

**United Nations
Office to the African Union**



**Bureau des Nations Unies
Auprès de l'Union Africaine**

Statement by SRSG Haile Menkerios

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to the

**African Union Peace and Security Council meeting on
strengthening the partnership between the United Nations
and the African Union on issues of peace and security in
Africa**

29 September 2016

Your Excellency the Chairperson of the PSC,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Distinguished Members of the PSC,

Your Excellency Commissioner for Peace and Security,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by expressing my profound appreciation to the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council, H.E. Abou Bakr Mahmoud, and indeed the entire membership of the PSC, for convening this important meeting on the topic ‘Strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa.’

This meeting is very timely, coming only two weeks after the UN Secretary-General issued his first report on *strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the Work of the United Nations Office to the African Union (S/2016/780)*. In this report the Secretary-General notes, that “There is an urgent need for new and stronger ways to address international peace and security challenges. Stronger partnerships with regional organizations, in particular with the African Union, can enable us to respond early, swiftly, coherently and decisively to prevent and manage conflict.”

The Secretary-General also recalls that the Security Council, the General Assembly and various organs of the African Union have repeatedly called for stronger strategic engagement between the United Nations, the African Union and the regional economic communities/regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa. These principles are enshrined in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations as well as in Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

It is imperative that we seize the moment to ensure that the partnership between the two Organizations is more firmly entrenched and strategic in order to better harness our collective efforts to address peace and security challenges in Africa. The scale and complexity of conflicts today, and the suffering that these conflicts create, threaten the international order. Looking across the continent, we face unprecedented threats from

increasingly complex national conflicts including terrorism and violent extremism, as well as trans-national organized crime and issues of maritime security. We face security threats caused by weak governance institutions, electoral disputes and political and economic exclusion. Poverty, unemployment, demographic pressures and climate change are also increasingly impacting on peace, security, and stability.

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

In order to counter these threats, partnership between the African Union and the United Nations is not an option; it is an absolute necessity. While we acknowledge that the United Nations Security Council has ultimate responsibility for international peace and security, we also recognize that neither the UN, nor the African Union or the RECs can address these threats alone.

As Members of the PSC are aware, between 60 and 70 per cent of the UN Security Council's time is spent on preventing and managing conflicts in Africa. Such efforts by the UN Security Council become more effective when they are coordinated with, complement or reinforce the initiatives of the African Union and its RECs. Only by pooling our collective expertise and resources together, and working collaboratively, can our Organizations realistically expect to have a positive impact.

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Collaboration between the UN, the AU and the RECs in addressing conflicts has progressively increased in the last decade. Such collaboration has however been characterized by a series of *ad hoc* engagements. It is time, and there have been increasing calls from both the UN and the AU, to move towards a more structured, systematic and predictable partnership - in short, a strategic partnership. We should not have to reinvent the wheel every time we face a new conflict on the continent. A structured, systematic and predictable partnership would mean that mechanisms are in place and working in both Organizations to ensure joint early and continuous engagement, from early warning and conflict prevention to mediation and peace support operations, and on to post-conflict reconstruction and development.

I must emphasize the importance of the UN Secretariat and AU Commission undertaking joint analysis of emerging and current conflict situations and developing coherent strategies of conflict prevention and management. In the event a political solution alone cannot avert a conflict, the common understanding developed by the two Organisations would form the basis for decisions on possible interventions, including those that require authorization by the two Councils.

In the area of conflict prevention and mediation, there is an increasing body of practice which demonstrates that the two organizations are more likely to succeed if they are well coordinated and act together. It has been demonstrated through practice that mediation efforts have a better chance of success when there is only one lead mediator for a given conflict situation, and that other Organizations support the lead mediator that has a comparative advantage or preferential access to the parties. This has been the case, for instance, in Sudan and South Sudan where the AUHIP led by former President Thabo Mbeki has ably led mediation efforts with the support of the UN's Special Envoy and many other partners. The AU's Facilitator in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Edem Kodjo, leads the national dialogue process with the technical and political support of the UN. Similarly, both the UN and the AU support the efforts of East African Community's facilitator for the Burundi peace talks, former President Benjamin Mkapa.

