



# Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations

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## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
I. Introduction .....	1
II. Africa and Europe at a Crossroad .....	3
A. The AU: Toward Greater Self-sufficiency and Efficiency.....	3
1. Financial reform.....	3
2. Institutional reform.....	4
B. The EU: A Breakup and a Breakdown .....	5
1. Brexit .....	6
2. Migration and terrorism.....	7
C. Reshaping AU-EU Relations .....	10
III. What Role for the AU in Peace and Security?.....	12
A. The Changing Nature of Conflict in Africa .....	12
B. The AU's Strategic Priorities.....	13
C. The African Union and the Regional Economic Communities .....	14
IV. Points of Divergence.....	16
A. Resentment and Mistrust: The “Equal Partnership” and the Colonial Trap .....	16
B. Funding: The Donor-recipient Dilemma.....	19
C. Institutional Irritants: Bureaucratic Burden and Capacity Deficit .....	21
D. “Whatever Works!” .....	22
V. The Search for Common Ground .....	25
A. A Rational, Interests-based Partnership .....	25
B. Splitting the Bill More Equitably .....	25
C. Greater Cooperation and Working-level Linkages.....	27
D. A Realistic Assessment of Constraints.....	28
1. Reorient capacity building and reduce the bureaucratic burden .....	28
2. Limitations and consequences .....	29
VI. Conclusion .....	31
APPENDICES	
A. Map of TK.....	32
B. About the International Crisis Group .....	33
C. Crisis Group Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2014.....	34
D. Crisis Group Board of Trustees .....	36

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

## *Executive Summary*

African and European leaders are scheduled to meet in November for the fifth triennial African Union-European Union summit at a time when relations between the two institutions have reached a turning point. Both are in transition, undergoing internal reforms that will have serious implications for their future peace and security partnership. After significant disagreements in 2016 over European Union (EU) payments to troops in the African Union (AU) mission in Somalia, there is now considerable political will on both sides to strengthen cooperation. While collaboration has improved in some areas in recent months, deep-seated frustrations over financing and each other's perceived deficiencies remain strong. Relations are too emotional, bound up in colonial history – a breeding ground for mistrust and resentment. If the relationship is to be deepened, both sides must deal openly with disagreements. Deliberations should be less transactional, moving away from a narrow list of African demands and negotiations over what the EU will pay for. Instead, they must be more strategic, based upon clearly articulated interests.

The AU has embarked on a potentially transformative process of institutional reform that, if implemented, will make it leaner and more efficient and should increase its financial self-sufficiency. However, there are significant challenges to the AU's authority resulting from the changing nature of conflict in Africa, especially the spread of jihadist and other non-state armed groups, and the concomitant rise of ad hoc military coalitions to combat them, such as the Multinational Joint Taskforce in the Lake Chad basin and the G5 Sahel. These changes also bring into question the suitability and sustainability of the continent's peace and security architecture. Designed in the 2000s, it is now under strain and in need of wholesale review. The AU needs to clearly set out its strategic priorities and define its role in peace and security, deciding whether to focus on developing and harmonising policy and maintaining political oversight or becoming an implementer of projects. It also should reassess its relations with the regional economic communities, a central element of the continent's security architecture, clarifying which organisations should take the lead in conflict situations.

With the prospect of the UK's exit, the EU is preparing for life without one of its most influential and wealthy member states. This inevitably will impact its relations with the AU, as will renegotiation of the Cotonou Agreement, a partnership between the EU and 79 sub-Saharan African, Caribbean and Pacific countries which expires in 2020. The African Peace Facility, the main source of EU support for the AU's peace and security activities, is funded through the agreement's financial instrument, the European Development Fund.

The EU is one of the AU's most significant peace and security partners; since 2004 it has provided more than €2 billion (\$2.39 billion) in assistance. The question of financing is one of the areas of greatest tension between the two institutions. Their relationship is essentially that of donor and recipient but both are reluctant to characterise it as such, even though they actively, if inadvertently, perpetuate the dependency.

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The EU increasingly resents being treated like a “cash machine”, especially as it believes it does not receive due recognition. It wants the AU to pay its “fair share”. The AU claims to want this too. It wishes to reduce its reliance on external support and, as a result, member states have agreed to proposals for a 0.2 per cent levy on imports to the continent that could generate more than \$1.2 billion per year. This is essential. If the suggested levy is not workable for some or all member states, alternative solutions must quickly be found.

The vexed donor-recipient dynamic is further complicated by tensions over the legacy of European colonisation, which intensified greatly during Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma’s tenure as AU Commission chairperson. This has a detrimental effect on trust and confidence, prevents free and frank discussions and bars progress toward an interest-based partnership.

The AU-EU summit is unlikely to be as transformational as the two institutions would wish – preparations have not progressed far enough for this. But it could still be a useful springboard for more strategic discussions and movement toward an interests-based relationship, if the following steps are implemented:

