CONCEPT PAPER

Policy Advisory Group Meeting: The AU/NEPAD and Africa’s Evolving Governance and Security Architecture

Compiled by the Centre for Conflict Resolution, Cape Town, and the Centre For Policy Studies, Johannesburg

November 2004
Introduction

The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town, and the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), Johannesburg, are hosting a policy advisory group meeting in Misty Hills, near Johannesburg, on 11 and 12 December 2004. The meeting will analyse and assess Africa’s emerging governance and security architecture from a human security perspective, and will have three focal areas. First, a critical assessment of the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and their interpretations and implementation of a “people-centred” approach to security. Second, an evaluation of efforts by African and external actors (including the United Nations [UN], the United States, the AU, the Nepad secretariat, subregional bodies, national governments and civil society groups) to monitor and respond to human rights and democratic governance issues on the continent. Third, an analysis of the AU’s efforts to establish a security mechanism, Nepad’s focus on peace and security issues, and associated challenges around these subjects.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the AU and to determine a proper division of labour between itself, NEPAD (which will become a specialised agency of the AU by 2006), Africa’s subregional organisations, its civil society actors and the UN. Middle-level officials heading up security departments in subregional organisations and the AU will be invited to participate in this meeting along with academic and policy experts. Ibrahim Gambari, the UN Undersecretary-General charged with coordinating NEPAD issues at the secretariat in New York, has already agreed to deliver a keynote address at the meeting. During discussions involving CCR and CPS with representatives of the AU, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in Addis Ababa in November 2003, enthusiastic support was expressed for the holding of a working group meeting in order to build institutional links between these organisations, share information and experiences, and benefit from the accumulated knowledge of some of Africa’s best scholars and practitioners. Since the Nepad initiative and the AU are closely linked, CCR and CPS felt the need to incorporate a focus on Nepad in the meeting.

The aim of this meeting will be to develop, debate and influence policy options that will have the potential to contribute positively to the construction of an effective, people-centred governance and security architecture in Africa. This project aims to achieve the following four principal goals:

- To serve as a useful guide to the Nepad secretariat and Africa’s regional organisations and actors in assessing their strengths and weaknesses in the areas of democratic governance and conflict management;
- To identify the key factors required to maximise the potential of Nepad and Africa’s fledgling security mechanisms and to provide tangible support for the efforts of regional organisations at strengthening their political, military and human rights institutions;
- To share comparative experiences between, and learn policy lessons from, the AU, Nepad and Africa’s subregional organisations; and
- To facilitate networking among civil society actors, representatives of intergovernmental organisations, and government officials; as well as to encourage the involvement of civil society actors in critical policy debates.
Background

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) placed a strong emphasis on the security of post-colonial states and anti-colonial liberation movements over the security of people. This was evident in the following ways: its vision to promote unity and solidarity between African states (rather than African people); its rigid, non-interventionist posture in cases of civil conflicts; and the 1964 Cairo Declaration on Border Disputes and African States which essentially legitimised national boundaries that had been determined by colonial powers.

In the post-Cold War era, African multilateral institutions and policy frameworks have adopted a more people-centred approach to security. In this approach, security is seen as a “multi-dimensional phenomenon that goes beyond military considerations and embraces all aspects of human existence, including economic, political and social dimensions of individual, family, community and national life.”

The African Union seeks to promote unity and solidarity among African states as well as African people; to promote and protect respect for human rights; as well as to encourage democratic principles and institutions, “good governance”, and popular participation. The spirit of the AU’s Constitutive Act seeks to empower African citizens through sustainable socio-economic development and meaningful improvements in standards of living. In addition, the Act provides for the participation of African civil society actors in the activities of the organisation, and calls for the establishment of a Pan-African Parliament which was established in South Africa earlier this year. Critically, the Act also makes provision for interference in the internal affairs of member states in cases of unconstitutional changes of governments, genocide, and conflicts that threaten regional stability.

The AU is currently tackling issues relating to peace and security; poverty reduction; democratic governance and human rights; co-operation and integration; and the role of civil society actors in supporting the vision and goals of the AU. A bold and ambitious plan for operationalising the 15-member Peace and Security Council (which was elected in March 2004) has been devised, in particular, setting up the Panel of the Wise for mediation activities on the continent as well as an African standby peacekeeping force by 2010.