Admittedly, however, such coordination and complementarity has not always been apparent in conflict prevention and management throughout the continent. It is imperative that the two organizations systematically move in the direction of adopting such an approach.

In peace support operations, the UN continues to support the AU Commission to manage and operationalize African-led peace operations mandated by the AU Peace and Security Council and authorized by the UN Security Council. These range from the AU's long-term engagement in Somalia, to the MNJTF's initiative against Boko Haram and the RTF's engagement against the Lord's Resistance Army. It also includes supporting African organizations as the first responder such as in the crises in the Central African Republic and Mali. While these AU-led, and UN-supported, efforts have been largely successful, they have been undertaken on an *ad-hoc* basis. Although the Security Council will always address each conflict on a case-by-case basis, there is more the two Organizations can do to bring a level of predictability and sustainability to managing peace operations. These are questions that the two Organizations must address in the context of their strategic partnership.

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

The UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council have a pivotal role to play in strengthening strategic partnership. There has been significant progress over the last few years in strengthening collaboration between the two Councils. The 10th consultative meeting between the two Councils held in New York in May, provided an opportunity for a constructive and candid exchange of views. The recent joint meeting of the Councils to discuss South Sudan, which took place earlier this month in Addis Ababa, is also an indication of the progress that has been made in the last few years. The A3 has an important role to play in strengthening and facilitating PSC and SC relations.

Between the UN Secretariat and AU Commission, I am pleased to report that tremendous progress has been made in strengthening the partnership. In addition to daily working-level interactions, we conduct regular Desk-to-Desk meetings; monthly Director-level VTCs; and the Joint Task Force of the senior leadership twice a year. However, we both need to invest and strengthen collaboration in early warning and conflict prevention. We need to do more joint horizon scanning. And the partnership between the Commission and the UN Secretariat needs to be institutionalized with an agreed Joint Framework.

Naturally, the partnership between the two Organizations must be underpinned by a culture of mutual respect and greater transparency. There is a historical legacy that we need to learn from and overcome. Occasionally, bad practices of the past have fostered antagonism and resentment. We must not allow a rational future partnership to be imprisoned by the past, and thereby fail to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by a closer, strategic partnership.

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

With regard to financing of the African Union and its peace and security related activities, we welcome the decision of the AU Summit in Kigali to implement measures that would provide more predictable financing to the AU, including operationalizing

the Peace Fund. This initiative provides an opportunity for the AU and the UN to deepen the partnership on the important strategic question of burden-sharing, including financing. Both the UN Secretariat led by the Secretary General, and I am sure the AU Commission, welcome any efforts by Member States to provide predictable and sustainable resources so that we can better discharge the mandates entrusted to us by our respective Councils. UNOAU, and the wider UN Secretariat, stand ready to support the AU Commission as it moves to establish a more dependable Peace Fund.

Finally, with regard to UNOAU, its role and mandate is to act as a conduit for strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in the area of peace and security. The Secretary-General has stated the partnership will remain a priority for the “foreseeable future”. UNOAU will continue the day-to-day interaction, streamline and enhance communication and understanding between the two Organizations, which will result in a strengthened partnership. Making that partnership strategic is the decision of the legislative organs of the two Organizations, primarily the UNSC and the AUPSC in the case of peace and security.

I wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the AU Commission, particularly the Peace and Security Department and the Political Affairs Department, for their strong and steadfast support to consolidating our practical collaboration. The UNSC will be considering the issue in November under Senegal’s Presidency, when the Secretary-General will present his report on UN-AU partnership and the work of UNOAU, which advocates for a predictable, strategic partnership between the two Organizations in addressing peace and security challenges in the continent. A call for the development of such strategic partnership by the PSC, consistent with its past pronouncements, at this juncture will clearly indicate Africa’s leadership in championing such an initiative and ensure success.

I wish to thank you once again, Mr. Chairperson, for convening this meeting, and inviting us to make this statement, and through you thank all PSC Members for their continued commitment to peace and security in Africa and support for our common effort.

I thank you.