Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

THE EMERGING ROLE OF THE AU AND ECOWAS IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

**BACKGROUND PAPER PREPARED FOR
EXPERT GROUP MEETING**

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I.   Introduction

1.   The international community is increasingly paying attention to the role and contribution of regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly within the African context. However, much of the literature on the activities of African regional organizations has so far focused on the contributions of these organisations in peacekeeping and peace enforcement. In these fields, African regional organisations, especially the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have gained a wealth of experience and have proven their value. While challenges regarding the capacity of these organizations to become effective partners in peacekeeping continue to draw the attention and the resources of the international community, the structures and the activities undertaken by African regional organisations to prevent conflict and consolidate peace have received much less consideration. It is the aim of this report to help close this gap by contributing to a better understanding of the role and activities of the AU and ECOWAS in conflict prevention and peace building.

2.   Despite this report's focus on the AU and EOWAS, it is important to highlight that Africa is home to numerous regional organizations and regional economic communities (REC). There are at least 14 RECs in the continent, in addition to other regional groupings such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the League of Arab States. Each of the five regions into which Africa is officially divided has at least two RECs while some have three. In addition to the AU and ECOWAS, the two organizations that have developed the most expertise in peace and security issues are the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which also have significant experience in addressing conflict and conflict prevention. Other regional organizations that are currently developing conflict management mechanisms or have had experience in this field are the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

3.   The report covers a series of topics and thematic areas related to the structures and programmes of the AU and ECOWAS in conflict prevention and peace building providing an introduction to African regional organisations and their comparative advantages. It examines the approaches and current activities of the AU and the ECOWAS and analyzes the challenges and constraints that both organisations face in carrying out their mandates. It also looks at cooperation with the United Nations and provides an outline of the challenges and the potential in this regard. Finally, the report offers a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening the support of the UN to the AU and ECOWAS in terms of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

4.   This report focuses on the AU and ECOWAS as these two organisations have developed the most advanced and comprehensive conflict management mechanisms in Africa. It aims at providing a succinct overview of the role of these organisations by: a) introducing the wider audience to the breadth and depth of their engagement in conflict prevention and peace building, b) analyzing the challenges they face and providing insight into how they cooperate with the UN; c) highlighting their potential to prevent conflict and build peace, and d) drawing attention to the need for increased cooperation with the UN, especially in the area of capacity building.

5.   At the outset, some clarification on the terms used herein is needed. Despite current and lingering debates on the concept of "conflict prevention", for the purposes of this report, "conflict prevention" has been divided into two levels of activity: operational and structural prevention. "Operational prevention" aims at preventing an immediate crisis or escalation of the crisis. It comprises such tools as mediation, negotiation, early warning, preventive diplomacy and deployment. "Structural prevention" has a longer-term perspective and places greater emphasis on addressing the root causes and the structural factors underlying a given conflict. "Conflict management" refers to all peace efforts, including conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building. "Peace building" is a term that describes all peace efforts undertaken in countries emerging from conflict that seek to build, sustain and consolidate peace and prevent the

recurrence of conflict. Peace building thus comprises and denotes preventive measures as well as developmental activities. In addition, the term "regional organization" is used to refer to both regional organizations such as the AU and sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS.

6.   The report is based on desk research and interviews. Desk research involved examining a variety of sources, including publications, reports and official documents issued by the AU, ECOWAS, the UN, the European Union, non-governmental organizations and think-tanks as well as relevant academic literature. Interviews were carried out in early 2007 with staff and officials of the AU, ECOWAS, the Southern African Development Community, the African Peer Review Secretariat, the NEPAD Secretariat and United Nations Agencies and Departments.

II.   The emerging role of regional organizations in conflict prevention and peace building

7.   Despite the primary role that the deployment and management of peacekeeping operations in Africa continues to play for the African Union and ECOWAS, these organizations, together with the United Nations, are increasingly and more systematically engaged in conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities. The surge of conflicts in the aftermath of the Cold War and the operational, political and financial difficulties of mounting peacekeeping operations as well as the realization of the limits of peacekeeping operations to actually consolidate peace, have persuaded the international community, including regional organizations, to pay greater attention to how conflict can be avoided and how peace can be secured. Conflict prevention is one of the primary obligations of Member States as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and lies at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. A general consensus is emerging among Member States that comprehensive and coherent conflict prevention strategies offer the greatest potential for promoting lasting peace and creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. One of the principal aims of preventive action is therefore

to address the deep-rooted socio-economic, cultural, environmental, institutional and other structural causes that often underlie the immediate political symptoms of conflicts requiring a comprehensive approach that encompasses both short-term and long-term political, diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights, developmental, institutional and other measures taken by the international community, in cooperation with national and regional actors.

8. Preventing the emergence of armed conflict requires early action by national and regional actors and, where appropriate, by the international community. The United Nations is not the only actor in prevention and, in some cases, may not be the actor best suited to take the lead. Member States, international, regional and sub regional organizations the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and other civil society actors also have very important roles to play in this field. It is within this context that regional organizations have become increasingly involved in creating innovative institutional capacities for early warning and conflict prevention.

9. The prospective role of regional organizations in conflict prevention and peace building, as well as the anticipated roles of all other actors, would theoretically be based on their respective comparative advantages to ensure the best possible results in creating, sustaining and consolidating peace. However, while comparative advantage is often referenced in official statements made regarding the provisions outlined in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, these advantages are rarely identified and organizational activities are seldom aligned to any significant degree with presumed or actual comparative advantages. Moreover, an exclusive focus on comparative advantage remains difficult for international organisations as they are driven as much by political interests as by their mission and mandates. Nevertheless, regional organizations are often better placed to address the causes of conflicts close to them and can better influence their prevention or resolution, as they can provide a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of their regions. In fact, in its presidential statement of 28 March 2007 (S/PRST/2007/7), the UN Security Council recognized the important role of regional organizations in the

prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in addressing security challenges in their regions.

10. With greater involvement by regional organizations in conflict prevention and management there is an increased need for a clearer framework for collaboration among regional organizations, and with the United Nations. Africa's experiences in the peace and security field have greatly contributed to changing the perception that only the UN Security Council is authorized to deploy peacekeepers and thus to engage in peace and security activities. The early 1990's saw the first authorization by the Security Council of the use of force by a regional organization (S/25567; S/PV.3191). The United Nations and the African Union have, since 2004, strengthened cooperation in the context of crises such as those in Darfur and Côte d'Ivoire, and redefined the scope and content of the collaborative conflict management partnership.

11. Recognizing the increased role of these organizations in maintaining peace and security, the United Nations and the African Union have gradually strengthened their partnership culminating in the signing of the Declaration on Cooperation in November 2006. Pursuant to the Declaration, efforts have commenced to develop the 10-year capacity-building programme for the African Union, which envisages, inter alia, enhanced cooperation in all phases of conflict management; early warning and preventive diplomacy; peacemaking; peacekeeping; post-conflict reconstruction; and peacebuilding and human rights.

12. Regional organizations do have important comparative advantages and assets that have proved valuable in addressing and resolving conflict in their respective regions.

