INTERACTION BETWEEN THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL AND 
THE PANEL ON THE REVIEW OF UN OPERATIONS 
ADDIS ABABA, 11 FEBRUARY 2015 

REMARKS BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE AU COMMISSION PEACE AND SECURITY ON THE 
NEW SECURITY THREATS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN-LED PEACE OPERATIONS

Let me start by reiterating that the initiative by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to convene a High-Level Panel on Peace Operations is important and timely.

Yesterday, the Commission of the African Union (AU) had in-depth interactions with the High-Level Panel, both at the level of the Chairperson and the Department. The Panel also exchanged views, via VTC, with the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), which is currently on mission in Mali. We learned from the Panel about their thinking and objectives. And I trust that they also learned from us, about our perspectives and views.

The importance of peace support and peacekeeping operations for the continent cannot be overemphasized. Today, there are more than 100,000 AU and UN peacekeepers and international civilian personnel deployed on ten missions on the continent. They are deployed in critical locations, where the future of African nations is at stake. Their annual cost exceeds $7.5 billion dollars. Peace support operations are a vital part of Africa’s security landscape today.

Today, we are faced with new conflict dynamics and threats. The nature of conflict has changed: transnational dynamics, armed non-state actors, illicit trafficking and other related emerging security threats play an ever-increasing role. These new threats challenge democratic governance, as various groups resort to violence to further their political claims. They, at times, undermine the territorial integrity of our Member States. Add to this, the rise of terrorism and violent extremism.

It is, therefore, no surprise that today’s peace operations differ greatly from an earlier generation, notably the peacekeeping missions of the Cold War era and immediate post-Cold War era. The following elements are worth highlighting:

- First, as we all agree, today’s peace operations larger and more complicated;
- Second, rather than deploying only when hostilities have ended, peacekeepers are deployed into situations of active ongoing armed conflict;
- Third, their mandates go beyond simply monitoring a ceasefire and keeping belligerents apart. It includes wide ranging tasks, such as the protection of civilians, support to stabilization and nation building and other related tasks;
Fourth, peacekeepers find themselves operating alongside and hand-in-hand with foreign Special Forces engaged in counter-terrorist operations, or international law enforcement tasks such as controlling piracy of illegal narcotic trafficking.

Additionally, new international norms have been established, such as the Responsibility to Protect and the protection of civilians, and zero tolerance of sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation. Let me add here that many of those transformations were initiated in Africa and have been spearheaded by the AU and its Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. For example, the concept of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ emerged from the notion of ‘Sovereignty as Responsibility’, developed by an eminent African scholar, jurist and diplomat, Dr. Francis Deng. The norm of the right to intervene in cases of genocide and crimes against humanity was enshrined in the AU Constitutive Act. It was the Inter-Governmental Authority Development (IGAD) that, in 1994, enshrined the right to self-determination for the people of southern Sudan as a central principle for the resolution of the civil war in Sudan.

How did the AU, through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), adjust to the new security environment and threats, as well as to the new norms that have emerged? I would like to highlight the following nine elements:

- First, the readiness of the PSC to take bold and decisive action and authorize the deployment of operations in extremely unstable environments, where no one else is willing to venture. Since the early 2000s, a number of missions have been authorized by the PSC or its predecessor, the Central Organ for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, including in Burundi (AU Mission in Burundi – AMIB), from 2002 to 2003; Darfur (AU Mission in Sudan – AMIS), from 2004 to 2007; Somalia (AU Mission in Somalia – AMISOM), since 2007; Central Africa (Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord’s Resistance Army – RCI-LRA), since 2011; Mali (African-led Support Mission in Mali – AFISMA, in 2012 – 2013; and Central African Republic – CAR (African-led Support Mission in the CAR – MISCA), from 2013 to 2014. Last January, the PSC authorized the deployment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) established by the Member countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Benin to combat the Boko Haram terrorist group. In 2007, the Assembly of the Union authorized operation “Democracy in the Comoros”, to restore state authority in the Island of Anjouan. The PSC and the other AU policy organs should be commended for their pro-activeness.

- Second, AU operations are given robust and, where necessary, peace enforcement mandates. The objectives vary: they range from protecting civilians against armed and terrorist groups (counter-LRA operation, fight against Boko Haram, CAR, Somalia), to restoring state authority (Somalia, CAR), preserving the territorial integrity of Member States (Mali, Comoros). Often the tasks given to our missions include neutralizing armed groups or eliminating them all together, and fostering state authority.

