The UN, the AU and ECOWAS –
A Triangle for Peace and Security in West Africa?

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1   Introduction

The central question in the regional-global security debate is how the relationship between the UN and regional organisations should be structured so as to maximise the comparative advantages of each body and ensure the complementarity of roles, while maintaining the primacy of the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Current debate is centred on how feasible 'partnerships' can be between the UN and regional organisations.[1] The United Nations (UN) has primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security. In his *Agenda for Peace*, then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali acknowledged that the capacities of regional organisations in the key areas of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking, and post conflict peacebuilding could not only lighten the UN's burden, but also help consolidate 'a deeper sense of participation, consensus and democratization in international affairs'.[2] However, although regional organisations have a clear 'stake' in resolving regional crises, the complex dynamics of such crises can mitigate the impact of these organisations.[3]

The relationship between the UN and African regional organisations has received significant attention due to the preponderance of conflicts on the continent. The UN has collaborated with the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), predominantly in the area of peacekeeping, and continues to make efforts to improve its relationships with them, notably in the area of peacebuilding. The latest initiative of the UN in this regard is the implementation of a ten-year capacity building plan for the AU and its sub regional organisations, discussed further in a later section of this paper. Considering that the UN, the AU, and ECOWAS each have peace and security mandates that concern Africa, there is clearly much to be gained from ensuring coherence and coordination of the efforts of these organisations in the maintenance of peace in Af-

rica. The challenges of and opportunities for greater cooperation are the focus of this paper. Following a brief overview of the history of relations between the UN and the AU and the UN and ECOWAS, the paper considers the opportunities for, and challenges to more fruitful collaborations between the UN, the AU and ECOWAS. In a concluding section, the paper highlights key issues and restates the need for clearer and closer working relationships among the three bodies in the area of peace and security.

2   A Historical Background

The regional-global security debate is about as old as the UN itself. The Dumbarton Oaks proposals subordinating regional arrangements' peace and security efforts to the UN Security Council generated strong resistance from Latin American and League of Arab states. An important modification was made at the San Francisco conference concerning the right to individual and collective self defense: Article 51 of the UN Charter protected the 'inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations'.[4]

When the UN came into being, there were only four African member states and they did not have much say in the policies and actions of the world body. When the Congo crisis broke out in 1960, the UN, Belgium, and the Soviet Union intervened because there was no African regional body to contend with the UN over the resolution of the dispute.

3   Conflict Management in Africa: The UN and the Organisation of African Unity/African Union

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Africa's first effort at continental integration, was formed in 1963. It marked Africa's first attempt to address its own security challenges. However, the OAU's failure to resolve conflicts in Nigeria (1967-1970), for example, exposed the organisation's limitations and hampered the UN's ability to respond.

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[1]   See Tim Murithi, Between Paternalism and Hybrid Partnership: the Emerging UN and Africa Relationship in Peace Operations, FES Briefing Paper, May 2007.

[2]   Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, Chapter VI, 1992.

[3]   Report of the Secretary-General on the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, in the maintenance of international peace and security, 24 March 2008.

[4]   Interview with James Jonah, New York University Graduate Centre, July 7, 2008, New York. For more detailed information, see James Jonah, *The United Nations,* in Adekeye Adebajo & Ismail Rashid (Eds), 'West Africa's Security Challenges: Building Peace in a Troubled Region', 2004, pp. 319-347. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

In a period of waning UN interest in Africa[5], the OAU deployed its first military mission, an inter-African force, in Tchad in 1981.[6] The OAU mission was unable to resolve the Tchad conflict due to a lack of adequate financial and logistical resources among other factors. In 1993, the OAU facilitated peace talks and deployed a Neutral Military Observer Group to Rwanda that was eventually taken over by the UN. Subsequent peace interventions in Ethiopia/Eritrea (2000), Burundi (2003-2004)[7], and Somalia (2007-date), among others, have served as precursory efforts to UN missions. The UN's interventions in Somalia and Rwanda accentuated its disinterest in Africa and emphasized the need for stronger African responses to African conflicts.

