhance their coordination. Further, the aim of this policy brief is to highlight action points that would assist to strengthen the coordination of the UN and AU with the aim of increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the resolution of conflicts and maintenance of peace on the African continent.

Resolution 2320 which is commonly referred to as the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security (initiated in 2016 and signed in 2017) highlights different

methods and mechanisms of enhancing UN-AU coordination, the Joint Framework particularly focusses on UN-AU coordination on peace missions, further highlighting comparative advantage, complementarity in peace and security and burden sharing on the basis of collective responsibility. In Resolution 2320 the UN and AU strive for common understanding and convergence of interests and resources in what are themed as the essential themes of the UN-AU partnership which according to the resolution are- preventing and mediating conflict, and sustaining peace, ensuring an early and comprehensive response to conflict which includes addressing the root causes of conflicts, a continuous partnership review with the aim of enhancing the UN-AU partnership and lastly, an enhancement of the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing for AU-led, UN authorised peace support operations UN Doc. S/RES/2320 (S/2016/780). Before delving into the discussion, it is imperative to note that the UN was not created to work in coordination with regional organisations but rather to offer temporal support to regional organisations in their maintenance of peace and security as stipulated in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The following section aims to discuss Security Council resolution reviews, and the adoption and enhancement of practices and processes that would strengthen already existent resolutions, mechanisms and institutions that were created to enhance UN-AU coordination on issues of peace and security.

## Resolutions:

**1. Conduct thorough reviews that would help resolve any implementation volatilities, uncertainties, complexities and ambiguities ‘VUCA’<sup>1</sup> that exist in resolutions aimed at coordinating UN-AU peace missions.**

Following through Resolution 2320 which purposely speaks of enhancing the partnership between the UN and the AU through joint mechanisms and regular consultations between the two organisations, important questions to ponder on in relation to this resolution and its resounding call for joint organisational mechanisms and consultations arise as follows- what measures have been put in place to ensure that joint mechanisms are formed? how many joint mechanisms have been established since the signing of the resolution? what is the number of joint consultations held every year? With regards the regularity of joint consultations and meetings, how regular is regular? what measures have been put in place to ensure the regularity of these joint consultations? have the joint consultations held so far yielded the desired results and what does the future entail with relation to joint consultations? what form and structure will joint mechanisms and consultations take and what are the anticipated implications of the mechanisms and consultations for the future of peace and security? one might ask. By September 2017, one year after Resolution 2320 had been introduced, the

Security Councils of the UN and the AU held their second informal joint meeting and their eleventh joint consultative meeting where the two security councils shared their opinions on peace and security and assured that they would explore options for further collaboration, including harmonising their work programmes and embarking on joint field missions. Owing to Resolution 2320, strategically and operationally, the Security Councils of the UN and AU have had an increased interaction through their bi-annual meetings, planning for joint missions and a series of regular meetings termed as desk-to-desk meetings. In addition to the UN Security Council Resolution 2320, there is need for the formulation of (a) co-drafted UN-AU resolution that resolves any implementation VUCA that might exist in resolution 2320. If implementation VUCA are not identified and rectified this would lead to implementation mishaps which might cause more harm than good in the resolution of conflicts – the worst-case scenarios being the fueling of conflicts. A recommended way of eliminating the potential of experiencing implementation mishaps is a thorough review of resolution 2320 conducted with analytic lenses to ensure that the intended purpose of the resolution is being achieved. In theory, it is much easier to explain UN and AU coordination and to call for its enhancement. Explaining implementation is much easier than the actual implementation process, resultantly, the ideologies and plans intended for

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<sup>1</sup> VUCA- an acronym that stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. The VUCA acronym is commonly used to describe market conditions and in discussions addressing strategic leadership.

implementation are not always as easy to execute. The VUCA of implementation are evident in actualising coordination and practicality in the field as evidenced for instance in the implementation of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) which required but lacked the strategic use of Somalian security forces and the required transportation and communication services to execute the mission with ease Williams (2011, p.44) and Boutellis and Williams (2013, p.12-5). Another instance of implementation complexities can be evidenced in the United Nations- African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) which along with a myriad of other problems lacked adequate resources and personnel. Boutellis and Williams (2013, p.12-5) conferred that UNAMID was prone to Sudanese government interferences and UNAMID personnel experienced violent attacks from militant groups, these problems amid other problems prevented the rapid and successful execution of the mission. For instance, the AU communiqué prepared by the Permanent Representative of Cote d'Ivoire to the United Nations Security Council dated 28th November 2018, questions how cooperation between the UN, states and regional/sub-regional organisations can be strengthened in practice. Thereby shifting the focus away from theorising and aiming towards practical implementation of strengthening UN-AU coordination on peace missions. From the challenges faced by past and current peace missions, including the cases of AMISOM and UNAMID, it can be deduced that practical, context specific and needs based implementation strategies are essential in eliminating

implementation VUCA that might exist in the implementation of coordinated peace missions.

