UN Cooperation with Regional and Sub-regional Organisations and Conflict Prevention

Expected Council Action
On 16 April, the Council will hold a debate combining two thematic issues:

- *UN cooperation with regional organisations*; and
- *conflict prevention*.

The meeting will have a particular focus on Africa and will be presided over by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa.

High-level participation by some other Security Council members, including Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the UK, is anticipated. It is also possible that some heads of state of African countries may attend or be represented by foreign ministers. The meeting will also coincide with the presence in New York of high-level officials for the meeting on 17 April between the UN Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC). (In 2007, agreement was reached in Addis Ababa during a meeting with the visiting delegation of the UN Security Council to hold annual meetings between the two bodies.)

A resolution that would highlight developing an enhanced relationship between the Security Council and regional organisations, especially the AU, with a view of making this relationship more effective, as well as encouraging closer collaboration between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission and generally supporting the Secretary-General's proposals from his recent reports on UN cooperation with regional organisations and on conflict prevention, is the expected outcome.

Background
The Council has two relevant reports from the Secretary-General:

- one on enhancing cooperation between the UN and regional organisations (S/2008/186 dated 24 March), which was requested by the Council in March 2007; and

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- one on the implementation of resolution 1625 of 14 September 2005, and strengthening the effectiveness of the UN's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa (S/2008/18 dated 14 January 2008).

South Africa has also circulated a concept paper on the upcoming debate (S/2008/229).

This initiative builds on:

- efforts by Romania in 2004-2005 and Greece 2005-2006 to highlight the importance of better coordination with regional organisations;
- initiatives by South Africa and France under their presidencies in 2007, including a summit level meeting of the Council on 25 September at which French President Nicolas Sarkozy presided over the Council and which aimed at focusing attention on the need to further mobilise the international community to address the challenges of peace and security confronting Africa, and to build support for the efforts being made by the AU; and
- work by Congo including an open debate on 28 August during the presidency of Congo (the then Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa) and a seminar organised by the Working Group on 3 December. On the agenda were methods of supporting national actors to enhance their respective countries' capacity to prevent conflict; regional approaches to cross-border challenges; mediation and peacemaking strategies; and ways to mobilise the international community. Recommendations resulting from the seminar included:

  - ❖ instituting better procedures to allow rapid reaction by the Council to crises;
  - ❖ giving a clearer preventive diplomacy mandate to the Secretary-General;
  - ❖ paying particular attention to disputes with the potential to become a threat to international peace and security; and
  - ❖ enhancing existing partnerships between the Council and regional organisations.

(For further information please refer to our 24 August 2007 *Update report* and our November 2007 and February 2008 *Forecast* reports.)

Cooperation with Regional Organisations
The Secretary-General's report discusses the responsibilities of the UN and international organisations under Chapter VIII of the Charter. It describes the multiple levels on which the organisation already collaborates with regional organisations in the maintenance of international peace and security and identifies the challenges and the opportunities inherent in such partnerships, and some experience of working with the AU.

The Secretary-General makes a number of recommendations:

- clarifying the nature and structure of partnership between the two organisations, including defining the role regional organisations play in the maintenance of peace and security, in particular the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, as well as the necessary distinction between cooperating with regional organisations for Chapter VIII activities and all other regional organisations' activities;

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- developing consultation and coordination mechanisms within and between the UN and regional organisations;
- strengthening and improving the delivery for capacity-building for peacekeeping and peace support operations with regional organisations;
- enhancing the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing regional organisations when they undertake peacekeeping under a UN mandate; and
- strengthening the capacity of the UN Department of Political Affairs in conflict prevention and mediation, as well as undertaking joint reviews by the cooperating organisations of collaborative mediation and peace and security endeavours undertaken by the UN and regional organisations.

The South African mission concept paper suggests that the debate could adopt concrete measures to further enhance the relationship between the two organisations in global peace and security matters. It also highlights as issues for possible discussion:

- the capacities and limitations of regional organisations in response to the complex nature of contemporary conflicts;
- ways in which predictable, sustainable and flexible resources for regional organisations can be secured, in particular the AU, to carry out mandates involving maintaining international peace and security;
- strengthening cooperation on peace-building and post-conflict stabilisation, recovery and reconstruction, including consideration of issues on the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) agenda, AU participation in the PBC processes, support for the setting up of the AU Multi-sectoral Committee and its secretariat, and information sharing and best practices;
- closer cooperation between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission, in all aspects of conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace building and post-conflict reconstruction and development; and
- consideration of mandates and best practices, especially in cases of the UN taking over AU missions and/or providing support for them.