Nepad was designed as a framework to guide Africa’s political and economic renewal. Key to Nepad’s identity is an emphasis on African “ownership” of the plan as well as genuine partnership with donor countries. Nepad has five key policy areas: democracy, governance and peace and security; economic and corporate governance; infrastructure and information technology; human resource development; agriculture and market access. These five areas are indicative of a more holistic approach to development in which there is an explicit recognition of the interlinkage between political, economic and social processes. The Nepad document therefore acknowledges that development is impossible in the absence of democracy, human rights, peace, and good governance, and seeks to commit African governments to these goals. Through its secretariat in South Africa, Nepad has set up an African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) which will monitor the adherence and progress of countries to political governance and sound economic management. Reviews are to be undertaken on a voluntary basis and are not intended to be punitive. Thus far, 23 countries have signed up for review. Nepad’s role is primarily that of facilitator and of building capacity, while the actual implementation of projects will be designated to institutions, regional economic communities, and individual states. The goals and objectives of the AU, Nepad, and their respective organs, if properly implemented, have potentially

revolutionary implications for the African continent and its international affairs. These issues will be addressed in greater detail by the policy advisory group meeting.

Problem Statement

Three key challenges must be met in order to achieve the vision and objectives of the AU and Nepad, particularly that of making Africa a more safe and secure environment for its people. Below are outlined three critical challenges that will inform discussion and debate during the proposed advisory group meeting.

1) The commitment of some of the AU’s member states to the idea of popular and civil society participation, as well as democratic governance and human security as enshrined in the Nepad document, remains weak.

Human rights abuses and a lack of democratic accountability continue to occur in parts of Africa. In a number of countries, the state, especially the national security apparatus, threatens the safety and security of citizens. The reluctance of many states to sign up for Nepad’s peer review mechanism is seen by some as a lack of commitment to the processes designed to entrench good governance in Africa. There is also a lack of strong national civil society organisations in many African countries. These are necessary components of the political landscape to ensure democratic practices and accountability. Where a noticeable civil society sector exists, governments generally tend to regard civil society groups with suspicion. Governments have also been slow in mainstreaming gender into their decision-making structures, a commitment they have undertaken through their membership of the AU and subregional bodies.

2) There is a lack of a clear division of labour between the AU, Nepad, Africa’s subregional organisations, civil society actors and the UN in terms of the provision of security.

The AU’s protocol relating to its Peace and Security Council, and Nepad’s peace and security proposals, call for defining relations and rationalising the AU’s links with Africa’s subregional bodies. However, this may be a difficult task, as the existing regional security arrangements have been established by decisions of the leaders of subregional organisations. Furthermore, the protocol relating to the AU’s Peace and Security Council was drafted without significant input from subregional organisations. In addition, this protocol was signed much later than most regional pacts and agreements on peace and security, such as the ECOWAS security mechanism of 1999 and the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation of 2001. Harmonisation is therefore a sine qua non, but competition and a certain amount of rivalry should be expected.

3) The financial and logistical weaknesses of Africa’s current security mechanisms and activities.

Since the establishment of security mechanisms in Africa, the effectiveness of the associated activities and processes of these organisations has been severely constrained by a lack of adequate financial and logistical resources. Despite the efforts by Africa’s regional organisations to strengthen their security mechanisms, the UN must assume its proper responsibilities as the body primarily responsible for global peace and security. For example, in the case of peacekeeping, Rwanda’s Arusha agreement in 1993, the Congo’s Lusaka Accord in 1999, and the Algiers Accords that ended the Ethiopia/Eritrea conflict in 2000, revealed the military weakness of the OAU/AU whose members lacked the resources to implement agreements they had negotiated.
without the deployment of UN peacekeepers. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, the UN had to take over ECOMOG’s (the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group) peacekeeping responsibilities. Nepad, through its partnership with the Group of Eight (G8) industrialised countries will contribute to raising funds and building capacity for the AU’s Peace and Security Mechanism. However, for the foreseeable future, the financial, material and personnel support of western peacekeepers who have both the equipment and resources for UN missions in Africa, will be critical. The limited British intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 demonstrated that the involvement of such armies is crucial in filling gaps created by the deficiencies of African militaries.