- ❑ **Pursue a pragmatic partnership based on mutual interests:** assertions about an “equal partnership” in a seriously imbalanced relationship cause unnecessary tensions, irritating some AU member states and raising unachievable expectations. The notion, while remaining an aspiration, should be de-emphasised and replaced with a more pragmatic understanding of AU and EU mutual interests and the interdependent nature of their relations.
- ❑ **Focus on strategic and political interests:** discussions of the minutiae of what the EU will or will not pay for tend to dominate AU-EU meetings at all levels. It will be hard to avoid financial matters, but the summit should focus on matters that are vital to the long-term interests of the two unions and address the issue of funding as part of a strategic examination of peace and security after Cotonou. Ideally, any future support should be predictable to enable the AU to do more medium-term planning, and flexible to permit adopting new initiatives and adapting the continental security architecture. It also should include an instrument for rapid reaction like the existing Early Response Mechanism. Support should focus on four key areas: early warning; preventive diplomacy and mediation; peace support operations; and capacity-building and non-lethal equipment for AU member states’ military and security forces. To encourage AU member states to increase their financial support, any future mechanism should be based on a matched funding system in which the EU’s contribution is proportionately linked to those made by African governments.
- ❑ **Put migration on the agenda:** another step toward a more interests-based partnership would be the inclusion of migration and mobility on the summit agenda, a highly contentious issue that AU member states are reluctant to discuss openly. The EU’s kneejerk reaction to increasing flows of irregular migration from Africa has alienated the AU, which wants Europe to increase legal migration routes and tackle root causes rather than the seal its borders. However uncomfortable, the issue should be on the table – it will permeate the meeting regardless.

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## I. Introduction

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Much binds Africa and Europe together. Collectively, the EU's 28 members are Africa's principal trading partner, main foreign investor, chief source of remittances and largest provider of development and humanitarian assistance.<sup>1</sup> The two continents are geographically close (just eight miles separate them at their nearest points) and they have a shared, if chequered, history. Security issues in one rebound on the other: for example, instability in Libya and the Sahel (in part, at least, of Europe's own making) has contributed to rising numbers of migrants crossing the Mediterranean.

Since its inception in 1957, the EU (then the European Economic Community) has had a close association with Africa, initiated by France and later supported by the UK when it joined in 1973. Over time this has developed from a narrow focus on trade and development to encompass security, governance and the rule of law. The first formalisation of relations between the AU (then the Organisation of African Unity) and the EU was the establishment of a framework for political dialogue at a summit in Cairo in April 2000. It was cemented in 2007 with the development of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) which sets out the shared values, interests and strategic objectives of the two institutions.<sup>2</sup>

In November, leaders representing the AU's 55 members are scheduled to join those from the EU in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire for the fifth triennial AU-EU summit.<sup>3</sup> The EU has declared 2017, which also marks the tenth anniversary of the JAES, "a defining year" for its partnership with the AU and has expressed the hope that the Abidjan meeting will "reshape and deepen" relations.<sup>4</sup> The AU has yet to pronounce its expectations for the summit, but there is a sense in Addis Ababa, home to the organisation's headquarters, that relations are ripe for reinvigoration. Relations reached a low point in 2016 with a bruising dispute over the EU's payment of stipends to troops in AMISOM, the AU's peacekeeping mission in Somalia, but coordination and cooperation are said to have improved in recent months.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership", European Union, Brussels, 4 May 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The formulation "Africa-EU" was used to enable Morocco's participation – it was not a member of the OAU/AU in 2000. Garth le Pere, "AU-EU Security and Governance Cooperation"; and Kaye Whiteman, "The Rise and Fall of *Eurafrique*" in Adekeye Adebajo and Kay Whiteman (eds.), *The EU and Africa: From Eurafrique to Afro-Europa* (London, 2012), pp. 23-43 and 257-275.

<sup>3</sup> Previously the Africa-EU summit. The name was changed at the behest of the AU following Morocco's re-entry in January this year.

<sup>4</sup> "Joint communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership", op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> The EU reduced its funding of AMISOM troop stipends by 20 per cent. Following suspension of all budget support to Burundi (as a result of its political crisis), the EU subsequently requested the AU find a direct means of paying Burundi's AMISOM contingent in order to prevent the government

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A re-evaluation of the AU-EU relationship is timely. Both unions find themselves at an institutional crossroad that will greatly impact their continued association. The AU is embarking on a potentially transformational process of reform almost as radical as the evolution from the Organisation of African Unity to the African Union in 2002. It also cautiously welcomed Morocco back into the fold at the January 2017 summit, after 33 years of self-imposed exile, and now for the very first time is a truly continental body. The EU, having weathered the worst of its existential crisis over migration, is now faced with the prospect of the UK's exit and is preparing for life without one of its most influential and wealthy member states.

These transitions come at a time of rapidly changing international politics. The geopolitical context for multilateral diplomacy is deteriorating under the influence of U.S. President Donald Trump who prefers a bilateral, transactional approach to foreign relations and is seeking to considerably reduce U.S. financial support to the UN, in particular to peacekeeping.<sup>6</sup> There is uncertainty surrounding the Trump administration's wider Africa policies, though it will maintain and likely increase the focus on counter-terrorism, particularly in the Horn of Africa and the Lake Chad basin, bringing only short-term gains in countries like Somalia and Nigeria, while causing further civilian casualties.<sup>7</sup>

China's weight on the continent continues to grow. Beijing's Africa policy has been shaped by economic interests, but its need to protect business investments has pushed it to engage in peacekeeping and conflict resolution in Mali and more particularly in South Sudan. The commercial, diplomatic and military presence of the Gulf states and Turkey in Africa, especially the Horn, is increasing but it is not yet clear whether it will undermine or bolster stability.<sup>8</sup>

How the two institutions adjust to these external and internal challenges will have serious ramifications for their peace and security partnership. To deepen relations, they will need to tackle deep-seated frustrations that breed mistrust and resentment.

This report is based on extensive interviews with AU and EU officials and member states' representatives in Addis Ababa, Brussels, Berlin, The Hague, Juba, London, Nairobi and Pretoria, between January and October this year. It provides a detailed analysis of the relationship between the two institutions, identifying and assessing key points of divergence, elucidating concerns and complaints, and suggesting ways to strengthen future relations by bridging the divides that currently separate them.