Comparative advantages of African regional organizations
Conflict prevention and peace building - Because of the greater geographic proximity, regional organizations usually have a more intimate understanding of the country in crisis and greater knowledge of local

conflict dynamics, contexts and actors

- As a result, they can also justifiably claim a better understanding of cultural sensitivities and culturally effective and acceptable ways of resolving conflict

- As many conflicts have cross-border dimensions, they can play an important role in ensuring that any response is carried out as a part of a regional strategy

Operational prevention

- As they are directly affected, regional organizations usually have a greater incentive to act and to prevent tension from escalating

- The closer relationship to the country gives regional organizations additional leverage with regard to the parties to the conflict (regional trade sanctions, limiting regional membership privileges)

- The involvement of a regional organization can often make more discreet face saving action possible

- Sometimes a regional organization is preferred by the parties to a conflict, as they can retain greater control over the involvement of the regional organization as compared to the UN, for example

- In some situations, regional organizations are more trusted to be impartial, understanding and amenable to regional solutions

- Regional organizations may act as an interface or interlocutor that can mediate between local actors and external actors

- Regional organizations may be able to put more pressure on the parties than other external actors

Structural prevention and peace building

- For the international community, regional organizations can provide some form of ownership that can be important when faced with weak and illegitimate governments

- Regional organizations often have greater interest and determination to stay engaged in the long term

- Regional organizations can add important value by lending legitimacy to controversial yet necessary processes and initiatives (providing incentives/cover for other actors to get

involved)

-    Regional organizations may be able to coordinate stakeholders and partners more readily

- Regional organizations can also ensure that African interests (African principles, agenda), and more specifically regional interests, are taken into account

- In some circumstances, such as trade negotiations or debt relief initiatives, regional organizations can play a representational role for a post-conflict country by mobilizing support for or providing political and technical assistance to that country to achieve its goals.

III. AU and ECOWAS Structures to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace

13. Even though the OAU had engaged in some mediation, preventive diplomacy and peace negotiations efforts for some time, African organizations generally lacked a comprehensive and structured conflict management mechanism. In 1998 and 2002 respectively, the AU and ECOWAS began to establish normative frameworks and instruments to address the entire conflict spectrum, from peacemaking through conflict prevention to peace building, in a more systematic and effective manner. The AU has established the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Framework (PCRD), and the ECOWAS is currently setting up a Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). These frameworks aim at building the foundation for addressing conflict and security in a holistic and effective manner, strengthening these organizations' roles and improving coordination of their work with that of other actors, including the UN.

14. Well-designed institutional structures are important for the prevention of conflicts and for generating effective responses when conflicts do erupt. This section provides a brief overview of the genesis of the structures of the AU and ECOWAS, with particular emphasis on those that have been designed to address peace and security issues. The structural differences between African institutions and those of the EU and the UN are also illustrated. The last part of this section discusses how formal processes and structures have interacted with more informal and pragmatic approaches in the way African regional organizations have managed conflict.

A. THE AFRICAN UNION

15. The African Union, the successor to the Organization for the African Unity, held its inaugural meeting in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002. Based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the AU has 53 Member States and is, on that account, one of the largest regional organizations in the world. The principles and values enshrined in its charter reflected the new determination of African leaders to address the challenges facing the continent in a proactive manner. While the OAU emphasized the principle of non-

interference in the internal affairs of Member States and put a premium on sovereignty, the AU makes provision for military intervention in cases of grave circumstances such as war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. The African Union also pledged to oppose any unconstitutional change of government taking place in a Member State.

16. The AU was partially modelled on ECOWAS, which itself had been inspired by the European Union model. However, unlike ECOWAS, which developed and strengthened its role in peace and security only gradually, the AU had from the outset a strong conflict management focus with a view to establishing a common defence policy for the African continent and peacefully resolving conflicts among its members. The current principles and structures of the AU were designed to overcome the shortcomings of its predecessor and ensure a more dynamic and pro-active response to the challenges facing the continent.

17. The main organs of the AU include the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Peace and Security Council, the Executive Council, the AU Commission, the Pan-African Parliament, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, the Court of Justice and the Financial Institutions. Within a few years, the African Union has made significant progress in elaborating the African Peace and Security Architecture, which consists of instruments, institutions and processes to anticipate, prevent, manage and resolve conflicts. Specifically, the African Peace and Security Architecture comprises, inter alia, the African Union Peace and Security Council, established in March 2004, a Panel of the Wise, a continental early warning system, a special fund and the beginnings of an African standby force.

18. **The Peace and Security Council (PSC)** is the AU's primary standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. Given its wide-ranging mandate, the Council is a potentially powerful instrument: it can address any problem regarding stability, security and peace without major restrictions; and it is explicitly mandated to consider conflict prevention, anticipation, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace building. The Protocol establishing the PSC allows for

intervention to address grave circumstances; the PSC therefore has a broad role to play and can help the AU address conflicts in a holistic and integrated manner.

19. The Peace and Security Council is established as a standing decision-making organ intended to function as a collective security and early warning arrangement to facilitate a timely and effective response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa. It is composed of only fifteen members, of which ten are elected for two years and five for three years. Members are elected on the basis of their overall commitment to peace and the principles of the AU, with care being taken to ensure equitable regional representation and rotation. No single Member State can block the Council's action, as no member has a veto and decisions can be made by a two-thirds majority. The Secretariat of the Peace and Security Council is small and not yet fully functional. However, the AU is endeavoring to strengthen the capacity of the Peace and Security Secretariat to service the Council, including by providing high quality analytical reports in order to facilitate the decision making process. In March of 2007, the UN provided training for two AUPSC Secretariat staff and strengthened links between its secretariat and that of the AU.

20. Since its inception, the AU Peace and Security Council has considered situations in Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan (the Darfur region and South Sudan) and Togo.

21. **The AU Commission** is the main administrative and implementing organ of the African Union. As such, it is involved in the design, execution and implementation of peace building and preventive activities. The Commission is composed of a Chairperson, a Deputy Chairperson and eight Commissioners, each of whom heads a directorate. The Commissioner for Peace and Security is responsible for the implementation of Peace and Security Council decisions, policies and programmes regarding conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution and terrorism. The Peace and Security directorate is made up of three divisions: the Peace Support Operations Division, Peace and Security Council Secretariat and the Conflict Management Division, the latter deals

with early warning, peace building, mediation and crisis monitoring. The African Union has become more active in mobilizing resources and expertise to complement the core mandate of the organizations in conflict prevention.

22. The Common African Defense and Security Policy (CADSP) is one of the core policy documents guiding the peace and security work of the AU Commission. The policy embraces a multi-dimensional notion of security that complements the traditional focus on state security with a new and added emphasis on human security. It therefore considers issues such as human rights, poverty, the right to a livelihood, natural resources and participation in governance as critical to achieving security. Internal threats identified by the policy include unstable post-conflict situations, environmental degradation, diseases, crime, landmines, and illicit small arms and light weapons.

23. The objectives of CADSP include ensuring collective responses to threats; and enhancing the AU's capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts and promoting a culture of peace. The policy also emphasizes the need to strengthen cooperation with Regional Economic Communities and with the United Nations. It is anticipated that the AU will establish Memoranda of Understanding with Regional Economic Communities to guide cooperation, with a view to facilitating harmonization and coordination of activities encouraging information exchange, and establishing liaison offices in the respective organizations[1].

24. **AU field offices** play an important role in conflict prevention and peace building. They have enabled the AU to considerably expand its role in conflict situations and countries at risk of conflict and to play a greater part in the implementation of peace agreements. There are currently eleven field offices which monitor conditions and assist in the implementation of peace agreements: Ethiopia/Eritrea, Western Sahara, Liberia, Chad, Comoros, Somalia, the Central Africa Republic (CAR), Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in the Great Lakes. These offices have helped the AU increase its credibility and visibility in the management of conflicts and have enhanced the Commission's capacity to prepare policy options for the Chairperson.