Although the UN has co-deployed in the past with the AU and ECOWAS in several African countries, the joint AU-UN hybrid mission in Darfur (UNAMID) marks an attempt to depart from the previous form of cooperation between the UN and African regional organisations whereby the AU and ECOWAS would deploy first and the UN would eventually take over full responsibility for the mission. Since its deployment, UNAMID has encountered serious problems including inadequate logistics and personnel.[8] Again, poor capacity on the part of some AU staff raises questions about how equitable a partnership the operation is.[9] The indictment by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of Sudanese President Omar Bashir and the AU's condemnation thereof suggest that there is insufficient consultation and consensus between the UN and the AU on Africa's security concerns. These issues need to be addressed if the mission is to succeed in fulfilling its mandate as well as serving as a workable model for future cooperation between the UN and African regional organisations.

4   Conflict Management in West Africa: The UN and ECOWAS

Other efforts at regional integration followed in Africa's various sub regions, notably the Eco-

nomic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975. ECOWAS was formed with a primary mandate to improve regional economic integration in West Africa. However, the onset of civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone underscored the indispensability of peace and political stability to successful economic integration, forcing a shift from economic to political priorities. ECOWAS deployed its Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia (1990-1998, 2003-2006), Sierra Leone (1997-2000), Guinea Bissau (1999), and Côte d'Ivoire (2003).

The ECOMOG missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone occurred without prior UN authorisation due to internal divisions within ECOWAS and the UN. The UN Security Council held several informal consultations, some in response to ECOWAS' requests for assistance, but took no immediate action. After difficult negotiations, the UN sent military observer missions to Liberia in 1993 (UNOMIL) and Sierra Leone in 1998 (UNOMSIL) to help ECOMOG implement its mandates under the respective peace agreements. While the UN retained UNOMIL, resource constraints forced the partial withdrawal of ECOMOG troops from Sierra Leone in 2000. The UN responded by transforming UNOMSIL into a peacekeeping mission, UNAMSIL.

Difficulties that confronted the UN-ECOWAS cooperation in Liberia and Sierra Leone included lack of clear mandates, disparities in logistics and remuneration, and divergent approaches to issues such as sanctions, and elections. As such, even though there were some useful consultations between the UN Security Council and ECOWAS, the above factors created a disconnect between the political decisions that were made and their implementation in the field.

ECOWAS withdrew its troops from Guinea-Bissau after a few months due to a lack of financial and logistical support from the UN and the international community. After questionable elections in 1999, the UN established a Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS).

5   The UN-AU Capacity-Building Framework: the Story so Far

Throughout their existence, the OAU (now AU) and ECOWAS' conflict management capacities have been constantly tested by a succession of conflict scenarios. The same conflicts have continually tested the provisions of the UN Charter concerning regional solutions to instability and the UN's evolving disposition towards engage-

[5]   Jonah, *The United Nations*, page 320.

[6]   Cedric de Coning , The Role of the OAU in Conflict Management in Africa, Monograph No. 10, Conflict Management, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, April 1997

[7]   Festus Aboagye, *The African Union in Burundi: Lessons from the First African Union Peacekeeping Operation*, 2004.

[8]   Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, 7 July 2008.

[9]   Interview with General Henry Anyidoho. New York, June 24, 2008.

ment with such initiatives. Despite extensive mediation activities by the AU and ECOWAS, previous cooperation between these organisations and the UN has focused mainly on peacekeeping. Since 1995, the UN has made several efforts to broaden the scope of these relationships and clarify the roles of each party. While underlining the UN's control over the maintenance of international peace and security, several high level and thematic meetings with regional organisations, Security Council debates, and key documents/reports and resolutions have affirmed the important role of regional organisations in peace and security and made recommendations aimed at ensuring more effective cooperation between them and the UN.[10]

In 2005, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1631 which identified priority areas for collaboration between the UN and regional organisations. Further to the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on implementing Resolution 1631[11], the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council elaborated a ten-year Capacity Building Programme to enhance the ability of the AU and its sub regional organisations to 'address the challenges to human security in Africa'.[12] The focal areas identified by the Framework include conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In April 2008, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1809 highlighting progress made so far and identifying areas that require further attention.