Policy Recommendations to Inform Discussion and Debate

During the policy advisory group meeting, discussions will be informed by the following five policy recommendations, which seek to address the above-mentioned challenges:

1) Establish and strengthen AU, regional, and national mechanisms on human rights, conflict management and democratic governance.

Greater emphasis must be placed on the establishment and strengthening of the AU’s organs and mechanisms dealing with democratic governance and human rights issues such as the Pan-African Parliament and the African Court of Justice. Africa’s subregional organisations must also strengthen their own institutions to be able to promote democratisation and human rights more effectively and to involve civil society actors more actively in their work. Concrete ways must be urgently found to launch the AU’s Peace and Security Council and its structures such as the African standby force, the Early Warning System, and the Panel of the Wise. Effective cooperation modalities must be established between the AU and subregional organisations in the peace and security fields. Nepad’s APRM must be capacitated to ensure that governance audits are properly conducted and that concrete ways are devised to facilitate the necessary adjustments in those areas where countries do not meet the necessary criteria for effective democratic governance.

2) The AU Commission and Nepad Secretariat should strengthen ties with appropriate civil society bodies.

The AU’s Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), dealing with civil society issues, should be adequately staffed and equipped to perform its monitoring role more effectively. The AU Commission should also be prepared to help overcome the apprehension, and sometimes even hostility, demonstrated by several African governments towards civil society actors. The AU also needs to embark on actual implementation of various protocols dealing with democratic governance. In addition, the AU Commission and the Nepad secretariat should reach out to African NGOs, think-tanks, and centres of excellence in the democracy and governance fields in order to build up a network of researchers and resource persons who can contribute to enhancing capacity in its main areas of work. Nepad should be popularised so that both policymakers and citizens are familiar with its objectives and functioning, and civil society actors should be further enabled, through stakeholder meetings and web-based access, to make meaningful inputs into Nepad policy formulations and activities. Nepad and the AU should, in particular, draw in gender activists to strengthen the gender-related dimensions of all their policies and programmes which are currently very weak.
3) The AU Commission must focus in the short-term on the successful integration of NEPAD into the AU by 2006 which will help dispel the perception that NEPAD is a rival of the AU.

NEPAD and the AU should be effectively integrated. A good start would be to integrate the Peer Review processes of the AU and NEPAD. Given that NEPAD has been tasked with resource mobilisation for the continent, it would do well to make this a priority and to devise ways of mobilising resources for strengthening the AU.

4) Avoid the duplication of African peacekeeping forces.

In terms of the proposed AU standby force to be established by 2010, it would be sensible for the AU to avoid duplication, competition, and waste of resources by encouraging and supporting the efforts of Africa’s subregional organisations – some of which have made substantial progress in creating their own security mechanisms - to set up their individual standby forces that could eventually be deployed under the auspices of the AU to undertake peacekeeping missions. States in West, East, and Southern Africa are already engaged in building their capabilities in this area.

5) Establish greater peacekeeping co-operation between subregional organisations and the UN.

The peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi and Congo could signify an innovative approach to UN peacekeeping in Africa based on regional pillars (ECOWAS, SADC and IGAD) supported by local “hegemons” like South Africa and Nigeria whose political dominance is diluted by multinational peacekeepers from outside their subregions. By placing regional forces under the UN flag, the hope is that the peacekeepers will enjoy the legitimacy and impartiality that the UN's universal membership often provides, while some of the financial and logistical problems of regional peacekeepers can be alleviated through greater burden-sharing.

Follow-on Activities

This policy advisory group meeting will take place over two days, and will involve about 40 participants drawn from the AU, Nepad, UN, African subregional organisations, national governments, academia and civil society organisations. The proceedings will be documented in the form of a policy report and widely disseminated by the organisers. Follow-up activities will take place to implement the recommendations of the policy advisory group, including meetings with the AU and Nepad to discuss ways in which the recommendations can be incorporated into their current work. The policy report will be launched in Johannesburg (involving members of the Nepad secretariat, key South African government officials and representatives of the donor community in Pretoria) and Cape Town (involving key South African parliamentarians and local civil society actors). Future meetings will be planned between the Nepad and AU secretariats, as well as the UN, to consolidate these efforts which are in line with the current work of both the CCR and CPS.