Involvement by AU field offices in the implementation of peace processes has also helped the AU design effective strategies and facilitated implementation of the agreements concluded and encouraged the parties in conflict to move forward in their peace efforts.

25. The AU is in the process of establishing a **Panel of the Wise** as well as using mediators and special representatives to support conflict prevention efforts. The AU Panel of the Wise is designed to support and advise the Peace and Security Council and the Chairperson of the Commission on all peace and security matters, including mediation, negotiation and preventive diplomacy efforts. The Panel is composed of five senior Africans who enjoy a high level of respect by virtue of having made significant contributions to the continent. Members of the Panel are selected by the Chairperson of the Commission and are appointed by the Assembly for a period of three years. At its Eighth Ordinary Session in January 2007, the AU Assembly appointed the first five members of the Panel, including two former Presidents and Salim Ahmed Salim, former OAU Secretary-General and currently AU Special Envoy for Darfur. The Panel's effectiveness will depend to a great extent on the creation of a mediation unit and mediation training programmes in support of the Panel's work.

26. Through the use of mediation, official visits and special representatives, the AU has undertaken activities aimed at resolving crises in Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, the Darfur region of the Sudan, and Western Sahara. In September 2004, Mame Madior Boye was named the African Union's Special Representative for the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

27. The African Union's **Continental Early Warning System** (CEWS) is an important instrument of the AU's conflict prevention agenda. The CEWS has a Situation Room which is linked to the early warning and monitoring mechanisms of the regional organizations. It is intended that regional data and analyses will be used to provide the PSC with options for action and advice on potential conflict situations. The AU Situation

Room will not itself collect any data but will receive it from the early warning mechanisms of the RECs. This will require some harmonizing between the RECs and the AU to make early action at the AU level possible.

28. The operationalization of the AU's CEWS is currently under way, with a focus on: (i) formulation, adoption and implementation of standard operating procedures (SOP) in the Situation Room; (ii) guidelines on data collection and reporting by AU field missions; (iii) development of formats for Early Warning reports; (iv) training of CEWS and field mission staff in Conflict Prevention Management and Resolution (CPMR); (v) development and training on the use of CEWS software and methodology; and (vi) regular reporting and briefings on conflict situations to the PSC, the Panel of the Wise and the Chairperson of the Commission. A balance will have to be struck between harmonizing versus preserving the regional character of Early Warning systems that are in line with region-specific needs and conflict contexts.

29. The **New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD),** an Africa-owned and Africa-managed strategic development framework was launched in 2001 and is now a program of the AU. NEPAD aims at eradicating poverty and at placing African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development. NEPAD is the region's blueprint for the future as it attempts to address the root causes of conflicts and has, therefore, an important role to play in preventing conflict. African leaders have ever more recognised the need to strengthen the link between peace and development by laying the foundation of sustainable development, addressing governance issues and providing frameworks for the human development of their societies.

30. In this regard, and in order to improve governance and thus contribute to the prevention of conflict, African leaders established the **African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM),** a voluntary self-monitoring and assessment tool open to all members of the African Union. So far, 27 Member States of the AU have acceded to the Mechanism and 5 countries have already completed the assessment process, which entails conformity to

principles, codes and standards in the basic declarations of NEPAD on democracy, political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socio-economic development. In addition to promoting governance in more general terms, the APRM also seeks to increase countries' awareness of the sources of conflict and to strengthen mechanisms that can help prevent, reduce or resolve conflicts.

B. The AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Framework (PCRD)

31.   The AU's Post-Conflict and Reconstruction Framework (PCRD), which found its origins in the African Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework issued by NEPAD in 2005, is a strategic framework that lays down a number of principles that should inform peacebuilding activities, specifies several areas of intervention in peacebuilding and proposes numerous activities in each area that could be carried out to achieve the goals of the framework. It is not intended to be stringently prescriptive but rather to be a comprehensive guide on the basis of which, appropriate strategies, policies and activities can be developed and implemented for each unique situation. It also creates a number of structures, mostly at the continental level, to support the framework and assigns and clarifies roles of all actors involved in peacebuilding, including the AU, Regional Economic Communities and other regional institutions, civil society and external partners (such as the UN, International Financial Institutions, and bilateral partners).

32.   At its 7th Ordinary Session, the AU's Executive Council requested the AU Commission to "develop an AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction based on the relevant provisions of the Peace and Security Protocol and the experience gained so far in the continent."[2]. The AU Commission's draft was then discussed, examined, amended and endorsed in a number of meetings by relevant bodies. These included the 4th Brainstorming Retreat of the PSC and other Member States of the Permanent Representatives Committee (Durban, South Africa; 4-5 September 2005); the 39th meeting of the Peace and Security Council (Endorsement of outcome; Addis Ababa; 30 September 2005); a Technical Experts Meeting on PCRD (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; 7-8 February, 2006); an AU-Civil Society Organizations meeting on the draft policy

framework on PCRD (Abuja, Nigeria; on 5-7 April 2006); a Validation Meeting within the AU Commission (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; 31 May 2006); and a Governmental Experts Meeting (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; 8-9 June 2006)[3].

33.   The objective of the PCRD is to "improve timeliness, effectiveness and coordination of activities in post conflict countries and to lay the foundation for social justice and sustainable peace, in line with Africa's vision of renewal and growth."[4]. In part, the AU has established the PCRD to ' adjust "reconstruction models that have been borrowed from outside Africa and have lacked comprehensiveness, favoring some aspects of PCRD to the exclusion of others, sometimes risking the resumption of conflict."[5] Instead, the PCRD is based on lessons from African peace consolidation experiences and goes beyond stabilization to "achieve long-term sustainable development as underpinned by the African vision of regeneration and growth."[6]

34.   The PCRD is envisaged to be an instrument that: a) consolidates peace and prevents a relapse of violence; b) helps address the root causes of conflict; c) encourages and fast-tracks planning and implementation of reconstruction activities; and d) enhances complementarities and coordination between and among diverse actors engaged in PCRD processes.[7]

35.   Underlying the PCRD are five core principles which include African leadership; national and local ownership; inclusiveness, equity and non-discrimination; cooperation and cohesion; and capacity-building for sustainability[8]. As a general framework, the PCRD sets out a wide range of policies, activities and benchmarks in the areas of security; humanitarian and emergency assistance; political governance and transition; socio-economic reconstruction and development; human rights, justice and reconciliation; and women and gender. The framework distinguishes between intervention in the emergency (short-term) phase, transition (medium-term) phase and development (long-term) phases yet acknowledges that many activities might have to be carried out simultaneously.

The AU's Conflict Management Structure[9]

C.   THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

36.   The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), one of the largest and most varied political, economic and security sub-regional organizations in Africa, was founded in 1975 with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos as a sub-regional organization bringing together 15 West African countries[1]. Based in Abuja, Nigeria, ECOWAS was created to promote regional integration and foster economic development in a sub-region which is inhabited by more than 250 million people and which is also home to some of the poorest nations in the world. The fortunes of ECOWAS have been, and continue to be, significantly affected by Nigeria's political trajectory and dynamics.

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[1] Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Togo. In 1976 Cape Verde joined ECOWAS, and in 2002 Mauritania withdrew.