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from appropriating the stipends. This was compounded by the temporary suspension of all payments to AMISOM troops after the AU failed the EU's Pillar Assessment, a routine evaluation of its management of EU funding. According to a senior EU official, AU-EU collaboration was highly effective during elections in Kenya in August, and improved relations – especially with the AU Department for Political Affairs, has continued since. Crisis Group interview, EU official, Addis Ababa, 5 October 2017.

<sup>6</sup> In June, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, boasted she had managed to cut over \$500 million from the \$7.87 billion peacekeeping budget. "Haley cheers cuts to UN peacekeeping: 'We're only getting started'", CNN, 29 June 2017.

<sup>7</sup> "Trump eases combat rules in Somalia intended to protect civilians", *The New York Times*, 30 March 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Crisis Group Africa Report N°288, *China's Foreign Policy Experiment in South Sudan*, 10 July 2017. Crisis Group Africa Commentary, "A Dangerous Gulf in the Horn", 3 August 2017.

Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017

## II. Africa and Europe at a Crossroad

### A. *The AU: Toward Greater Self-sufficiency and Efficiency*

To lessen AU dependence on external donors, member states have committed, in principle, to significantly increase their funding, including for peace and security activities. To ensure they get value for money, they have embarked on a potentially radical reform process that, if successful, will make the AU leaner and more efficient.

#### 1. Financial reform

In July 2015, African leaders pledged to fund 25 per cent of the AU's budget for peace and security operations by 2020 – an acknowledgement that its over-reliance on external aid is unsustainable, compromises the AU's ownership of its agenda and constrains its freedom of action.<sup>9</sup> The strong desire by some member states for increased financial self-sufficiency can be traced back to the 2011 crisis in Libya, during which France, UK, the U.S. and their allies side-lined the AU and its road-map for a negotiated exit for Muammar Qadhafi. This sense of powerlessness was compounded as Africa, unable to act due to internal political disagreements as well as a lack of military capacity, watched French troops stem insurgencies in Mali and Central African Republic (2012 and 2013).<sup>10</sup>

Members agreed in July 2016 to a 0.2 per cent levy on “all eligible” goods imported to the continent, based on proposals from Donald Kaberuka, former African Development Bank president and now AU high representative for the Peace Fund. The tax has the potential to generate more than \$1.2 billion per annum.<sup>11</sup> This commitment has opened the door to more predictable and sustainable funding for AU-led peace support operations through UN-assessed contributions, but it must be transformed into ready money before these funds will be unlocked.<sup>12</sup> So far, only Ghana and Rwanda have enacted the levy into national law. Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Republic of Congo are the only other states known to have taken steps to implement it.<sup>13</sup>

The 0.2 per cent levy is “very controversial” among some member states.<sup>14</sup> Their objections are threefold. First, the levy contravenes World Trade Organisation (WTO)

<sup>9</sup> “Declaration on self-reliance”, AU Assembly/AU/Decl.5 (XXV), 15 July 2015. “APSA 2014 Assessment Study: Final Report”, AU, 27 April 2015, p. 14. Only \$205,149,538 of the \$576,958,511 2017 budget derives from member-states, the rest from partners. “Decision on the Budget of the African Union for the 2017 Financial Year”, AU EX.CL/Dec.919 (XXIX), 13-15 July 2016.

<sup>10</sup> This is particularly the case for South Africa. Dlamini-Zuma, when chair of the AU Commission, was an especially strong advocate of financial self-sufficiency. Alex de Waal, “African Roles in the Libyan Conflict of 2011”, *International Affairs*, vol. 89, no 2 (2013), pp. 365-379. Crisis Group Commentary, “The Problems with ‘African Solutions’”, 2 December 2013.

<sup>11</sup> “Figure of the Week: The African Union introduces a new funding structure”, Brookings Institution, ([www.brookings.edu/blog/africa](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa)), 27 July 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Under Security Council Resolution 2320 (18 November 2016) the UN agreed to fund 75 per cent of UN-approved AU peace operations provided AU member states make up the difference.

<sup>13</sup> “Decision on the outcome of the retreat of the Assembly of the AU”, AU Assembly/AU/Dec.605 (XXVII), 17-18 July 2017. “Ghana, Rwanda and Kenya introduce 0.2% import tax to fund African Union”, *Ghana Business News*, 12 June 2017. “Rwanda approves draft law on new tax for financing AU”, *The East African*, 14 February 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Crisis Group interview, African diplomat, Addis Ababa, 27 April 2017.



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rules and could harm bilateral trade relationships. The WTO and U.S. government have questioned the levy's legality and some African states are using this as the basis for delaying implementation. The WTO objections are not insurmountable: the AU could establish a continental free trade area or push for a waiver. However, such measures would take considerable time to implement, making the originally proposed January 2018 start date unachievable and the new 2020 deadline a longshot.<sup>15</sup>

Second, the plan was adopted hastily during a retreat of heads of state at which no technical experts, who could have flagged potential legal hurdles, were present. This objection reflects wider concerns about the decision-making process at the AU and a worrying new trend of resorting to secluded retreats (two so far) rather than AU summit plenary sessions.

Third, some member states are very uneasy about increasing spending on the AU and doubt the commission's ability to administer additional funds.<sup>16</sup> Their misgivings will be hard to overcome, but have resulted in an institutional reform process that is intended to make the organisation more efficient and cost-effective.