Implementation of the Capacity Building Programme has so far focused mainly on the activities of the "African Union Peacekeeping Support Team" within the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. This team has deployed staff at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa with the aim of providing the necessary expertise and transfer of technical knowledge to enhance the AU's capacity for planning and managing Peace Support Operations. [13] In furtherance of this

same goal, the DPKO has held a number of training programmes targeted at senior AU officials (civilian, military and police). The DPKO has also provided some support towards the realisation of the African Standby Force (ASF) although this support has been criticised as being insufficient.[14]

6   Opportunities for Collaboration

Previous cooperation among the UN, the AU and ECOWAS has consisted mainly of peacekeeping. Thus, lessons learned from joint peacekeeping operations must first be consolidated in order to improve future collaborations, before other opportunities for collaboration may be considered.

Lessons learned from Joint Peacekeeping

In joint peacekeeping operations, cooperation must occur at all levels (i.e. political, military, and economic) and must be based as far as is practically possible on the comparative advantages of all organisations involved. Africa has experienced soldiers but is currently not in a position to make significant financial contributions to joint peacekeeping missions. As such, the UN and Africa's bi- and multilateral partners must commit to provide the required funding and logistics for joint peacekeeping operations. African countries must be consistent in their demand for this.

Mandates must be clear, coherent, and complementary in order to ensure mission success.[15] In Sierra Leone, erroneous assumptions by UNOMIL about the deployment locations of ECOMOG led to serious casualties for the UN.[16]

Care must be taken to distinguish between capacity-building and capacity substitution. It is useful for the UN and bilateral and multilateral development partners to loan technical capacities to organisations like the AU. However, care must be taken to ensure that the intended knowledge is genuinely transferred. This form of assistance does not eclipse the need to develop the capacity of the beneficiary organisation in the face of pressure to meet deadlines and achieve set targets.

[10] For more detailed information, see *A Regional-Global Security Partnership: Challenges and Opportunities*' (2006), and Security Council Report Update No. 3, September 2006.

[11] Op. cit.

[12] Declaration Enhancing UN-AU Cooperation: Framework for the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union. The Framework had previously been proposed by the *World Summit Outcome Document* (October 24 2005).

[13] For example, a technical team is currently at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa assisting with advice and assistance to UNAMID; I.nterview with Nicholas Seymour, July 8, 2008, UN, New York. See 'Report of the Secretary-General on the relation-

ship between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, in the maintenance of international peace and security', 24 March 2008.

[14] Cilliers, J., 2008, 'The African Standby Force – An update on progress', ISS Paper 160, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa.

[15] S/RES/1809 (April 16, 2008)

[16] Jonah, the UN, page 328.

Conflict prevention and Peacebuilding

The UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is a new creation and expression of the UN's recognition of the need for a holistic approach to conflict management. The PBC, established in 2006, aims to consolidate the benefits of international efforts to end war in countries emerging from conflict. Its specific mandate is to:

- Bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery;

- Focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict and to support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundation for sustainable development,

- Provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United nations, to develop best practices, to help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and to extend the period of attention given by the international community to post-conflict recovery.[17]

Post-conflict reconstruction is an expensive long-term process. There is a need for better coherence and coordination of bilateral efforts to avoid duplication and ensure that host countries' needs are met. There may also be a need to review the PBC's mandate or strengthen its relationship with the relevant UN organs.

The PBC's work in West Africa has so far focused on two countries: Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and to a lesser extent, Liberia.[18] Consultations between each country's government and the country-specific configurations (CSCs) of the PBC led to the formulation of Strategic Peacebuilding Frameworks for each country.[19] Sierra Leone was allocated $35 million, 19 million of which remains unspent.[20]

An important observation of the Sierra Leone CSC visit to Freetown is the centrality of economic development to peace and stability. However, recent debates in the PBC on the relevance of energy reform to the Strategic Peacebuilding Framework for Sierra Leone raised questions about what constitutes peacebuilding and what issues belong on the PBC agenda. In order to be effective, the PBC's interventions must be as comprehensive as possible bearing in mind that peace, security, and development are inextricably intertwined[21].

The founding resolutions of the PBC provide for the participation of 'relevant regional and sub regional organizations' in CSCs at the invitation of the PBC Organisational Committee.[22] While the AU Permanent Observer Mission in New York has attended most of these meetings, ECOWAS has not always been represented at the CSCs for Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau.[23]

Like the UN, the AU and ECOWAS recently developed conflict management frameworks to coordinate previously ad hoc peacebuilding interventions. The AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Framework (PCRD) and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) both aim to coordinate more holistic approaches by each organisation towards the management of conflict in Africa. The AU and ECOWAS need to be more directly involved in the PBC's work, a role that should be clearly articulated in any agreements between the UN and these organisations.[24]

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[17] Paragraph 2, UN Security Council Resolution 1645 (2005).