37.   The conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the early 1990's changed ECOWAS' own perception of its role in the region. The organization's involvement in these two conflicts and in Guinea-Bissau through the deployment of its cease-fire monitoring group (ECOMOG), brought leaders to realize that the objectives of economic integration and development could not be achieved without working towards political stability, security and good governance. As a result, the 1990's saw a series of new and revised treaties and protocols to create a more political and security-oriented role for ECOWAS. While two earlier defence-related protocols existed - the 1978 Protocol Relating to Non-Aggression and the 1981 Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence - their scope was limited and they lacked critical political support. In 1993 ECOWAS revised its Treaty, by which it sought stronger economic and political cooperation. This was followed by the Declaration of a Moratorium on Importation, Exportation, and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa in 1998. Despite considerable opposition, this Moratorium was renewed in 2001 for another 3 years and has recently been transformed into the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other related Materials, which was signed in June 2006.

38.   The intermittent peacekeeping and mediation interventions of ECOWAS brought the organization a wealth of experience in dealing with conflict issues, particularly with regard to peacekeeping and peace enforcement. In order to move from ad-hoc interventions to a more systematic approach to building peace and preventing conflict, ECOWAS set out to put its peace efforts on a stronger legal, normative, institutional and operational footing. The 1993 ECOWAS Revised Treaty was followed by a milestone agreement, the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999). The Protocol addresses the full range of peace efforts and aims at achieving greater transparency in decision-making and at improving effectiveness in mission implementation and establishes the ECOWAS institutional capacity for peacebuilding. It sets out six instruments and bodies, namely: the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Mediation and Security Council, the Defence and Security Commission, the Council of Elders, the Executive Secretariat, and the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

39.   The Twenty-ninth Ordinary Summit of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government held in Niamey, Niger, in January 2005, approved the transformation of the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat into the ECOWAS Commission. The purpose of the transformation was to enhance the power of the Commission and strengthen its influence and its degree of supranationality. In addition to restructuring the Secretariat, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government also adopted a new legal regime that simplified decision making and expedited the ratification process by introducing a simpler and more direct way to enact laws that bind Member States. Instead of adopting protocols and conventions, ECOWAS now encourages enactment of supplementary acts and other decisions of the Authority, or in some instances, by the Executive Council, which become immediately binding and applicable to Member States and ECOWAS institutions without going through the lengthy ratification process. The Council of Ministers and the Commission now have greater decision-making and implementation powers.

40. Within the ECOWAS conflict prevention structure, **the Mediation and Security Council** decides on all matters relating to peace and security on behalf of the Authority and has an explicit mandate to address conflict prevention and peace building in addition to peacekeeping. Its role and powers are similar to those of the UN Security Council, although no ECOWAS Member State has veto power and decisions can be taken on a two-thirds majority. The Mediation and Security Council has 10 member states out of a total membership of 15. There is little structural competition between the Council and the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the highest decision-making organ in which each Member State has a seat, because the Authority fully delegates its authority to the Council in matters relating to peace and security.

41. In 1999, **the Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention** was adopted by ECOWAS to help the region deal with conflict situations, including prevention management and post-conflict reconstruction, in a more systematic and comprehensive manner. In December 2001, ECOWAS Member States adopted the **Protocol on**

Democracy and Governance as a supplementary protocol to the Mechanism. These two Protocols provide the necessary supranational authority for ECOWAS intervention in Member States on issues relating to governance, democratic culture and human rights, respect for constitutionalism and the rule of law, and peace and security. By 2007, six member states had ratified the 1999 Protocol while eight member states had ratified the 2001 Supplementary Protocol.

42. The development of the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance is another political milestone for ECOWAS that reflects its Member States' political commitment to fostering democracy and good governance and to addressing the root causes of conflicts in the sub-region. It builds on the 1991 ECOWAS Declaration of Political Principles. The Protocol contains many critical and innovative provisions, principles and guidelines for Member States in the areas of national constitutions, elections and election monitoring; the role of the armed forces, the police and security forces; poverty alleviation; and the promotion of social dialogue; education, culture and religion, rule of law, human rights and good governance, women, children and youth. It provides for certain sanctions to be applied to Member States in cases of the abolition of democracy or the massive violation of human rights. Further work is being planned for the development on a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. Within this framework, ECOWAS has increasingly engaged in programs and activities which address critical issues relevant to conflict prevention in the areas of humanitarian response, electoral assistance and monitoring, peacebuilding, governance, promotion of human rights and cooperation on immigration issues.

43. ECOWAS has also established the **Council of Elders** to strengthen its conflict prevention and post-conflict efforts. Election observation has become one of the important areas of involvement of the Council of Elders. Efforts have recently been made to strengthen the Council's effectiveness, including by extending the term of office from one to three years, providing more training, and improving mission preparation.

44. The centerpiece of ECOWAS' operational prevention efforts will be the ECOWAS Observation and Monitoring System (ECOWARN), an indicator-based information network accessible through the internet which works on three levels: national, zonal and at the level of ECOWAS Headquarters though its regional situation room. ECOWARN is expected to use an open, participatory and inclusive approach to conflict management, as the system is based on tripartite inputs (ECOWAS, Government and civil society) taking civil society as an equal if not preferred partner in the collection of data and the overall design of programmes.
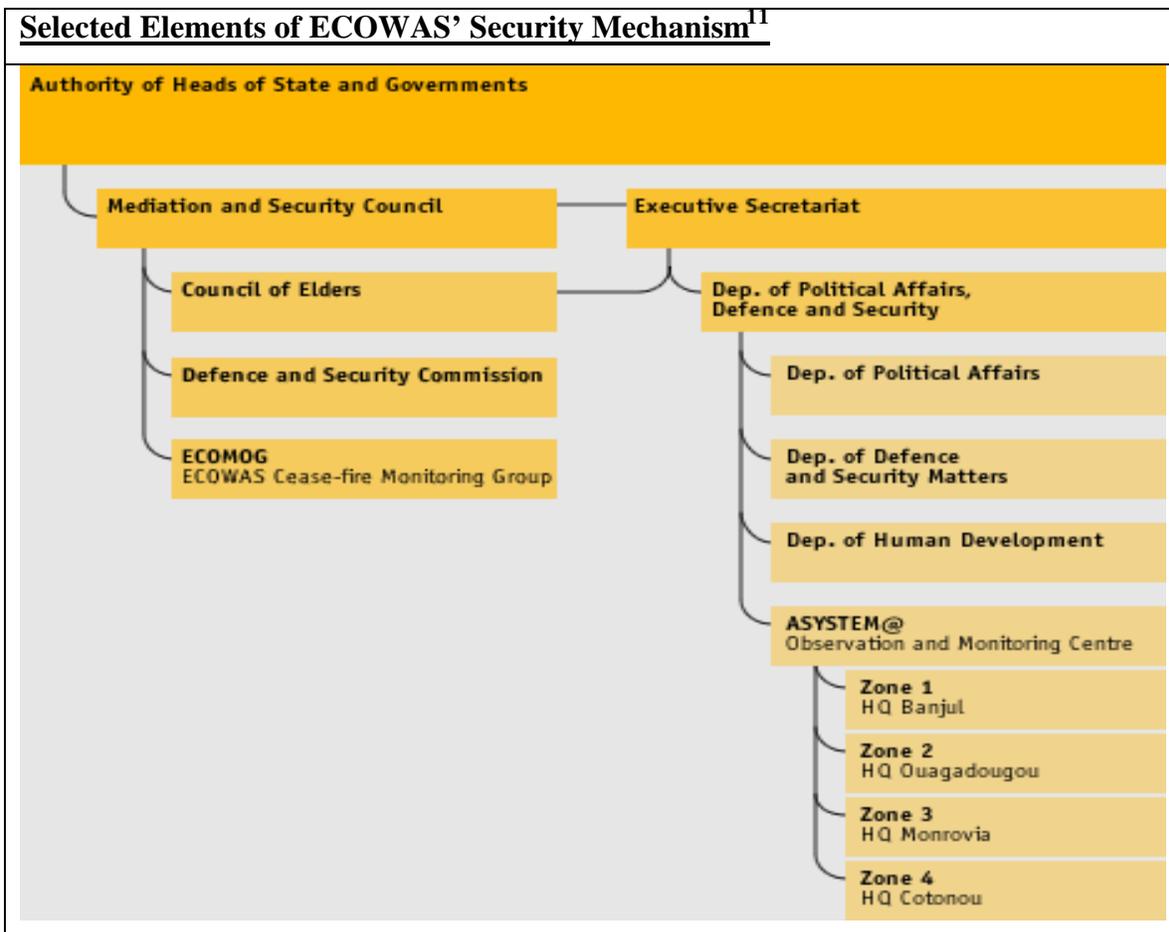
D. The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (CPF)