## 2. Institutional reform

January's AU summit saw the adoption of Rwandan President Paul Kagame's radical reform agenda, developed following a request by heads of state six months earlier. Kagame's proposals, if implemented, would reduce the AU's focus to just four areas with continental scope: peace and security; political affairs; the establishment of a continental free trade area; and Africa's voice and representation in global affairs.<sup>17</sup> The reforms also aim to establish a clear division of labour among the AU, member states and the regional economic communities and mechanisms (RECs/RMs) – which are the building blocks of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)<sup>18</sup> – in line with the AU's principle of subsidiarity that maintains that conflict resolution is best driven by actors closest to the crisis. Part and parcel of the reform is a comprehensive overhaul of hiring procedures for AU Commission staff, a more robust, merit-based

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<sup>15</sup> The 0.2 per cent levy contravenes the WTO's most favoured nation status, which stipulates that countries cannot discriminate against trading partners. Countries that have committed to zero tariffs would also be in breach of WTO rules on bound tariffs. "New AU funding system and the WTO", International Economic Law and Policy Blog (worldtradelaw.typepad.com), 10 September 2016. "Kagame meets African foreign ministers, rallies for continental solution", KT Press, 7 May 2017.

<sup>16</sup> "Is the AU ready to take charge? Does it have the tools, budget compliance to take hold of it? I doubt it", said one African diplomat. "Heads of states don't make the right decisions when they don't have advisers in the room who understand the technical issues", explained another. Crisis Group interviews, African diplomats, Addis Ababa, 27 April, 16 June 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Under the reforms, the AU would no longer have a mandate for infrastructure and energy, social affairs, the rural economy and agriculture, and human resources, science and technology. The economic affairs, and trade and industry portfolios would be drastically reduced.

<sup>18</sup> The AU recognises eight RECs: Arab Maghreb Union, Economic Community of West African States, East African Community, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Southern African Development Community, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Economic Community of Central African States, Community of Sahel–Saharan States; and two RMs: Eastern Africa Standby Force Coordination Mechanism and North African Regional Capability. See section III.C. for further details. APSA is the continent's security framework, consisting of the Peace and Security Council, Panel of the Wise, Continental Early Warning Systems, African Standby Force and Peace Fund.



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process for selecting the chairperson and competitive recruitment for the deputy chairperson and commissioners.<sup>19</sup>

Reform proposals have been drawn up and dropped before – the findings of a 2007 high-level panel were shelved, and a plan to transform the AU into the African Union Authority was quietly put aside following the demise of its chief proponent, Libya’s Muammar Qadhafi.<sup>20</sup> However, this time could be different because three sitting heads of state – Presidents Kagame, Idriss Déby of Chad and Alpha Condé of Guinea – have been charged with driving the process.

Even so, securing member states’ political support is unlikely to be straightforward. The Pan-African fervour that drove the AU’s establishment in 2002 has waned. Some heavy hitters, Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Africa and Libya (coincidentally the AU’s architects) are focused on troubles at home or in their regions. Some of the smaller countries, such as Tanzania and Zambia, historically champions of Pan-Africanism, are similarly distracted, while Kenya is disillusioned with the AU following the defeat of its candidate for commission chairperson.

There is also unease about Kagame’s style. His authoritarian leadership is not winning friends,<sup>21</sup> although, following member states’ complaints, he has dropped proposals that only heads of state or their deputies be allowed to participate in meetings of the Assembly, the AU’s supreme decision-making body. To succeed, Kagame needs to build a coalition of continentally minded leaders. He also needs to bring along all the AU’s constituencies, particularly the commission and the regional economic communities – which have yet to be properly consulted – and the member states, especially the current big five budget contributors (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa).

Central to Kagame’s plans are Kaberuka’s financial reforms. “These measures are the nerve centre of everything else we are doing”, Kagame told AU leaders at the summit in July. “The independence and self-reliance of the African Union is an existential question for our continent”.<sup>22</sup> Without significant additional member states’ financing, the AU will find it increasingly difficult to fulfil its security mandate and AU-led peace support operations will remain blocked from accessing UN-assessed contributions. Increasingly, other partners – including the EU – will be looking for more significant AU funding before committing their own resources.

## B. *The EU: A Breakup and a Breakdown*

The UK’s unexpected decision to withdraw from the EU and the continuing fallout from the 2015 migration crisis have placed enormous strain on the union, for a time calling into question its very existence. Its kneejerk response to migration has imperilled its relationship with the AU and threatens to overshadow the AU-EU summit.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Kagame, “The Imperative to Strengthen Our Union: Report on the Proposed Recommendations for the Institutional Reform of the AU”, Assembly/AU/Dec.635 (XXVIII), 29 January 2017.

<sup>20</sup> “The African Union has a plan to fix itself. Will it be able to?”, *World Politics Review* ([www.worldpoliticsreview.com](http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com)), 10 February 2017.

<sup>21</sup> “Kagame is becoming the President of Africa ... trying to tell us that he is more important than others”, complained an African diplomat. Crisis Group interview, Addis Ababa, 27 April 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Address by Paul Kagame to the 29th African Union Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly, Addis Ababa, 3 July 2017.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

## 1. Brexit

The UK's decision to leave the EU will have serious implications for EU-AU relations. The UK provides almost 15 per cent (€4.478 billion or \$5.36 billion in 2014-16) of the budget for the European Development Fund (EDF), through which the African Peace Facility, the financial mechanism for AU peace and security activities, is funded.<sup>23</sup> The UK will continue to fund its own aid programs in Africa, and may even keep channelling support through EU mechanisms like the EDF. Either way, it seems unlikely that current levels of spending on the AU will be maintained.<sup>24</sup>

