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Letter dated 24 December 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the concept note (see annex) of this year's eighth thematic discussion of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, held on 27 November 2015, entitled "Partnerships: Importance of regional peacekeeping initiatives".

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex would be brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Mahamat Zene **Cherif**
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Annex to the letter dated 24 December 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Concept note

27 November 2015 Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations thematic discussion entitled “Partnerships: Importance of regional peacekeeping initiatives”

On 27 November 2015, Chad, as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, will hold a thematic discussion entitled “Partnerships: Importance of regional peacekeeping initiatives”. This discussion will bring together Security Council members and a broad range of Member States, particularly troop- and police-contributing countries. Mr. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Tété Antonio, the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, have been invited to brief the Working Group. The main objective of the meeting is to generate a constructive exchange of views on the subject.

Context

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations. In 1945, the drafters of the Charter showed great foresight by envisioning a global architecture that allowed and defined a place for regional arrangements. Based on Chapter VIII of the Charter, the United Nations today works closely with different regional structures, including in the area of peace and security. This evolution stems from the idea that no single actor can cope with international security challenges and that different actors bring comparative advantages. Although the Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, regional organizations have gradually taken ownership of the concept of peace operations. As a result, the number of peace operations deployed by regional organizations has been increasing over the last 25 years, making the organizations key players for international peace and security. Currently, in addition to United Nations missions, peace operations are being deployed, inter alia, by the African Union, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Moreover, some regional organizations are making key contributions within United Nations missions, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) within the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) within the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

Scope of regional peacekeeping initiatives

The scope of regional peacekeeping initiatives spans virtually across the whole spectrum of peace operations because the structures, doctrines and capacities of regional organizations vary widely. However, for some organizations, there can be a gap between the peacekeeping efforts envisioned in their founding documents and

the peacekeeping endeavours they actually undertake. Furthermore, it is important to note that not every regional organization is involved in peacekeeping: in some areas, such as South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, deep-seated tension between neighbouring countries has impeded existing regional organizations taking on peacekeeping mandates.

Some regional organizations — for example, SADC, CIS and ECOWAS — tend to carry out mainly traditional peacekeeping tasks, such as ceasefire monitoring and supporting peace agreements. Others, like the European Union and the OSCE, specialize in military, police and/or civilian capacity-building missions. The African Union is entitled to deploy peace enforcement operations, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army. Other regional organizations are tempted to follow the lead of the African Union, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission with its Multinational Joint Task Force geared towards fighting Boko Haram.

It is important to underline that regional organizations-led peacekeeping initiatives develop according to each organization's capabilities and according to the security needs of the context in which they operate. This means that their peacekeeping expertise is destined to evolve over time, that dormant regional organizations may be quickly restored and new regional arrangements created if needed, and that regional organizations may develop joint peacekeeping initiatives when needed.

In spite of the diversity of regional organizations-led peacekeeping initiatives, it is possible to discern a trend whereby regional organizations-led peace operations are adopting increasingly offensive postures, especially in Africa, in the face of new threats to peace and security. In the face of the emergence of these threats, interregional organizations collaboration is on the rise, as exemplified by the joint SADC-ICGLR (International Conference of the Great Lakes Region) endeavours to set up the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and by the institutionalization of the Nouakchott Process in the Sahelo-Saharan region since March 2013.

Evolution of the peacekeeping security context

Over the last few years, terrorist and criminal groups have been taking advantage of power vacuums in an increasing number of areas. Preying on the population and on the resources of the countries in which they operate, these groups can be seen as spoilers whose interests lie mainly in the perpetuation of instability. They add to the complexity of situations in countries already riddled with instability or dealing with post-conflict uncertainties.

The presence of such groups either impedes the United Nations deployment of peace operations where they are most needed or poses a serious threat to United Nations peace operations already deployed on the ground. Indeed, it is estimated that two thirds of all United Nations peacekeepers are now operating in such areas, struggling to put peace processes back on track and to protect civilians.