The last debate on the role of regional and sub-regional organisations in maintaining peace and security was held in November. It examined the issue in general without focusing exclusively on Africa. In addition to non-Council UN member states a geographically diverse group of regional organisations including ASEAN, the AU, the EU and ECOWAS, among others, were invited to participate. A presidential statement stressed the need for regional organisations to strengthen contributions to the Council's work. (For more detailed information on this issue please refer to our 18 September 2006, 23 March 2007 and 2 November 2007 *Update reports.)*

Conflict Prevention
The Secretary-General's report (S/2008/18) on strengthening the effectiveness of the UN's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa, was issued on 14 January. It claimed that a culture of prevention was taking hold at the UN "and the commitment to building and mainstreaming its tools has taken root." It suggested that since the last progress report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891), submitted to the General Assembly in 2006, the UN system had played a vital role in Africa and elsewhere in addressing conflict situations at an early stage.

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The Secretary-General however observed that "despite the increased recognition of the utility and effectiveness of preventive measures, a considerable gap remains between rhetoric and reality." He proposed that the key priority was further enhancement of the UN's conflict prevention work and outlined current efforts to strengthen the organisation's conflict prevention mechanisms and instruments, with a view to making them a central component of its collective security architecture.

To enhance the ability of the UN to avert negative developments and prevent crises from escalating into armed conflict, he suggested that the Council:

- enhance its capacity for preventive action, for example by dispatching, on a timely basis, missions to the field to assess situations on the ground;
- use sanctions as a tool for conflict prevention and use reports of groups of experts to carry out lessons learned activities (such as possibly broadening the use of sanctions to apply not only to belligerent states but also to non-state actors, as well as the Council continuing its debate on natural resources and conflict in order to examine options such as the use of sanctions, monitoring and reporting to increase transparency in the international private sector; and
- develop the structured relationship with the AUPSC, including information sharing on conflict situations on the agendas of the two bodies, and considering the modalities for supporting and improving in a sustained way the resource base and capacity of the AU.

He also called on UN member states to:

- support efforts to enhance UN preventive diplomacy and mediation capacities (an apparent reference to his proposal in 2007—now stalled in the General Assembly's Fifth Committee—to strengthen capacity in the Department of Political Affairs);
- deploy integrated offices mandated to build national capacities for conflict prevention in the aftermath of the drawdown of peacekeeping operations, as in the cases of Sierra Leone and Burundi; and
- increase support for the PBC.

For his part, the Secretary General indicated, among other things, that he would:

- move ahead with plans to enhance the Secretariat's capacity to analyse and develop recommendations for action in regard to conflict situations;
- continue efforts to enhance UN regional field presence in support of conflict prevention, particularly in Africa;
- strengthen the capability of the UN for preventive diplomacy and mediation, especially through the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs and its standby team of experts; and
- support efforts throughout the UN system to build national and regional capacity, notably in Africa, to address the root causes of conflict, while strengthening institutions that provide channels for peaceful conflict resolution.

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Possible Outcome

The elements of the draft outcome resolution currently being negotiated among Council members include:

- developing a stronger, structured and effective relationship between the Security Council and regional organisations, especially the AUPSC with a view of making this relationship more effective;
- sustaining the involvement of regional and sub-regional organisations in the peaceful settlement of disputes;
- highlighting the importance of the implementation of the Ten-Year Capacity Building Programme for the AU, especially realising an operational AU Standby Force;
- encouraging closer collaboration between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission;
- enhancing the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing regional organisations when they undertake peacekeeping under a UN mandate;
- supporting the Secretary-General's proposal to set-up within three months an AU-UN panel consisting of distinguished persons to consider comprehensively the modalities of how to support peacekeeping operations undertaken by regional organisations under a UN mandate; and
- requesting the Secretary-General to include assessments of progress on the cooperation between the UN and regional organisations in his regular reporting to the Security Council.

At the time of going to press, the main focus of the draft resolution was on cooperation with international organisations, and to a lesser extent on conflict prevention. Furthermore, some non-African Council members had proposed inclusion of balanced references to other regional organisations (e.g. the EU) in the draft resolution.