[18] The Government of Liberia received $10 million from the Peacebuilding Fund for promoting awareness of ongoing political processes as part of its post-conflict reconstruction programme.

[19] Country specific configurations are sub-committees of the PBC specifically convened to deliberate on the peacebuilding needs of countries under the consideration of the PBC. Strategic Peacebuilding Frameworks are essentially roadmaps for addressing the priority areas of intervention identified by countries on the PBC's agenda.

[20] The UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) claims that this is due to delays by the government of Sierra Leone in submitting project documents. Representatives of the Sierra Leone government however attribute it to delays in the disbursement of funds by the relevant UN office in Sierra Leone.

[21] Kofi Annan, In Larger Freedom, United Nations, 2005.

[22] See Article 7 (b), S/RES/1645 (December 20, 2005), and Article 7 (b), A/RES/60/180 (December 30, 2005).

[23] ECOWAS did not participate in the CSC visit to Sierra Leone and it is not known whether the findings of the visit were communicated to ECOWAS. Interview with H. E. Mr. Nathaniel Milton Barnes, Permanent Representative of Liberia to the UN. New York, July 10, 2008.

[24] Resolution 1631 (October 17, 2005) proposed that the UN consider forming cooperation agreements with regional organisations to serve as frameworks for joint peacekeeping operations.

Conflict Mediation

The UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) was established in Dakar in 2001. Though its mandate is to coordinate UN activities in West Africa, the location of the office in Dakar is hindering its work as ECOWAS' headquarters is located in Abuja, Nigeria.[25] The AU and the UN Department for Political Affairs (DPA) are engaged in a number of initiatives including developing an operational plan for the Panel of the Wise, developing an AU toolbox of mediation experience, and providing various forms of mediation training for AU personnel.[26]

7   Challenges to Greater Cooperation

Lack of established framework

As stated earlier, fierce debates preceded the deployment of UN missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, reflecting the UN's ambiguity towards co-deploying with a regional organisation (in Africa).[27] In order to forestall future misconceptions or willful manipulations of the provisions of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the UN must confirm its commitment to work more closely with regional organisations by creating through a collaborative process a framework that defines the responsibilities of the UN and relevant regional organisations in a given conflict situation, while maintaining flexibility with regard to the rate of response and other peculiarities of varied conflict situations. For instance, it is a major principle of the UN to not intervene in a conflict without a peace agreement whereas ECOWAS is prepared to do so. However, in certain situations, it is not possible to negotiate peace agreements without first establishing some measure of stability. ECOWAS deployed in Sierra Leone and Liberia without peace agreements and subsequently created the conditions for negotiations that led to the respective peace agreements.[28]

A mechanism for monitoring and periodic evaluation should accompany the framework for co-operation between the UN and regional organi-

sations to ensure that all the parties fulfil their responsibilities. Concrete action should be taken to hold consultations on and finalise partnership agreements between the UN and regional organisations. For this relationship to be meaningful, it must be clear who will do what, when and how. For example, will UN approval of AU- or ECOWAS-led missions be given pre- or post- deployment? What effect will this have on the legitimacy of these missions?

The principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states is central to the UN; how will it be reconciled with the exigencies of the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as enshrined in the ECOWAS and AU conflict management frameworks? As Jackie Cilliers rightly observes, the differences in approach by these organisations to the principle of R2P raise issues regarding the handover by ECOWAS and/or the AU to the UN in situations where this is deemed necessary due to logistical and resource constraints. The UN and the AU both respect the sovereignty of member states. However, the Constitutive Act of the AU, in stark contrast to its predecessor states that it has the "right … 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 raises issues of how mandates will be determined and the different criteria for intervention for both organisations fulfilled in order to ensure a smooth transition from one mission to another.

The UN and bi- and multilateral development partners of ECOWAS will have to bear the burden of financing joint UN-ECOWAS operations for the foreseeable future. Most ECOWAS member states will not be in a position to contribute financially to peace missions while they continue to stagger under the weight of unwieldy debt burdens. Funding has long been a major issue for the AU, the ECOWAS, and other African sub regional organisations. It is inconceivable that African countries continue to service unrealistic debt burdens with money that could be put to better use in critical areas of need.