45.   The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (CPF) has been established to provide a basis for operationalising efforts to prevent conflict in Member States. The framework was endorsed by regional experts at a meeting in November 2007; the experts recommended that the framework be considered by the Mediation Security Council and Council of Ministers with a view to seeking the approval of Heads of State and Government.

46.   The framework is designed to mainstream conflict prevention into ECOWAS's policies and programs; to strengthen capacity within ECOWAS to pursue concrete conflict prevention using existing resources (such as the Early Warning System, the Council of Elders, etc.); to develop the conceptual basis for conflict prevention; to increase understanding of conflict prevention related opportunities, tools and resources at technical and political levels; to extend opportunities for conflict prevention to post-conflict environments; and to enhance ECOWAS' anticipation and planning capabilities in relation to regional tensions[10]

47.   The CPF also seeks to strengthen decision-making and intervention capacity. This will be done by streamlining and strengthening the link between information analysis, option preparation and implementation. It is anticipated that when the Conflict Prevention Framework becomes fully operational it will support activities such as ensuring credible

electoral processes and good political governance as well as capacity-building for preventive action. As democracy and government institutions strengthen, a broader range of medium term efforts will be undertaken in areas such as women in democracy and development; the media in a democracy; security sector reform; cross-border initiatives; micro-disarmament; tackling the youth crisis; and peace education/culture of peace.

Selected Elements of ECOWAS' Security Mechanism[11]

Authority of Heads of State and Governments

Mediation and Security Council

Council of Elders

Defence and Security Commission

ECOMOG
ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group

Executive Secretariat

Dep. of Political Affairs, Defence and Security

Dep. of Political Affairs

Dep. of Defence and Security Matters

Dep. of Human Development

ASYSTEM@
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HQ Monrovia

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HQ Cotonou

Overview of AU and ECOWAS structures

48.   The AU and ECOWAS have similar overall structures. They combine the structures of the European Union and the United Nations, featuring both a parliament, commission and a decision-making organ that meets at the level of Heads of State which

parallel the European Union arrangements as well as a dedicated and powerful inter-governmental organ for peace and security matters similar to that of the UN. These strong and well-balanced structures provide the AU and ECOWAS with the potential to cover all key thematic areas from security to development, to ensure political commitment, and to build strong links to the key constituencies outside of governments such as civil society. It is this strong structural foundation that underpins the capacity of the AU and ECOWAS to undertake peace operations and engage in conflict prevention activities.

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES OF THE UN, EU, AU AND ECOWAS			
United Nations	**European Union**	**African Union**	**ECOWAS**
General Assembly	European Council (Heads of State and Government)	Assembly of Heads of State and Government	Authority of Heads of State and Government
	Council of the EU (Ministers)	Executive Council (Ministers)	Council of Ministers
Security Council		Peace and Security Council	Mediation and Security Council
UN Secretariat	European Commission	AU Commission	ECOWAS Commission
	European Parliament	Pan-African Parliament	Community Parliament
Economic and Social Council	The European Economic and Social Committee	Economic, Social and Cultural Council	Economic and Social Council
International Court of Justice	The Court of Justice of the European Communities	Court of Justice	Community Court of Justice

49.   The AU and ECOWAS also have very similar conflict management mechanisms, including a decision-making organ designated to deal with matters of peace and security similar to the UN Security Council. Other bodies and features that both organizations

have in common are groups of eminent persons entrusted with the task of undertaking mediation, negotiation and facilitation missions; military stand-by forces, together with a body responsible for technical military matters; and dedicated capacity within their respective Commissions that deals with the whole range of peace and peace-related issues.

50.   The following table provides additional information regarding the ways in which the AU and the ECOWAS Commissions support the peace and conflict prevention efforts of their respective organisations. The AU Commission has two separate directorates headed by Commissioners for Political Affairs and for Peace and Security that oversee different aspects of conflict prevention and peace building. The Peace and Security directorate deals mainly with aspects related to peacekeeping, early warning and peace building while the Political Affairs Directorate complements this work by managing aspects related to peacemaking. With regard to ECOWAS, the entire spectrum of peace and conflict prevention activities is carried out by the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), with the exception of the humanitarian affairs function, which has been transferred to the Department of Human Development and Gender.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS OF THE AU AND ECOWAS	
African Union	**ECOWAS**
Peace and Security Council	Mediation and Security Council
Panel of the Wise	Council of the Wise (formerly Council of Elders)
African Standby Force	ECOMOG Force
Military Staff Committee	Defence and Security Commission
Continental Early Warning System (CEWS)	ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN)
AU Commission >Commissioner for Peace and Security >Commissioner for Political Affairs	ECOWAS Commission Commissioner for Political Affairs, Defense and Security

IV. Capacity Constraints and Challenges of the AU and ECOWAS

51.   The AU and ECOWAS are pioneers in norm-setting and policy-making. Heads of States of both organisations have agreed on a large number of normative texts regarding conflict prevention and peacebuilding, some of which have pushed and overcome political boundaries that have been or continue to be insurmountable at the global level. In the past, AU Member States signed conventions, treaties, protocols and declarations on, *inter alia*, the elimination of mercenaries, a nuclear-free and landmine-free Africa, the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, the prevention of terrorism, human and people's rights, the rights and welfare of the child and illicit trafficking. West African leaders also have a number of normative frameworks and rules on, *inter alia*: mutual defence assistance, political principles, crime, child soldiers and various instruments on combating the trade in small arms and light weapons among others.

52.   Key normative and policy achievements include the AU position calling for rejection and condemnation of unconstitutional changes of government together with the possibility of suspending such governments from the activities of the Union. The AU has given itself the authority to intervene in a Member State, without its concurrence if necessary, in the event of grave circumstances, such as genocide or massive human rights violations. This legal provision has been seen as a manifestation of the concept on "the responsibility to protect", and precedes by several years the adoption of the provision by the UN at the 2005 World Summit.