In recent years, the EU's Africa policy has been finely counterpoised between French and UK interests. Both countries have used the EU's financial instruments to further their own national interests in the continent.<sup>25</sup> Brexit will likely result in a rebalancing away from the Horn of Africa (in particular Somalia, which has received by far the most African Peace Facility funding) to the Sahel and West Africa. This change will be driven not only by France but also by AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat – his native Chad is central to efforts to combat Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin and jihadist groups in Mali. It already is noticeable: France was behind an EU decision in June to award €50 million (\$59.8 million) to the G5 Sahel force charged with combatting terrorism and organised crime in the region.<sup>26</sup>

By chance, Brexit coincides with increased German interest in Africa. Partly because of the European migration crisis, Germany has recognised that instability in Africa affects its national interests and is making its engagement increasingly visible. In January 2017, the government unveiled its “Marshall Plan *with* Africa”, which aims to promote fair trade, increased private investment, bottom-up economic development, entrepreneurship, jobs and employment opportunities.<sup>27</sup> The continent was the focus of Germany's 2016/2017 G20 presidency, resulting in the launch of the Compact with Africa – country-specific agreements aimed at promoting private investment and increasing infrastructure provision.<sup>28</sup> Germany also raised its troop ceiling for

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<sup>23</sup> “Explanatory Memorandum on the Financing of European Union Aid under the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2014-2020, in accordance with the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement”, UK Government, Command Paper 8818.

<sup>24</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials and European diplomats, Brussels, 12-23 May 2017; UK diplomat, July 2017.

<sup>25</sup> While the vast bulk of the African Peace Facility (APF) has been spent on AMISOM, the majority of the EU's military and civilian Common Security and Defence Policy missions have been stationed in francophone Africa. Unwilling to commit more bilateral resources, the UK has used the APF to ensure continued financial support for AMISOM, the AU-led peace support operation in Somalia. France is doing the same with the G5 Sahel force in Mali.

<sup>26</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials and European diplomats, Brussels, May 2017; Addis Ababa, June 2017.

<sup>27</sup> The Marshall Plan aims to move away from “the donor-recipient mentality” and toward “an economic partnership based on initiative and ownership”, but the German government failed to consult African partners during the plan's development. “The Marshall Plan is a fiction. It was designed neither *with* nor *for* Africa”, said one AU official. Crisis Group interview, Brussels, 22 May 2017. “Africa and Europe – a new partnership for development, peace and a better future”, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, January 2017.

<sup>28</sup> The Compact with Africa was launched at the G20 summit in Hamburg, 7-8 July 2017. Seven countries have joined the program so far: Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia. “At a glance: the Compact with Africa”, *Deutsche Welle*, 9 June 2017.

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MINUSMA, the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, from 650 to 1,000, making it Berlin's largest deployment, exceeding Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>29</sup>

It remains to be seen whether Germany's greater military and economic presence will translate into more political power in Africa – it still does not have the confidence that France and the UK exude in this arena. There seems to be little appetite to assume the UK's mantle: "Germany is very hesitant in taking a leading role", explained one government official. "The UK and German approaches are very different: the UK takes a military approach and Germany a civilian approach".<sup>30</sup> Germany's more assertive foreign policy could reflect its increased economic strength within the union following the economic crisis. The recently launched Alliance for the Sahel, a joint German, French and EU initiative intended to improve coordination of development assistance to the region, could be a sign of this and an illustration of how a Franco-German partnership could be used effectively in the future.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. Migration and terrorism

Two issues – migration and terrorism, interlinked in Europe's imagination but not in Africa's – have brought home to the EU just how close the two continents are. They simultaneously represent one of the largest sources of tension and the greatest opportunity for cooperation between the two institutions.

Terrorism is an area where the AU and the EU in theory should find common ground. "[It] has become a unifying factor for the AU and EU. It weakens African countries and has an effect on European countries in terms of refugee flows", one AU official told Crisis Group.<sup>32</sup> So far, much of the EU and its member states' engagement has been with AU member states, not the commission, including support for the G5 Sahel force and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad basin, which are coalitions of directly affected states combatting cross-border jihadist and criminal threats in the two regions. This is largely because the AU lacks a coherent plan to combat terrorism,<sup>33</sup> but also because member states are reluctant to cede sovereignty on what they see as an issue of domestic security, and because EU member states prefer to deal directly with militaries they know well (for example, France and Chad). However, the AU could play an important role, especially in terms of enforcing continental agreements and authorising and coordinating ad-hoc forces like the G5 and MNJTF.

One area on which the AU and the EU do not see eye-to-eye is the intersection between terrorism and migration. There is some disquiet at persistent attempts in

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<sup>29</sup> "German parliament votes to expand military presence in Mali", *Deutsche Welle*, 26 January 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Crisis Group interviews, German government officials in Berlin, 18-19 May 2017; Addis Ababa, 13 June 2017.

<sup>31</sup> "Alliance for the Sahel will reinforce EU work for stability and development of key region", European Union, 14 July 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Crisis Group interview, AU official, Addis Ababa, 12 June 2017.

<sup>33</sup> The AU has a comprehensive legal framework (the 1999 Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combatting of Terrorism, the 2002 Plan of Action and the 2004 Additional Protocol define terrorist acts and areas of cooperation between states) but it has not been implemented by member states. The framework is supplemented by regional security cooperation arrangements like the Nouakchott and Djibouti processes. "Good talk, not enough action. The AU's counter-terrorism architecture and why it matters", Institute for Security Studies, March 2015.

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Europe, especially in the media, to link African migrants to increased terrorist attacks.<sup>34</sup> This and other aspects of the EU's response to migration have strained relations with the AU.