- Third, we need to acknowledge that these operations entail heavy casualties. This should not be misconstrued as wanton disregard for the lives of African soldiers and police personnel. We are grateful for ever to our Member States for
the sacrifices made and to all those uniformed personnel who paid the ultimate price for the search for peace on our continent. But we also understand that, in situations where the line between peace and war is blurred, we have to intervene to support those willing to break with the cycle of violence, neutralize spoilers and foster peace, for it to be kept at a later stage.

Fourth, while contemporary conflicts are largely intra-state, given the porosity of borders of the emergence of modern technology, these conflicts spill our borders into neighboring states, through movement of displaced communities, fighters, weapons, etc. This regional dimension thus means that the efforts to address the conflicts need to involve the neighboring states. They are the ones directly impacted and are, therefore, more willing than others to bring to an end a conflict that is destabilizing them and impeding their socio-economic development. We believe, therefore, neighboring countries have to be part and parcel of peace operations in their region.

Fifth, as our operations are engaged in offensive military action, the risk of civilian casualties is obviously high. We have, therefore, to take extra precautions to avoid causing unnecessary death that could turn the population against our peacekeepers. Hence, we have, over the past few years, developed a number of policies and tools to minimize civilian causalities, including Indirect Fire Policy, mainstreaming International Humanitarian Law, including United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, establishment of civilian casualty tracking cell, etc.

Sixth, counter insurgency operations cannot succeed without the support of local populations. We have to rapidly show visible and tangible changes and begin to return to normal productive life. We also have to be extremely sensitive to local culture and be respectful. In particular, we have to be very sensitive to accusations that may be leveled against our troops, and adopt zero tolerance policies to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

Seventh, counter-insurgency operations and the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime require enhanced intelligence sharing and cooperation, involving all concerned regional actors. That is why the AU initiated processes aimed at enhancing security cooperation within specific regions. Let me highlight here the Nouakchott Process on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan Region. We are soon launching a similar process in East Africa.

Eighth, our operations require close cooperation with external partners who can provide the type of intelligence and capabilities that are beyond our means. In Mali and CAR, we operated alongside French forces, while in Somalia, we are benefiting from US and UK support. We need to develop further modalities on how best we cooperate, based on our respective comparative advantages.

Ninth, given the nature of the conflicts we are dealing with, many of which can be characterized as civil wars, we need to rethink the whole issue of accountability in the aftermath of mass atrocities. We need to look at ways of furthering healing and reconciliation, to help countries rebuild and promote social cohesion.
As a result of AU’s pro-activeness, a new division of labor is emerging with the UN: the AU deploys initially to stabilize and create conditions for a UN peacekeeping mission that would support the implementation of peace agreement, a lasting political solution and reconstruction. We are aware of the steps taken by the UN to adjust to the new conflict environment, with the provision of more robust mandates that include stabilization tasks. However, this seems to be the exception. It is therefore likely that most of the enforcement operations will be undertaken by the AU.

These developments have an impact on the partnership between the AU and the UN. Whenever the UN is not in a position to directly carry out the required tasks, it should provide predictable, flexible and sustainable support to AU’s operations, building on the AMISOM experience.

The fact that the AU choose to undertake offensive military operations does not mean a preference for military solutions. In parallel to the operations on the ground, we seek as much as possible a political settlement, as demonstrated by AU’s involvement in efforts to seek agreements between parties in Mali and the CAR, among others. Even in countries like Somalia, our objective is to reduce the violence at manageable levels and to encourage as many stakeholders as possible to join the peace process, provided the severe links with terrorism and transnational organized crime.

My last point is to say that, at the end of the day, the only sustainable way to address the new threats I referred to earlier is to build strong, responsive and accountable state institutions at the local and national levels that deliver essential services, as well as ensure inclusive political processes, rule of law and public security. This is key to preventing conflicts and consolidating peace building gains. In this respect, I am glad to note that the June 2014 AU Summit and the PSC, in October 2014, have endorsed the Report of the High-Level Panel on Fragile States titled “Ending Conflict and Building Peace in Africa: A Call to Action” and requested the Commission to take the necessary follow-up steps. In this respect, the Commission, through its continental early warning system, is developing a structural vulnerability conflict assessment tool aimed at identifying at an early stage structural vulnerability to conflict, with a view to developing mitigation strategies.

I thank you.