53.   The AU and ECOWAS have built powerful and relatively comprehensive structures to undertake effective conflict prevention, management, and resolution. The members of the two primary decision-making organs of the AU and ECOWAS have no veto, thereby reducing the likelihood of any one member state blocking an otherwise collective response to a conflict. The continental early warning mechanisms, when fully operational and effective, will be able to generate information and options for action that are sophisticated and will be able do so in a systematic, purposeful and timely manner. The Council of Elders and the Panel of the Wise, the dedicated high-level mediation and

advisory capacities of ECOWAS and the AU respectively, strengthen peacemaking capabilities. The AU's Economic and Social and Cultural Council, though still in its infancy, is an advisory body composed of African civil society organisations that can eventually become a "genuine voice for Africa's citizens within the AU system"[12] and as such should have a significant impact on African peace efforts.

54.   Over the last decade, regional organizations have undertaken numerous mediation and negotiation efforts, many of which were successful. Many of these interventions were ad-hoc, crisis-driven and carried out at the Head of State level with limited input from secretariats at the working level. To improve effectiveness, sustainability and structured engagement, additional meditation expertise, dedicated human capacity and predictable funding provisions have to be set up.

55.   Many important norms and principles addressing the root causes of conflict have been signed during the last decade. But the process from signing to ratification, integration into national law and effective implementation and monitoring has been slow for political, capacity and financial reasons. The challenge now is to enable regional organizations to make their impact felt on the ground which will require financial and technical assistance.

CHALLENGES

56.   Regional organizations have to deal with serious human, financial, technical, administrative and management capacity challenges. Largely, they face the same challenges in establishing conflict prevention and peacebuilding instruments as does the UN. However, these challenges are often more extreme and are further complicated by additional burdens, such as difficult working conditions and weak information technology infrastructure and capacity.

57.   The secretariats of the African Union and ECOWAS are seriously understaffed and overstretched. Departments responsible for peace efforts are often a tiny fraction of

their equivalents in the UN, sometimes constituting only 5% of the size of the counterpart at the UN. For example, the AU has a total of 3 staff working on peacebuilding, two of whom are IT experts working on the establishment of a database of African peacebuilding experts.

58. Staffing shortages have serious programmatic implications. Regional organizations are often driven by and preoccupied with responding to crises and carrying out other urgent tasks such as election monitoring which leaves little time for less time-sensitive, yet critically important tasks in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As a result of the small number of staff, regional organizations often lack technical expertise in more specialized fields such as humanitarian affairs or crime prevention. This situation can also compromise the ability of regional organizations to effectively liaise with partners.

59. As in many bureaucratic organizations, recruitment is slow and takes time away from substantive matters. At the same time, turn over is often high given the difficult working conditions and the fact that there are better salaries and career opportunities available elsewhere. Retention of human capacity has become one of the foremost challenges of African Regional organizations[13]. Some new staff at the AU or ECOWAS move on quickly to positions with partners that offer better salaries and benefits, shorter work hours, greater responsibilities, better IT services and more career opportunities. As a result, valuable institutional memory and expertise is lost and new staff have to be trained.

60. Lack of sufficient and adequate IT capacity is also a significant challenge. In 2003, few ECOWAS staff had their own telephones. They would have to use the phone of the front office of the Deputy Executive Secretary to place an out of house call. Essential stationery such as ink cartridges were so scarce that many staff would regularly visit internet cafes to print documents. Internet access was very slow and intermittent and not all staff were proficient in the use of email as a mechanism for professional correspondence. While this stark situation has greatly improved, AU and ECOWAS staff

still continue to routinely use internet-based email accounts for professional purposes as a result of the limited reliability of in-house email services. Moreover, the lack of IT capacity sometimes becomes an obstacle to information-sharing especially of critical and sensitive information[14]. Lack of office space often adds to these troubles. As a result, ECOWAS has rented a building in downtown Abuja to accommodate some of its PAPS staff. The AU PSD is also facing a lack of office space.

61.   One of the greatest challenges remains the lack of financial resources. Funding to regional organizations has increased significantly yet the ambitions of regional organizations continue to substantially outstrip capacity and available resources. While ECOWAS is funded to a large extent by internal resources, its peace and security arm receives significant external assistance. At the AU, more than 95% of staff are funded directly or indirectly by partners[15]. While this has helped regional organizations to increase their role and effectiveness it also leaves them vulnerable to the changing funding patterns of donors. Reliance on outside funding also puts the sustainability of projects and activities in doubt. There is concern that if donors were to re-direct their resources, regional organizations would be unable to fill that funding gap in order to continue to carry out key activities. Regional organizations also face difficulties in utilizing the funds received in a timely manner. Elaborate financial procedures, and to a lesser extent, time-consuming reporting requirements, often lead to low levels of absorption of external assistance further undermining the organisations' effectiveness.

62.   Many times administrative and financial rules and regulations are tailored to deal with long-term matters such as economic integration. Peace efforts, however, are usually highly time-sensitive and the departments of peace and security are crisis-driven. The speed at which the organization recruits and absorbs funds is not commensurate with the challenging demands of peace efforts thus slowing down and reducing the RO's ability to prevent and respond to conflicts. The AU has partially alleviated this challenge by using the Project Implementation Unit. This unit has been originally set up under the AU-UNDP Capacity-building project and tasked with overseeing its implementation. But it has taken over the management of funds for other partner programmes including funds

from DANIDA, the EU and Canada. As a separate unit that works in close collaboration with the departments responsible for administration and finance, the Project Implementation Unit has the power to recruit staff funded by partners through an expedited process and has bolstered the AU's capacity to absorb and manage funds and recruit in a timely fashion.

63.   As with many other bureaucratic organizations, Regional organizations need to reform their organizational and management culture to become more efficient and effective in carrying out their mandates. For example, conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues often cut across departmental expertise and responsibilities. Such issues cannot be reasonably addressed without creating institutional structures such as inter-departmental task forces or standing committees that can draw on each department's expertise and facilitate information–sharing and the creation of integrated strategies. While systematic inter-departmental coordination has been somewhat limited in ECOWAS, the Conflict Prevention Framework that is currently being developed intends to address this issue [16].

64.   Despite these outstanding challenges, regional organizations have made great progress and have considerably increased their effectiveness over the last few years. Both the AU and ECOWAS have seen staff levels rise continuously, and according to partners, staff are not only trained and experienced but they have been praised for their pragmatism and creativity and their commitment and determination to give their best under difficult work conditions [17]. At ECOWAS, more well-qualified staff have joined, increases in funding have enabled Regional organizations to expand their activities and work hours and work loads have decreased from unsustainable levels a few years ago.