In 2015, more than one million refugees and migrants fleeing war, persecution and poverty in the Middle East and Africa crossed into Europe.<sup>35</sup> EU member states struggled to find an equitable means of accommodating this sudden influx of people. Deep divisions emerged, raising questions about the EU's commitment to open borders and threatening the viability of the union itself. Its chaotic response drew unfavourable comparisons with developing countries, like Lebanon, Ethiopia and Uganda, that have long been host to millions of displaced persons. The crisis provoked a backlash against migrants and was marked by an increase in support for right-wing, anti-immigrant, anti-Islam political parties and movements across the continent, contributing to the UK's 2016 decision to leave the EU and seriously impacting elections in France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Europe has taken a two-pronged approach to African migration and what it sees as the concomitant danger of terrorism. First, through the Partnership Framework and the EU External Investment Plan, the EU is trying to address the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration.<sup>36</sup> External observers have criticised deals made under the framework for offering incentives for curbing migrant flows to repressive governments, such as Sudan and Eritrea, whose own domestic policies fuel the exodus to Europe. Some EU member states also have questioned the ethics of this program.<sup>37</sup> Second, in an attempt to seal its southern border, the EU and its member states have increased their military presence and counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel and Lake Chad basin, key transit points and sources of irregular African migrants.<sup>38</sup> This has included providing support to the G5.

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<sup>34</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, Brussels, 22 May 2017; regional economic community (REC) official, Nairobi, 27 June 2017.

<sup>35</sup> "Over one million sea arrivals reach Europe in 2015", UNHCR, 30 December 2015.

<sup>36</sup> The framework established compacts with certain countries and the €2.84 billion (\$3.4 billion) Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The first five priority countries are Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Communication on establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration, EU Commission, 9 June 2016. "Commission decision on the establishment of a European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa", EU Commission, 20 October 2010. Communication from the Commission, "Towards a second phase of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and a new European External Investment Plan", EU, 14 September 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Crisis Group also has criticised these compacts as "legally, morally and practically" problematic, arguing that their impact will be limited if they don't focus on the drivers of migration. See Jean-Marie Guéhenno, "How Europe can solve a global crisis", *Politico*, 25 April 2016; Crisis Group EU Watch List N°6, 24 February 2017; "EU urged to end cooperation with Sudan after refugees whipped and deported", *The Guardian*, 27 February 2017. "Upgrading the EU's migration partnership", Carnegie Europe, 21 November 2016. Crisis Group interview, European diplomats, 15 May 2017. Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°100, *Eritrea: Ending the Exodus?*, 8 August 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Crisis Group Africa Report N°227, *The Central Sahel: A Perfect Sandstorm*, Executive Summary, 25 June 2015.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

This “fortress approach”<sup>39</sup> coupled with ham-fisted diplomacy, epitomised by the botched Valletta Summit, has alienated Africa. Following the drowning of 800 migrants crossing from Libya in April 2015, the EU drew together leaders from both continents in Valletta, Malta, in November that year. The seeds of failure were sown before the meeting had even begun: critics said the EU had failed to consult the AU or its member states sufficiently and had cherry picked those leaders with whom it wanted to work. Despite the EU’s pledge to spend \$1.9 billion on the root causes of migration through the Emergency Trust Fund, the Africans left feeling frustrated and insulted by what they saw as the EU’s “discriminatory approach” (accepting Syrians fleeing conflict but turning away Africans escaping poverty) and its attempts to bully them into automatically receiving deported migrants. The assistance offered was not nearly enough to override concerns about potential lost remittances valued at more than \$32 billion per year.<sup>40</sup>

There is also some disappointment with the Emergency Trust Fund, especially among the regional economic communities (RECs): “It’s failed”, said one REC official.<sup>41</sup> They feel the money has been spent on securing borders rather than migration’s root causes, as promised, and some regional bodies believe they have been short-changed as resources previously earmarked for their programs have been transferred to the trust fund. There is also a sense that the projects are not well-run, with contracts being awarded to EU member states’ aid agencies, some of which lack the requisite expertise or local knowledge. Some are concerned that the competition for resources is “dividing the continent” with many countries of origin believing their needs are not being met. Additionally, there is resentment regarding the amount of money made available to Africa, especially when compared to what is seen as the comparatively lucrative deal received by Turkey.<sup>42</sup>

African and European views on the issue are fundamentally at odds: the EU is doggedly focused on trying to prevent irregular migration whereas the AU is looking for ways to increase legal flows.<sup>43</sup> These two positions need to be reconciled. The EU should concede ground on finding routes for skilled workers, which are essential given Europe’s aging population. In turn, AU member states should cooperate more on returnees; for example, there is much frustration among EU member states that Ethiopia is balking at the readmission of just 32 migrants from Europe while planning to facilitate the return of hundreds of thousands of its citizens being expelled from Saudi Arabia.<sup>44</sup> The AU and the EU also should look for common ground outside the question of flows to and from Europe, for example by focusing more on the root causes of migration, something in which both institutions profess an interest.

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<sup>39</sup> Former AU Commission Chairperson, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, used the phrase following the Valletta Summit. “Africa: EU, Africa sign \$1.9 billion deal on return of immigrants”, *The East African*, 14 November 2015.