Capacity-Building: Too Many 'Cooks'…

Beside the UN, there is presently a multiplicity of development partners - organisations and states - seeking to work with the AU and ECOWAS in

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[25] Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, *The Emerging Role of the AU and ECOWAS in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding*. Page 37.

[26] See 'Report of the Secretary-General on the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations'..

[27] James Jonah, 'The United Nations', in *West Africa's Security Challenges: Building Peace in a Troubled Region*, Adekeye Adebajo (and Ismail Rashid (Eds), Lynne Rienner, 2004, Colorado: USA, page 327.

[28] Interview with General Henry Anyidoho, New York, June 24, 2008.

different areas.[29] It is not clear whether either organisation has identified priority areas for support or is coordinating its work with partner organisations and countries within the framework of its stated needs. Further research is needed to address this important question.

One actor whose role urgently needs to be strengthened is civil society, in particular the West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF). Efforts are ongoing to revive WACSOF which was paralysed for a while by internal divisions among its members. ECOWAS should work with independent civil society actors and WACSOF to support WACSOF to fulfil its function as a forum for civil society engagement with ECOWAS.

Civil society has an important role to play in conducting research, providing expertise to the AU and ECOWAS, and assisting in the implementation of stated goals in diverse areas of peace and security. The AU and ECOWAS should partner with universities and other educational and training institutions to establish training programmes specifically targeted at developing, especially among young Africans, the knowledge and skills needed to enhance Africa's capacity for conflict management. Other courses could be organised in collaboration with networks of experts such as the African Security Sector Network (ASSN) and the West African Network for Security and Democratic Governance (WANSED).[30]

8 The Relationship between the AU and ECOWAS

In principle, a relationship of subsidiarity exists between the African Union (AU) and African RECs. In reality, the nature of this relationship is unclear. It would seem that the AU has had more influence over the activities of RECs that have relatively lesser experience of conflict management – notably in Eastern and Southern Africa. Is there a case, then, for eliminating the role of the AU as 'middle man' between the UN and African RECs? Perhaps. But there is a stronger need for coherence of policy and approach of African countries towards international security cooperation. In the author's view, there is less to be gained from sidelining the AU than there is from assisting the continental body to take its

rightful place as the primary initiator and implementer of security policy in Africa.

The AU is the only African inter-governmental organisation with permanent representation at the UN because it is considered as the umbrella body for all African sub regional organisations. Ideally, this means that the AU should be in a position to represent equitably the security and other concerns of each of its sub regions. This is not the case for several reasons. First, there currently exists a multiplicity of sub regional organisations in Africa.[31] The AU is attempting to rationalise these groupings by formally recognising eight.[32] This project faces a number of challenges. For one thing, Africa's intra regional boundaries are not rational and some countries fall within the geographic scope of several regional economic communities (RECs). Second, although the AU has elaborate peace and security mechanisms and policies, it lacks the needed cohesion and resources to utilise them effectively. Although the AU and ECOWAS both have active working relationships with the UN, there does not seem to be coordinated interaction between both organisations' interactions with the UN. The AU may thus not be in a position to appreciate fully or articulate eloquently the major concerns of the West African sub region. This should not preclude the AU from participating in UN-ECOWAS meetings. Infact; it would provide an excellent opportunity for the AU to learn from two organisations with considerable experience of peace management in Africa. It would also help clarify areas of collaboration among all three organisations. Thirdly and relatedly, the AU is in a state of flux at the moment. A recently completed audit of the AU concluded that the continental body is not functioning at full efficiency because several key commitments have not been met.[33] As the AU attempts to streamline its organs, structures and operations, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) has a role to play in coordinating experience-sharing and staff exchanges among the various recognised African RECs.

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[29] Interview with Mashood Issaka, Senior Program Officer, International Peace Institute, New York. June 24, 2008.

[30] See www.africansecuritynetwork.org and www.wansed.info.

[31] West Africa: ECOWAS, UEMOA; East Africa: COMESA, ; Central Africa: ECCAS, ; North Africa/Horn of Africa: AMU, IGAD; Southern Africa: SADC,

[32] Interview with Mashood Issaka.