## Practices:

### **2. Engage in increased peer learning exercises and reviews that trickle down from the highest to the lowest level of UN-AU coordination on peace missions.**

Promoting experience-sharing and organisational learning through peer learning results in the birth of shared values and mutual understanding. Of paramount importance on the notion of shared values is the belief by both the UN and AU that the attainment of peace through joining efforts to resolve conflicts and end violence are critical to the achievement of the fundamental development goals of both organisations- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 of the AU, UN Doc. S/RES/2320. Derblom, Frisell and Schmidt (2008, p.48-53) express that transparent and accountable peer learning that is expressed in openness and willingness to learn from one another would help strengthen coordination further and provide jointness in the key stages of the strategic processes of UN-AU coordination. Derblom, Frisell and Schmidt (2008, p.52-4) and Pergantis (2015, p.17-8) further stress the importance of the sharing of responsibilities and the sharing of moral burdens as each organisations comparative strength permits. Andrews and Holt (2007, p.9) stress the importance of effective and consistent communication as a means of capturing

lessons learned and achieving shared values. They further argue that the hosting of joint meetings once or twice a year is insufficient for a comprehensive exchange and they propose an increased exchange of military and political personnel at both offices would boost communication and strengthen UN-AU coordination. The AU would benefit extensively from peer learning exercises and reviews with the UN as this would help build AU capacity. Particular capacity gaps that would be filled by increased UN-AU exchange are an increase in AU personnel and alternative ways of self-financing in addition to the AU member states commitment to meet 25 percent of the cost of AU peace keeping operations authorised by the security council through a 0.2 percent levy on imports to African countries Boutellis and Connolly (2016, p.12). Williams (2011, p.30) writes that a lack of bureaucrats and standing forces are but some of the structural gaps faced by the AU.

## Processes:

### **3. The enhancement and/or identification and adoption of additional methods of coordination between the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council.**

Among the current deliberate coordination efforts of the UN and the AU are the joint coordination mechanisms and institutions such as the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) headquartered in Addis Ababa. UNOAU operates at a continental level and covers all the affairs of the UN in

relation to the AU. At a sub-regional level, there has been an increase in supplementary deliberate efforts in coordinating UN-AU efforts in peace missions. These sub-regional mechanisms include the United Nations Support Office to Somalia (UNSOS) which offers support to AMISOM, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) which works towards promoting peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel region, and similar mechanisms and institutions, which aim to create peace at a sub-regional level and address cross-cutting issues such as gender inequality, climate change and youth unemployment which threaten peace within their respective sub-regions. As conferred by Derblom, Frisell and Schmidt (2008 p.40-5) coordination at the Security Council level includes the co-training and co-deployment of troops to peace missions, and collaborating peace efforts in the field which take the form of -hybrid missions, support missions and mission transitions. The aforementioned coordinated institutions and mechanisms are commendable for heightening UN-AU coordination and cooperation in peace and security. Additional coordination could take the form of a wide range of practical mechanisms for field coordination, such as strengthening the capabilities of the existent joint coordination institutions and mechanisms, that already play vital roles in pre, during and post conflict situations.

## Conclusion

With an increase in diverse and complicated African conflicts the UN and AU are coordinating their institutional, operational and strategic efforts with the aim of resolving conflicts and ending violence in Africa, which is not an easy endeavor. UN-AU coordination on peace missions dates back as far as the 1960s in the Congo. Currently, UN-AU coordination on peace missions includes the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) 2007 to date, the United Nations- African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) 2003 to date, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSA) 2013 to date, and others. As alluded to previously, the intention of this policy brief was to highlight a few points that would help strengthen already existent UN-AU resolutions, mechanisms and institutions established to support UN-AU coordination on peace missions.

The paper focused on addressing three recommendations themed as resolutions, practices and processes. It was discussed that thorough resolution reviews should be conducted in order to resolve any implementation VUCA that might exist in resolutions aimed at coordinating UN-AU peace missions. Furthermore, in relation to practices and processes, the paper discussed that an engagement in peer learning exercises and reviews would result in an enhancement of UN-AU shared values and capacity building for the AU. Lastly, in order to strengthen UN-AU coordination on peace missions, it would be imperative for the UN and AU to enhance already

existent mechanisms or institutions and also if deemed necessary by the UN and the AU, they could identify and adopt additional mechanisms and institutions that could help to increase their effectiveness and efficiency in their resolution of conflicts.

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