<sup>40</sup> “Migrant crisis: no Africa-EU grand bargain”, BBC, 13 November 2015. “African leaders reject EU ‘charity’ over ‘investment’”, *The Telegraph*, 13 November 2015. “Beyond Valletta Summit”, *Times of Malta*, 10 November 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Crisis Group interview, REC official, Nairobi, 27 June 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials and African diplomats, Brussels, April 2017; REC officials, Addis Ababa, 12 and 16 June 2017; Nairobi, 27 June 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials and African diplomat, Brussels, May 2017; REC officials, Addis Ababa and Nairobi, June 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Addis Ababa, 21 June 2017.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

Scarred by Valletta, Africa is opposed to any serious discussion of migration at the upcoming AU-EU summit. The EU would like to have an open deliberation at the AU-EU summit, but is hesitant to put migration on the agenda. Instead, it hopes to use the central theme of “youth” to introduce the issue through the backdoor.

### C. *Reshaping AU-EU Relations*

The Cotonou Agreement, a partnership between the EU and 79 countries from sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), expires in 2020 and will be renegotiated over the next two years.<sup>45</sup> Development assistance under the Cotonou Agreement is channelled through the European Development Fund. The fund also finances the African Peace Facility, the main source of EU support for the AU’s peace and security activities and its regional economic communities.<sup>46</sup> It is not yet clear what shape the post-Cotonou settlement will take – neither the EU nor ACP states has defined its position – but significant change is possible and will reshape relations between the two unions.

One major uncertainty is whether the ACP model will continue. Largely comprising the former colonies of France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK, it is considered by some to be a colonial construct. Beyond a shared history of colonialism, there is little that binds the group except climate change and some aspects of development. Certainly, the peace and security challenges faced by Caribbean and Pacific countries are very different from those confronting Africa. Some EU member states, the Netherlands and Germany in particular, would like to see an overhaul of the ACP system.<sup>47</sup> One possibility would be for the EU to broaden Cotonou to include all developing countries, making Africa as a whole, not just sub-Saharan Africa, a separate pillar. However, some North African countries are against this and are sceptical of the EU’s motives, preferring to maintain their current treaty arrangements with the EU under the European Neighbourhood Policy.<sup>48</sup>

The re-entry of Morocco to the AU in January 2017 after an absence of 33 years also changes the EU’s relationship with the AU. Previously, the partnership was between Africa and the EU with a more ambiguous role for the AU. Now that the AU encompasses all 54 African states, plus Western Sahara, the process has begun to put the AU more firmly at the centre of the partnership, starting with the renaming of the summit from Africa-EU to AU-EU.

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<sup>45</sup> The Cotonou Agreement, originally concluded in June 2000, aims to reduce and eradicate poverty, promote sustainable development and integrate the ACP countries into the world economy.

<sup>46</sup> The African Peace Facility was established in 2003 at the request of African leaders. Since then more than €2 billion has been allocated to African peace and security activities. Additional funding has been provided through the EU’s Development Cooperation Instrument and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), among others.

<sup>47</sup> Crisis Group interviews, European diplomats and government officials, Brussels and Berlin, May 2017; Addis Ababa, June 2017.

<sup>48</sup> “We don’t think the continent should be treated as one. There are oceans between member states and regions”, said one North African diplomat. “The aim of the new partnership with Africa is to reduce the amount of money they want to put on the table. The EU gets lazy and doesn’t want to talk with 55 countries”, he continued. Crisis Group interview, Addis Ababa, 27 April 2017.



**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

Another question surrounding the post-Cotonou settlement is the future of the European Development Fund and, within it, the African Peace Facility, specifically whether it will be subsumed into the EU budget and its scope will remain the same. This feeds into a wider debate around the mid-term review of the EU's financial instruments and budget.<sup>49</sup> It also is connected to an ongoing discussion on whether the EU should finance security (including military) capacity building in African and other partner countries, either through existing mechanisms or the establishment of new ones post-2020.<sup>50</sup> While the security-development nexus is well established in EU policy documents, its practical implications, especially on funding, remain a divisive issue within and between EU member states. The core of the debate is the extent to which development assistance should be used to finance peace and security activities, particularly the military component.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The EU concluded the mid-term review of its multi-annual financial framework (or budget) for the years 2014-2020 on 20 June 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Proposals are being considered for an instrument for capacity building in support of security and development (CBSD) that would provide partner countries with military and security training and advice, non-lethal equipment and resources to enable them to prevent or manage crisis themselves. As a transitional measure until 2020, the EU Commission has proposed amending the existing Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) to allocate €100 million (\$120 million) to CBSD. It is unclear how CBSD could be financed after 2020. "Proposal Establishing an Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace", EU Commission, 5 July 2016.

<sup>51</sup> "The EU's new approach to funding peace and security", European Parliament Think Tank, 20 March 2017. Crisis Group interview, European diplomats and government officials, Brussels, Berlin and The Hague, 12-23 May 2017; Addis Ababa, 12-16 June 2017.



Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017

### III. What Role for the AU in Peace and Security?

#### A. *The Changing Nature of Conflict in Africa*

The African conflict landscape has changed dramatically since the start of the decade. Old forms remain: contested government transitions, civil wars, state repression and low-intensity insurgencies among them. But they now interact with challenges that add complex new dynamics, including the expanding influence of non-state actors (especially religious or other extremists and transnational criminal networks) and the effects of climate change and population growth.

Some new militant groups have ties to global jihadists, are deeply intolerant, reject political and religious pluralism and espouse goals that make their inclusion in political settlements hard to envisage. They operate alongside other pro- and anti-government militias; often their membership is fluid and overlaps with other forces. Their use of suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices pose new challenges to national security forces and peacekeepers. Non-state actors of all stripes, but particularly jihadists and traffickers, exploit huge spaces beyond government control, particularly in the Sahel and Savannah Belt. Armed groups are increasingly fragmented, with at best loose command structures, and commanders at all levels continue to enjoy easy access to funds through criminal activities.