Key Issues

The key issue is whether the Council is really ready to take up in a substantive way the recommendations from the Secretary-General's reports and those from the December seminar of the Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. To do so effectively might require significant changes not only in its day to day work but also in its working methods. Council members would need to be ready to commit additional resources to their participation in the Council. The Council would also need to adopt a similar approach in terms of its work with other regions as well.

A number of aspects of the issue lie outside the Security Council's direct decision making role including:

- funding (regional peacekeeping is currently *ad hoc*, uncoordinated and depends on the vagaries of donor financing). Funding or contributing to regional peacekeeping by assessed UN budget contributions is ultimately a matter for the General Assembly and not the Security Council;
- improving the capacity of the UN Secretariat in terms of human and financial resources in its ability to offer longer-term substantive planning or logistical support to missions led by regional or sub-regional organisations is also in the end a General Assembly responsibility. The current

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capacity levels seriously affect the UN's ability to collaborate on substantive issues with organisations in developing their capacity;

- the lack of resources such as equipment, logistics and standards in regional organisations cannot be addressed by the UN without also addressing UN resource levels; and
- an issue within the province of the AU is placing peacekeeping capacity under UN Standby Arrangements System. This remains to be explored. At the moment the Standby Arrangements System is still very much a concept rather than a reality. The AU is working on developing an African Standby Force by 2010 but at this stage there seems to be limited interest in integrating their capacity under UN Standby Arrangements System.

A second key issue is whether the Council's Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa can be reinvigorated. (A key related question in this regard is whether the Working Group can be encouraged to shift its focus from the thematic to the country specific aspects of the issue. This was a key recommendation of the Secretary-General in 2001 which has never been acted on. He proposed that the Working Group work on specific prevention cases. By contrast the Working Group has in practice continued working methods that tended to lead in the direction of abstract discussion. South Africa, the current chair, seems determined to re-energise the Group.

Council Dynamics

Members of the Council appear to be generally agreed on the value of the debate. However, many see its value as prompting future concrete measures that will go beyond the largely conceptual deliberations that characterised the two issues in the past. (Council members are aware of the practical value of strengthening the capacity of regional and sub-regional organizations; however, the Council has not traditionally shown much inclination to consider this issue other than at the abstract level.)

Overall, the Council seems favourably disposed towards the idea of using the Secretary-General's latest reports, as well as viable proposals from the December seminar to assist in its deliberations, and possibly reflecting these in the outcome document of the debate.

While the spectrum of views of Council members on shifting from conceptual to concrete issues is not very clear this stage, African members have retained their traditional stance of pushing for these issues to be debated. Also France and the UK, which were instrumental in helping to develop resolution 1625, appear eager to have conflict prevention become a central part of the UN's work.

Council members are also anticipating a possible request by President Gbagbo of Côte d'Ivoire during the meeting for a modification of the sanctions regime on his country. They have indicated in the past their preparedness to consider a request along those lines (e.g. partial lifting of the arms embargo for law and order purposes).

UN Documents

Selected Security Council Resolutions
• S/RES/1769 (31 July 2007) established UNAMID. • S/RES/1706 (31 August 2006) was the resolution on the situation in Sudan mandating UN assistance to AMIS. • S/RES/1653 (27 January 2006) addressed conflict prevention and resolution in the

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Great Lakes region.

- S/RES/1631 (17 October 2005) was the first resolution adopted by the Security Council on regional organisations.
- S/RES/1625 (14 September 2005) was a declaration on the effectiveness of the Security Council's role in conflict prevention, calling for the strengthening of cooperation and communication between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations in accordance with Chapter VIII.
- S/RES/1497 (1 August 2003) recognised the role ECOWAS played in implementing the June 2003 ceasefire in Liberia and cited Chapter VIII.
- S/RES/1464 (4 February 2003) welcomed the actions of ECOWAS in response to the violence in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002 with reference to Chapter VII and Chapter VIII.
- S/RES/1318 (7 September 2000) was the adoption of the Millennium Summit declaration on maintaining peace and security, especially in Africa.
- S/RES/1197 (18 September 1998) was on the need for the UN to provide support to regional and sub-regional organisations and to strengthen coordination between the UN and those organisations.
- S/RES/1170 (28 May 1998) established the Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

