Peace support operations - EU engagement with the UN and the African Union

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Geoffrey VAN ORDEN (ECR, UK) on Peace Support Operations – EU engagement with the UN and the African Union.

The Committee on Development, exercising its prerogatives as an associated committee in accordance with Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure, also gave its opinion on the report.

Members recalled that Peace Support Operations (PSOs) are a form of crisis response, normally in support of an internationally recognised organisation such as the UN or the African Union (AU), with a UN mandate, and designed to prevent armed conflict, restore, maintain or build peace, enforce peace agreements and tackle the complex emergencies and challenges posed by failing or weak states. The aim of PSOs is also to help create stable, secure and more prosperous environments for the longer term.

The committee also stressed that **the security landscape in Africa in particular has changed dramatically in the last decade, with the emergence of terrorist and insurgent groups** in Somalia, Nigeria, and the Sahel-Sahara region, and with peace enforcement and counter-terrorism operations becoming the rule rather than the exception in many areas. In this context, Members considered that coordinated external actions that make use of diplomatic, security and development tools are necessary to restore confidence and tackle the challenges of wars, internal conflicts, insecurity, fragility and transition.

The deployment of multiple UN-authorised missions in the same theatre of operations, with different actors and regional organisations, is increasingly the reality of modern peace operations. However, managing these complex partnerships, while not duplicating work or missions, is essential to successful operations. In this regard, Members called for the **evaluation** and **rationalisation of the existing structures**.

Better coordination: the committee urged the EU, given the scale of the challenges and the complex involvement of other organisations and nations, to seek an **appropriate division of labour** and to focus on where it can best add value. It considered that UN and AU missions are in need of a comprehensive approach under which, in addition to deploying military, diplomatic and development instruments, other essential factors are a thorough knowledge of the security environment, exchanges of intelligence and information and modern technologies. It stressed the importance of the other instruments of the EU in the security field and, in particular, of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations.

Provision of military forces: Members noted that the perceived legitimacy of a PSO is key to its success. They believed that the **AU should therefore contribute with support and military forces wherever possible**. They welcomed the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peacekeeping and Crisis Management and called on the EU to make further efforts to **facilitate Member State contributions.** They recalled that the EU has engaged in crisis-management activities in Africa. However, only 11 of the 28 EU Member States made pledges at the 28 September 2015 Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping, while China pledged a standby force of 8 000 and Colombia 5 000 troops. Accordingly, Members called on the EU Member States to **significantly increase their military and police contributions to UN peacekeeping missions.**

Prevention of conflicts: recalling the need for a rapid African response to crisis, Members emphasised the importance of investing more in conflict prevention. They recognised the critical contribution of the

African Peace Facility in developing the triangular partnership between the UN, the EU and the AU, but considered it vital that the EU institutions and Member States remain closely engaged if the Facility is to be fully utilised. They took the view that the Facility should focus on structural support rather than just bankrolling African forces' pay.

Military assistance for African states: Members observed that stepping up European military cooperation would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Europe's contribution to UN peace missions. They called on the EU and its Member States, as well as on other members of the international community, to **assist with training**, including discipline, equipment, logistical support, financial assistance and development of rules of engagement, to encourage and assist the **African Standby Force**.

Members also considered that the Official Development Assistance (ODA) needs to be redesigned under the OECD framework through peace building lenses. Similarly, the EDF regulation should be reviewed in order to allow programming design that includes peace, security and justice expenditures.

The committee insisted that neither the EU nor the Member States, in supporting PSOs, should act in isolation but that they should, rather, take full account of the contributions of other international actors, improve coordination with them, **improve rapidity of response**, and focus their efforts on certain priority countries.

A holistic EU approach: Members supported a holistic EU approach, which is the main instrument for mobilising the full potential of EU action in the context of peacekeeping operations and the stabilisation process, as well as for mobilising various ways to support the development of AU countries. They stressed that border management assistance should be a priority for EU engagement in Africa.

Targeted funds: Members recognised that the problem is often not the lack of funding but, rather, how funds are spent and what other resources are utilised. They backed initiatives such as the Békou trust fund operating in the Central African Republic. They believed the current funding programme is unsustainable, and that conditions should be attached to the African Peace Facility in order to encourage the AU to increase its own contributions to PSOs.

Sexual abuse by United Nations personnel: lastly, Members took note of the UN Evaluation Report of 15 May 2015 on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. They considered that the AU, the UN, the EU and Member States should exercise strong vigilance concerning such criminal matters and urged the most rigorous disciplinary and judicial procedures and the utmost effort to prevent such crimes.

It should be noted that in a **minority report** tabled by the GUE/NGL, Members pointed out that the report aims to increase EU contribution to peace support operations. They felt that the responsibility-to-protect-mechanism should not be used as a pretext for military intervention. They considered that NATO should leave the African continent, and stressed the need for a strict separation of EU from NATO in this context.