As underlined in the recent report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, the United Nations is not prepared to deal efficiently with such armed groups. United Nations peace operations are best suited for deployment in

contexts marked by the existence of a peace agreement — or at the very least a ceasefire — and the willingness of the warring parties to have the United Nations on the ground.

What is the international community to do in more volatile contexts? Surely, it cannot afford to stand idle when civilian populations are taken hostage and abused by terrorist and criminal armed groups. The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations report insists that capable regional forces are usually better suited than United Nations forces when it comes to dealing with such groups.

Advantages and limitations of regional organizations as peacekeeping partners

There are a number of advantages regional organizations may — practically or theoretically — bring with them as peacekeeping partners, especially in complex security contexts. Regional organizations represent a heterogeneous group in terms of peacekeeping doctrines and concepts and some of these organizations are tooled to usefully complement United Nations peace efforts, for instance by carrying out peace enforcement tasks in contexts where the absence of a comprehensive ceasefire agreement or a political settlement prevents the United Nations from deploying a peace operation. When an armed conflict arises or when a terrorist group emerges, neighbouring countries may be in a position to deploy troops most quickly through a regionally coordinated action, including through standby arrangements. Peace operations led by regional organizations tend to cost less than United Nations-led missions, which are usually larger and multidimensional operations. Regional organizations often bring a better understanding of the context, root causes and driving forces of a conflict. Neighbouring countries usually bring a stronger political and military commitment to intervene when it comes to stabilizing a situation and containing a conflict. Regional organizations are better suited to intervene in conflicts that may spill across national borders and that may have regional causes and implications. Lastly, regional organizations may bring more political legitimacy and leverage to peace efforts, especially in contexts where one or more parties to the conflict do not welcome a United Nations presence.

However, regional peacekeeping initiatives also come with their share of drawbacks. Three of these main limitations are the following. To begin with, regional organizations-led peacekeeping operations are staffed with personnel from neighbouring countries, whose priorities may run counter to the overall objectives of the mission. Moreover, in the context of entrenched historical animosity between neighbouring countries, some contingents of regional organizations-led peace operations may be viewed by the local population at best as partial to one party or another to the conflict and as worst as an occupying force, which may jeopardize the mission's success. Lastly, if regional organizations-led peace operations are usually less expensive, as mentioned above, it is quite simply because they sometimes lack the capacities needed to effectively carry out their mandates.

Lack of flexible, sustainable and predictable funding, a major obstacle to African peacekeeping initiatives

With an increasing number of peace operations deployed on the continent, Africa currently hosts 87 per cent of all uniformed United Nations peacekeepers. Meanwhile, since the entry into force of the Protocol relating to the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in 2003 and the subsequent build-up of the

African Peace and Security Architecture, the international peace and security responsibilities shouldered by African regional organizations have grown enormously. Therefore, the Secretary-General describing the African Union as the single most important regional partner for the United Nations in the field of peace and security — as he did in his report on the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (A/70/357-S/2015/682) — should come as a surprise to no one. With this newly acquired "status", the African Union represents an interesting case study when it comes to identifying the main obstacles faced by regional peacekeeping initiatives. Chief among these obstacles is the lack of flexible, sustainable and predictable funding. This issue is considered so important that in 2008, for instance, it prompted the Secretary-General to establish an African Union-United Nations panel in charge of considering the modalities of how to support — including financially — African Union peace operations established under a United Nations mandate. The Security Council has been seized of this issue on several occasions since then.

How the African Union-led peacekeeping initiatives are financed

According to the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (2002), member States of the African organization deploying personnel in African Union peace operations bear the cost of their participation during the first three months and the organization commits to reimburse those States within a period of six months, then proceeding to finance the operation. The African Union has established a Peace Fund to provide the necessary financial resources for its peace operations: such a fund is made up of financial appropriations from the regular budget of the African Union, voluntary contributions from member States and other sources within Africa (private sector, civil society and individuals), and through appropriate fundraising activities. However, for a number of reasons, some of them political, never before January 2013 — with the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) — was the African Union in a position to make available some of its own funds for a peace operation.