Overview of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the African Union and the ECOWAS

AFRICAN UNION

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Appropriate tools to respond to conflicts, including the PSC, the African Security Architecture, the ASF and the Panel of the Wise • Considerable political importance due to broad membership and the AU's role as Africa's representative in the world • Strong in norm-setting • Viable, innovative and effective decision-making structures (no veto and 2/3 majority in PSC) • Legitimacy in Africa • A strong normative foundation highlighting democracy, human rights and good governance • Capacity to have better understanding of conflicts and appropriate responses (local expertise) • Strong political support and will from key Member States	• Conflict prevention not yet operational – current efforts focussed on actual crises • No clear division of work with the sub-regional "building blocks", primarily ECOWAS, SADC and IGAD • Uneven political support for the AU and its objectives and activities • Lack of resources and experience • Insufficient technical and human capacity in many areas - discrepancy between intentions and implementation capacity • Insufficient funding from Member States • Little focus on peace and development nexus and integrated approaches • Organisational and operational overstretch
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Support for civil society, the Pan African Parliament (PAP), ECOSOCC and the Court could further strengthen and 'democratize' the overall peace and security architecture • Continuing interest of partners (UN, EU, G8, other bilaterals) to build AU capacity and the overall African Peace and Security Architecture • Establishment of PBC may lead to greater interest in supporting AU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding (PCRD) efforts • Greater cooperation between the PSC and the UN Security Council could lead to increased policy coherence and impact • Agreed division of labour between AU and	• Differing and vested interests in the various conflicts can hamper decision-making • New crises and an overwhelming focus on peacekeeping may undermine the development of the conflict mechanism, particularly prevention and peacebuilding • Lack of implementation of AU decisions in Member States, for various reasons, may stem development of the AU • Lack of resources coupled with far-reaching goals and efforts may lead to organizational and operational overstretch

RECs will reduce duplication while increasing overall effectiveness and enable burden-sharing	

ECOWAS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Appropriate bodies to respond to conflicts, including the MSC, ECOMOG, the Council of the Wise etc. • Viable, innovative and effective decision-making structures (no veto and 2/3 majority in MSC) • A strong normative foundation highlighting human security, democracy, human rights and good governance • Ability to have better understanding of conflicts and appropriate responses (local expertise) • Strong political support and will from key MS • Recognised as lead institution for peace and security in West Africa - the issue of competing sub-regional organisations has been resolved • The major dividing factor – Liberia – is no longer an issue • Nigerian leadership role • Most advanced in sub-regional integration and the development of the African Standby Force • Wide supranational mandate • Adequate trust of Member States in institution • Impressive track-record of achievement in peace and security • Goodwill from development partner • Great disposition of ECOWAS hierarchy towards innovative approaches to conflict	• Conflict prevention not operational – current efforts go into actual crises • Lack of adequate resources • Insufficient technical and human capacity in many areas - discrepancy intentions and implementation capacity • Insufficient funding from Member States • Some fear of Nigerian dominance • No clear division of work with AU and other sub-regional organisations • Organisational and operational overstretch • Insufficient analytical capacity may lead to a tendency for ad hoc-ism and tendency to be driven by external interests • Poor inter-departmental information sharing • Suboptimal communication between Secretariat and its organs on conflict prevention • Inadequate ICT support and services

management, particularly to conflict prevention	
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• ECOWAS can pave the way for other sub-regional organisations with regard to conflict resolution, regional integration and NEPAD • Great interest and support of development partners for peace and security initiatives • ECOWAS has been designated West Africa focal point on NEPAD implementation • Overwhelming mood in the sub-region in favour of a conducive environment for development and integration • Strengthening of democratic culture in sub-region • The establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission with a mandate to collaborate with RECs • Support for sub-regional civil society (WACSOF, WANEP etc.), the Parliament, ECOSOC and the Court can further strengthen and 'democratize' the overall peace and security architecture • ECPF may provide an opportunity for partners to increase collaboration with and capacity-building for ECOWAS in conflict prevention • Greater cooperation between the UNSC, AUPSC and MSC can lead to increased policy coherence and impact • Agreed division of labour between AU and RECs will reduce duplication while increasing overall effectiveness and enable burden-sharing	• Upsurge in active warfare in the sub-region could undermine progress in establishing a peace architecture • Loss of goodwill of development partners and donors could jeopardize initiative • Mistrust among Member States could lead to waning confidence from Member States • Worsening living conditions for the populations despite democratisation could unleash a new cycle of violence in the sub-region • Worsening working environment as a result of territoriality and mistrust could hamper ECOWAS efforts to attract skills • Differing and vested interests in the various conflicts can hamper decision-making • New crises and an overwhelming focus on peacekeeping may undermine the development of the conflict mechanism, particularly prevention and peacebuilding • Lack of implementation of AU decisions in MS, for various reasons, may stem development of the AU • Difficulty in absorbing funds may lead to decreasing financial assistance • Lack of resources coupled with far-reaching goals and efforts may lead to organizational and operational overstretch

V. AU and ECOWAS COOPERATION with the UNITED NATIONS

65.   As regional organizations are playing an increasingly important role in efforts to bring about peace and security, the need to develop stronger and more effective cooperation mechanisms with the UN has grown. Cooperation between the UN and regional organizations is currently taking place at three different levels: 1) at the intra-organizational level through the High Level Meetings (HLM), 2) at the intergovernmental level through the regular thematic meetings of the Security Council with regional organizations, and 3) at the operational level via the establishment of concrete programs of cooperation and capacity building between the UN secretariat and its regional counterparts, especially in the area of peacekeeping, and with UNDP, on issues related to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

66.   The Secretary-General has since 1994 convened seven high-level meetings (HLMs) with the heads of regional organizations with a view to strengthening mutual cooperation, particularly on peace and security issues in the context of Chapter VIII of the Charter. The High Levels Meetings have established six working groups on: dialogue among civilizations, lessons learned from field experiences, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, disarmament and non-proliferation, the protection of human rights in the fight against terrorism, and organizational and follow-up issues. The working groups adopt recommendations that can then be considered at the HLM.

67.   At the 3rd HLM, participating organizations agreed on 13 modalities that would guide their cooperation with the UN in the field of conflict prevention: better coordination at HQ and in field, systematic information exchanges, liaison officer exchanges, staff list exchanges, working-level visits, joint training, joint expert meetings, best practices repositories, Common Early Warning Indicators, database for Conflict prevention capabilities, links to civil society (media) for awareness, mobilizing resources and Working Group follow-up meetings for the above.

68.	The fourth HLM identified a number of peace building capacity-goals including agreement to establish peacebuilding units and focal points, systematic information exchanges, working level visits and joint training[18]. The sixth HLM in 2005 went further in strengthening efforts to achieve closer cooperation by agreeing to hold HLMs annually (instead of every two years) and to coordinate them with the annual Security Council thematic debates on UN cooperation with regional organizations. In 2006, the Security Council debate and the 7th HLM were held on the same day for the first time. The 6th HLM also decided to establish a standing committee 'to act as an initiator of ideas, a mobilizer of political will and sustainable direction, and a monitor of implementation of decisions made'[19]. Other important agreements made at HLMs have been to seek a pragmatic and flexible approach to cooperation and for Chapter VIII regional organizations to cooperate on Chapter VIII terms while other international organizations will cooperate with the UN according to the other chapters of the Charter[20].

69.	Since April 2003, the UN Security Council has had five open debates with regional organizations. In 2004, the open debate focused on cooperation in stabilization processes and in 2005, following the open debate, the Security Council adopted its first resolution on UN-Regional Organization cooperation which, inter alia, requested a report of the Secretary-General on opportunities and challenges facing UN-Regional Organization cooperation[21]. The September 2006 meeting that coincided with the HLM expressed the resolve to seek closer and more operational cooperation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacekeeping[22]. The 2007 Security Council open debate considered ways to promote cooperation with particular focus on AU-UN relations[23]. In these debates, it has become clear that in addition to peacekeeping cooperation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding collaboration is also receiving increasing interest, not least because of the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, fund and support office.