Selected Presidential Statements

- S/PRST/2007/42 (6 November 2007) was a presidential statement on the role of regional and sub-regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security.
- S/PRST/2007/31 (28 August 2007) requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the options for further implementation of resolution 1625.
- S/PRST/2007/7 (28 March 2007) was a presidential statement on relations between the UN and regional organisations, particularly the AU.
- S/PRST/2007/1 (8 January 2007) requested the Secretary-General to provide the Council with more regular analytical reporting on regions of potential armed conflict and stressed the importance of establishing comprehensive strategies on conflict prevention.
- S/PRST/2006/55 (19 December 2006) endorsed the phased approach towards a hybrid AU-UN force agreed upon by the AU Peace and Security Council.
- S/PRST/2006/39 (20 September 2006) welcomed the progress made in realising the goals of resolution 1631 and urged contributions to the capacity building of regional organisations and sub-regional organisations, particularly of the AU and African sub-regional organisations.
- S/PRST/2004/44 (19 November 2004) recognised the importance of strengthening Security Council cooperation with the AU in order to help build its capacity to deal with collective security challenges.
- S/PRST/2004/27 (20 July 2004) was the statement after the Council's debate on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organisations in stabilisation processes.
- S/PRST/2002/2 (31 January 2002) made recommendations for achieving conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.
- S/PRST/2000/25 (20 July 2000) invited the Secretary-General to submit a report on

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the prevention of armed conflict.

- S/PRST/1999/34 (30 November 1999) recognised the importance of building a culture of armed conflict prevention.
- S/PRST/1998/35 (30 November 1998) reaffirmed the increasingly important role of regional arrangements in maintaining peace and security.
- S/PRST/1998/28 (16 September 1998) set general standards for peacekeeping and stressed the need to be fully informed of peacekeeping activities carried out by regional or sub-regional organisations.
- S/PRST/1997/46 (25 September 1997) noted that addressing the challenges of conflict in Africa required a comprehensive approach and called on the Secretary-General to produce a report to address the issue.
- S/PRST/1994/22 (3 May 1994) said that regional and sub-regional organisations should be taken into account when setting up new peacekeeping operations.

Selected Letters

- S/2008/229 (8 April 2008) was a letter from the Permanent Representative of South Africa forwarding the concept paper on the relationship between the UN and regional organisations, in particular the AU, in the maintenance of international peace and security.
- S/2007/640 (29 October 2007) was the letter from the Permanent Representative of Indonesia forwarding the concept paper on the relationship between the UN and regional organisations in the maintenance of international peace and security.
- S/2007/148 (14 March 2007) was the letter from the Permanent Representative of South Africa forwarding the concept paper on the relationship between the UN and regional organisations, in particular the AU, in the maintenance of international peace and security.
- S/2005/567 (8 September 2005) were the conclusions of the sixth high-level meeting between the Secretary-General and regional organisations.

Selected Secretary-General's Reports

- S/2008/186 (24 March 2008) was the Secretary-General's latest report on enhancing cooperation between the UN and regional organisations, in particular the AU.
- S/2008/18 (14 January 2008) was the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1625 (2005) on conflict prevention, particularly in Africa.
- S/2006/590 (28 July 2006) was the report *A regional-global security partnership: challenges and opportunities.*
- A/60/891 (18 July 2006) was a progress report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the prevention of armed conflict.
- A/59/2005 (21 March 2005) was the report *In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all.*
- A/59/565 (2 December 2004) and Corr. 1 (6 December 2004) was the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.
- S/2001/574 (7 June 2001) was the Secretary-General's first comprehensive report on conflict prevention.

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- S/2000/809 (21 August 2000) was the Brahimi report on peacekeeping.
- S/1998/318 (13 April 1998) was the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Selected General Assembly Resolutions

- A/RES/60/1 (24 October 2005) was the World Summit Outcome Document.
- A/RES/49/57 (9 December 1994) was the Declaration on Enhancement of Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional Arrangements or Agencies in the Maintenance of International Peace and Security.

Other

- S/PV.5735 and resumption 1 (28 August 2007) was the discussion on the role of the Security Council in conflict prevention and resolution, in particular in Africa.
- S/2007/496 (14 August 2007) was the letter from the Republic of the Congo containing the terms of reference for the open debate on 28 August 2007 on conflict prevention and resolution, especially in Africa.
- S/2005/828 (22 December 2005) was the report on a seminar held by the Working Group on cooperation between the UN and African regional organisations in the field of peace and security.
- S/2002/207 (1 March 2002) outlined the terms of reference and mandate for the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.
- S/PV.3819 (25 September 1997) was the first ministerial-level debate on the situation in Africa.

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