Indeed, the African Union has been almost entirely dependent on exceptional measures and on external sources of funding for its peacekeeping initiatives. Apart from its own Peace Fund, the African Union currently depends on four different sources of money to deploy peace operations: the African Peace Facility, financed through the European Development Fund; multi-donor trust funds; bilateral financial support to troop- and police-contributing countries; and United Nations assessed contributions. However, the African Union aims at financing 25 per cent of its peace support operations expenditures by 2020 through its own budget.

As an example, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is financed by bilateral donations and voluntary contributions either to a United Nations-managed Trust Fund or to troop- and police-contributing countries directly. Moreover, the European Union provides the resources needed for the payment of troop allowances and other related expenses, within the framework of the African Peace Facility. Lastly, AMISOM benefits from a United Nations logistical support package dispensed through the United Nations Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA).

Impacts of the lack of flexible, sustainable and predictable funding for African Union-led peace operations

The lack of flexible, sustainable and predictable funding engenders acute problems that prevent the African Union from playing the role it should have in the field of peacekeeping. Some of the main problems are discussed below.

(a) The ad hoc character of the funding the African Union receives for its peacekeeping initiatives inhibits long-term planning. Indeed, it is frequent to witness a strong mobilization of donors when a conflict arises in order to deploy a mission, but then there is a quick drop in interest after some time, whereas the needs on the ground remain high.

(b) The dependence on multi-donor trust funds can be an obstacle to the overall coherence of peacekeeping initiatives, since it opens the door to individual donors' special requirements, hence potentially leaving broad areas of intervention underresourced.

(c) Reliance on unpredictable sources of funding means that there is no guarantee that essential capabilities will be available for the mission which, in turn, may invalidate planning assumptions.

(d) The lack of funding represents a disincentive to potential troop contributors who may be reluctant to commit to peacekeeping initiatives that they see as underresourced, especially when accompanied by a lack of any guarantee of sustained reimbursement.

(e) Depending on large numbers of donors — each one having its very own rules regarding accounting, reporting and auditing — puts a great strain on the already weak structures of the African Union.

(f) Donor support, both financial and practical, provided for specific operations may be able to facilitate an operation, but it does not contribute to building up long-term capacity for the organization.

Recommendations

Against the backdrop of the increasingly difficult contexts in which peacekeeping operations are deployed, regional organizations have a key role to play in the field of international peace and security, especially in Africa. While it is crucial to keep in mind their limitations, it is equally important to acknowledge that they have advantages to offer and that they may usefully complement the efforts already mustered by the United Nations. In order to allow the regional organizations to fully play this complementary role, the Security Council may consider the following recommendations in order to help them improve the flexibility, sustainability and predictability of the funding of their peacekeeping initiatives.

(a) The Security Council should reflect on its double responsibility of responding politically and operationally to new international security threats, and of enabling and supporting regional organizations-led initiatives willing to counter them.

(b) The Security Council should review the steps it could take to encourage and support the establishment of new regional peacekeeping initiatives, especially in areas where international peace and security is jeopardized and where the security

context is not suitable for a United Nations deployment. For instance, the propositions of the Nouakchott Process on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan Region could be used as a springboard for such a review.

(c) The Security Council should mandate the Secretariat to review the full range of potential support modalities towards regional organizations peacekeeping initiatives.

(d) The Security Council should discuss the recommendations of the upcoming United Nations-African Union joint review and assessment of the various mechanisms currently available to finance and support the African Union peace operations it authorizes.

(e) The Security Council should ensure a closer and a more collaborative dialogue with regional organizations willing to initiate a peacekeeping initiative.

(f) The Security Council should welcome, encourage and support the establishment of new regional and subregional organizations or mechanisms, particularly in highly vulnerable parts of the world where no effective security organizations currently exist.