70.	Though cooperation between the UN and African regional organizations is increasing, the relationship between the organizations and their operational structures needs to be better defined. Operational cooperation has probably been greatest in the area of peacemaking, the United Nations has collaborated with several African regional

organizations in negotiating peace in Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, the DRC, the Great Lakes Region and Darfur[24]. Cooperation through field offices between UN agencies and programmes and regional organizations is more common even though operational cooperation still remains to a large extent unstructured and minimally coordinated. In West Africa, for example, cooperation of UN agencies with ECOWAS is governed by at least 15 different Memoranda of Understanding. While this fact reveals active engagement between the two organizations, this cooperation would greatly benefit from better coherence of the UN system efforts. From the perspective of regional organizations, especially of ECOWAS, the lack of UN coordination has made cooperation more difficult. A high-level approach to building a comprehensive and coordinated relationship with ECOWAS and other sub-regional organizations is needed.

71. One of the significant developments with regards to peace building has been the establishment of the Peace Building Commission. (General Assembly, A/RES/60/180, paras. 7 (e), 11 & 19). Its main aim is to bring together relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peace building and recovery. The basis for institutional collaboration between the PBC and regional organizations, such as the African Union, is provided for in the founding resolutions establishing the PBC. Paragraph 7 that members of the PBC's country specific meetings shall include relevant regional and sub-regional organizations; while paragraph 11 states that the Commission shall, where appropriate, work in close consultation with regional and sub-regional organizations to ensure their involvement in the peacebuilding process in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter.

72.   Important challenges constrain closer and more effective UN cooperation with regional organisations. So far there is no clear division of labour or an agreed set of comparative advantages between the UN and regional organizations. Clarity is also lacking with regard to the added value of regional organizations in specific areas where capacity constraints make it difficult for them to fulfill their expected mandate without relying on the assistance of the United Nations despite what otherwise would fall within their purview. Calls for current activities to be in line with comparative advantages and

for a clear yet flexible division of labour have been repeatedly made by both sides but rarely elaborated further[25].

73.   In West Africa, cooperation between the UN and ECOWAS is hampered by the different office locations of the two organizations. While most regional UN offices are based in Dakar, Senegal, the ECOWAS Commission is located in Abuja, Nigeria. As a result of poor intra-African flight infrastructure and new restrictions on using Nigerian airlines in the aftermath of several recent crashes, visits are infrequent, expensive and often arduous. This continues to pose a challenge to staff in terms of movement, information exchanges, and cooperation.

74.   Another obstacle to increased cooperation has been the limited absorptive capacity of regional organizations. Even though donor interest in capacity-building of regional organizations is large, these organizations have, despite their best efforts, found that it is sometimes difficult for them to quickly use the funds received or implement even fully funded programmes. In fact, the single most important obstacle to cooperation might be the limited capacity on the part of regional organizations that often renders it unable to take up cooperation offers, undertake joint activities, effectively liaise with partners and fully engage in efficient partnerships. Insufficient staff coupled with immense work loads result in an uneven capacity to cooperate that can leave both parties discouraged.

VI. Way Forward

75.   Several recommendations have been made with a view to enhancing United Nations-Regional Organization cooperation. They include meetings of the heads of the organizations and more frequent exchange of information.

76.   Regional organizations usually possess superior information and understanding of local political dynamics. Frequently interveners have little local knowledge and locals have little power of intervention. Regional organizations could help bridge this gap.

Greater efforts are needed to build concrete mechanisms that will allow the UN to benefit from information and analysis of regional organizations for all peace efforts, including conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

77.   Cooperation needs to be strengthened on at least three levels, all of them critical for the success of the regional-global security partnership, first and foremost, strengthening the cooperation between the African Union Peace and Security Council, and the United Nations Security Council. While both organs have shown increased cooperation and coordination, much remains to be done to build an effective working partnership between the primary decision-making organs of each organization with respect to peace and security. Information exchanges, solicitation of advice, joint meetings, joint strategies and familiarization meetings could all lead to greater cooperation.

78.   Another step toward greater cooperation would be to build stronger links between the secretariats servicing both organs. A recent staff exchange and training of AU officials to the UN was a welcome development in this regard and should become the rule, not the exception. While both organs will not always be in agreement about how to handle certain crises or even which organization should take the lead, cooperation and coordination in the formulation of policy and strategy must be maximized whenever they are in agreement.

79. At the organizational level, the High Level Meetings have contributed to a more regular exchange. These have to be complemented by strong middle and working level links which will need to become the backbone of intra-organisational cooperation. The apparent success of desk-to-desk dialogue between the UN and the EU should therefore be replicated with African regional organizations. Critical forms of cooperation in this respect can include information-sharing, notification, provision of advice, working level cooperation, joint projects and activities, capacity-building support and common policies and strategies.

80.   The current focus of the UN is on finding the right legal foundation for formal cooperation agreements with regional organizations. This is important as different legal statuses have different operational, financial and political consequences. For example, regional organizations that qualify as such under Chapter VIII may be eligible for funding from the UN in carrying out peace efforts. They may also have a different political status vis-a-vis the UN. At the same time, some regional organizations in Africa are working under immense daily pressures to respond to and prevent conflicts while being constrained by limited capacity.

81. There is an apparent schism in understanding between the UN and regional organizations when the UN seemingly 'delegates' its functions to regional organizations. It is necessary to bridge this gap and define the conditions under which there can be more scope for partnerships with the UN and they can assume a larger role in operations managed by regional organizations either through co-deployment, co-financing or hybrid forces. Such an approach requires that the UN decides whether it can afford to have *ad hoc* approaches and delegate what it considers as non-core missions to regional organizations

82.   The increased interest in strengthening cooperation through High Level Meetings, the annual Security Council meetings on UN-Regional Organization cooperation, the establishment of special working groups, a standing committee and the efforts to build a regional-global security partnership are encouraging. In addition, the recent establishment of the 10-year capacity-building framework for the AU has lifted UN-Regional Organizations cooperation levels to a new high. Still, the UN must increase its cooperation efforts to support regional organizations which are trying to deal with the insecurity challenges and developments on the ground.

83.   UN-Regional Organizations cooperation has been strongest in the field of peacekeeping. DPKO has assisted the AU in the planning and establishment of the African Union mission in Sudan (AMIS) and has recently set up an AU Peacekeeping

Support Team in Addis Ababa and New York that will provide longer-term technical assistance and support for peacekeeping. DPKO has also assisted ECOWAS and the AU in other missions with ad-hoc technical assistance and has undertaken staff exchanges. But it is widely acknowledged that peacekeeping, though one of the most important instruments is necessarily temporary, very expensive and can only be one of many tools of conflict management. Much more needs to be done in preventing conflict and building peace. UN-RO cooperation needs to pay much greater attention to linking UN conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts to RO efforts while addressing the large capacity-building needs of regional organizations in both conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

84.   Current cooperation efforts have focused on processes rather than outcomes and practical results. To achieve the envisioned regional-global security partnership, a shift to results-based cooperation has to take place. The concrete meaning of the partnership itself, its elements and form as well as its limits will have to be agreed and clearly articulated. The need for clarity with regard to the legal status of regional organizations should be matched by a similar willingness to achieve clear consensus on the type, form and function of the partnership. While the UN and regional organizations have repeatedly pledged to form closer ties on the basis of comparative advantages and have praised the value of a clear division of labour they have been relatively silent on the specifics of what exactly the comparative advantages of each organization are and what different types of divisions of labour might be acceptable.

85.   There is considerable potential for closer cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations. Nevertheless it is clear that the United Nations itself can only significantly increase its support for regional organizations if it receives greater capacity and resources for this task.

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