[33] The audit, commissioned by the AU in Accra in July 2007, reviewed the structures, processes and operations of the AU with a view to promoting efficiency and coherence. The audit contains roughly 170 comprehensive recommendations, see Audit of the African Union, December 18, 2007, p. 16. Available online at www.pambazuka.org. See also Accra Declaration of July 2007.

Before it can occupy its rightful position as the supervening body for African issues, the AU will have to earn legitimacy before its RECs by building its own capacity to represent their interests while helping to enhance their various capacities to fulfil their respective mandates. Efforts to implement the ten-year capacity-building framework have hitherto centred on building the African Standby Force, finalising the Early Warning Systems of the AU and ECOWAS and enhancing the peacekeeping capacities of both organisations.

Each of the eight RECs recognised by the AU should consider establishing liaison offices at the UN. This will help conserve the time and costs of regular travel to New York for relevant meetings, and facilitate RECs' inputs to UN activities, especially the country-specific meetings of the PBC that take place frequently and often at short notice.

9   UN Security Council Reform

Africa's capacity or lack thereof to represent its security interests at the UN may be attributed partly to the lack of permanent African representation on the UN Security Council – an issue that is still the subject of considerable debate. Africa has two rotating seats of two years each in the present composition of the Council. Recent attempts to expand the membership of the Security Council and obtain an additional two permanent seats and at least one additional rotating seat for Africa, failed. Adekeye Adebajo attributes this to the 'deep divisions' that emerged among African countries on the issues of which countries should occupy the permanent seats and whether or not they should have the power of veto.[34] African leaders need to look beyond their differences at the prospective gains for the entire continent of having permanent representation on the UN Security Council. The process of achieving consensus on this matter and identifying potential drivers should be initiated and discussed in Africa's principal sub regions before being discussed at the continental level.

Until the next opportunity avails itself for the much-needed reform of the Security Council, Africa will have to rely on its political leaders to represent its interests at the UN. Unfortunately, recent election-related crises in some African countries (e.g. Guinea, Senegal, Cape Verde,

and Benin, among others) calls into question the legitimacy of some African leaders and their ability to defend accurately their countries' needs. It may also have a bearing on the ability of these governments to appoint experienced and capable representatives to their permanent missions to the UN.

The ECOWAS must intensify its efforts through the Authority of Heads of States and Governments and its Council of Elders to implement fully the provisions in the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001) concerning the mismanagement of elections and unconstitutional accessions to power.

10   Conclusion

The rationales for engagement on peace and security between the UN and regional organisations are numerous. RECs are closer to regional conflicts. They understand the dynamics of such conflicts, appreciate the specific needs for intervention, and know how it can be organised and implemented as quickly and efficiently as possible. Again, the fluidity of conflict imposes a greater burden on RECs to act quickly to prevent conflict in one country spreading to contiguous states. There are myriad other reasons why the involvement of RECs in regional peace is indispensable and the UN has long recognised this.

Notwithstanding, regional organisations do not always have the necessary resources to enable them respond appropriately to conflicts. The UN, on the other hand, may lack the required expertise or understanding of regional conflict dynamics to intervene alone; hence the need for partnership. Over the years, the UN has restated its desire to work more closely with RECs and attempted to create an acceptable framework. If this latest attempt is to succeed, two main issues must be addressed: the clarity of roles, the capacity of the AU and ECOWAS to engage with the UN, and the capacity of the UN to absorb the capacities of these organisations and other African RECs in its responses to security situations in Africa.

The principle of reciprocity must inform all future UN-AU and UN-ECOWAS collaborations. African troops and civilian personnel have been and continue to be active in UN-led peace missions throughout the world. Even if other UN-member states cannot provide the human resources needed for peace missions in Africa, they should not withhold financial and material support to African-led or joint peace missions. The accountability that the UN expects from regional bodies

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[34] 'Chronicle of a death foretold', in *A Dialogue of the Deaf*, Essays on Africa and the United Nations, Adekeye Adebajo and Helen Scanlon (Eds), Jacana Media, South Africa, 2006, page 26.

with a mandate for regional security comes at the cost of a stronger and sustained commitment to such organisations.

All options must be explored for closer collaboration between the AU and ECOWAS. The AU is only as strong and effective as the sum of its parts.

About the author

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