All this makes it harder to end the continent's crises. Regional powers and economic communities, the AU itself and outside powers have all struggled to manage crises, both new – such as those that have exploded over the past five years in Libya, Mali, Nigeria, the Central African Republic and South Sudan – and old – such as those in Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Africa's peace and security architecture, designed and developed during the 2000s, needs to evolve to respond to today's challenges. The AU and its member states are trying to adapt through new initiatives such as the Nouakchott process which aims to boost security cooperation among eleven West African and Sahelian states,<sup>52</sup> AFRIPOL, the AU mechanism for police cooperation, and the authorisation of ad hoc forces such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad basin and the G5 in the Sahel. However, wholesale re-evaluation of the architecture and the AU's role in peace and security, rather than a piecemeal approach, is required. The Kagame reform process presents an opportunity to do this, but it will require the AU to think strategically.

Supporters see the G5 and the MNJTF as flexible and innovative responses to new security threats. Others are concerned about the longer-term implications for the sustainability of the AU and its peace and security architecture.<sup>53</sup> These ad hoc forces lie outside the current architecture, being led neither by the AU nor a regional economic community. Their mandates, however, have been endorsed by the AU Peace and Security Council, making them eligible for EU funding, which is supposed to be

<sup>52</sup> The process, launched in Mauritania's capital in March 2013, includes Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

<sup>53</sup> Crisis Group interviews, European and African diplomats and EU and AU officials, Brussels, May 2017; Addis Ababa, June 2017.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

channelled through the AU.<sup>54</sup> The AU has been cut out of the EU's funding process for the G5 to avoid a repeat of the shortfalls that have left the MNJTF troops without essential equipment for over a year. Instead the EU appointed an external procurement provider.

The AU did not challenge this decision even though it could significantly undermine its authority. As outlined in its founding documents, the AU has primary responsibility for peace and security on the continent. By giving in to pressure from the EU and some AU member states, and allowing itself to simply rubber-stamp the G5 without maintaining political or financial oversight of the mission, the AU has ceded part of its power and set a precedent that may be difficult to erase.<sup>55</sup> From an institutional perspective it would have been more prudent if the AU had insisted the G5 Secretariat report back to it on a regular basis so that it could monitor progress and adherence to the agreed mandate. Instead it gave up a major source of leverage over regional bodies and member states – access to EU funding.

### B. *The AU's Strategic Priorities*

To adapt both to the changing nature of conflict and to the emergence of ad hoc forces like the G5, the AU must set out a coherent peace and security strategy and clearly articulate its role within it.

The AU has an excess of ambitious goals, but is unsure of its strategic priorities. This is reflected in the plethora of declarations and roadmaps developed in recent years.<sup>56</sup> Everyone interviewed for this report gave different, sometimes wildly divergent, perspectives on the AU's future direction. Strategically, the AU is caught between long-term aspirations for “a peaceful and secure continent” by 2063 – a time scale that makes planning difficult – and the impossibly short near-term aim of “Silencing the Guns” by 2020.<sup>57</sup> It is unclear how much buy-in member states have to these frameworks and master plans, meaning that the vision laid out in these documents may be divorced from political realities on the continent.

Perhaps the most accurate guide to the AU's current thinking is the Peace Fund, the only framework member states have committed to financing themselves. It has

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<sup>54</sup> “Communiqué of the 679th PSC Meeting on the draft Strategic Concept of Operations (CONOPs) of the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel”, African Union, 21 April 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Some EU officials already are questioning the need for the AU to intervene: “There are new types of operations where the AU is not relevant”, said one. Crisis Group interview, EU officials, Brussels, 22 May 2017. Pressure to support the G5 came from a number of AU member states, including Chad, that are in dire need of money and support the AU can't give. “Le Tchad menace de retirer ses troupes des opérations de la Minusma et du G5 Sahel”, *Jeune Afrique*, 25 June 2017. The draft G5 concept of operations only mentions the AU once, in the context of providing funding for the force.

<sup>56</sup> The documents setting out AU's priorities include Agenda 2063; the “50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration”; the “APSA Roadmap 2016-2020”; “Securing Predictable and Sustainable Financing for Peace in Africa”; the “AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020”; and the “Maputo Strategic Work Plan for the African Standby Force”.

<sup>57</sup> The 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration was affirmed by African leaders in May 2013 during celebrations for the founding of the Organisation of African Unity. It includes a commitment to “undertake to end all war in Africa by 2020”. Agenda 2063, the AU's “strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years”, sets out the broad aspirations for peace and security, including the pledge to “silence the guns” by 2020.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

three funding windows: mediation and preventative diplomacy; institutional capacity; and peace support operations. But not all African officials agree on these priorities. A diplomat from one African country said the AU should not engage at all in expensive peace support operations that have limited success. Another questioned whether the AU genuinely was committed to conflict prevention, suggesting the AU was simply following the UN and EU's lead.<sup>58</sup>

One key area that will not be financed through the Peace Fund is post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD), despite overwhelming support from the commission, the regional economic communities and member states for the AU to take a more active role in stabilising and rebuilding countries emerging from war. One reason for its omission from the Peace Fund is the high cost of PCRD activities. There is also disagreement over whether the AU should simply set policy and strategic direction or engage in post-conflict reconstruction and development implementation, with regional bodies typically favouring the former course.<sup>59</sup> The AU's partners, in particular the EU, have little appetite for financing post-conflict reconstruction efforts, however.<sup>60</sup>

### C. *The African Union and the Regional Economic Communities*

How the AU realigns relations with the regional economic communities (RECs) and mechanisms (essential elements of Africa's security architecture) is also crucial to its future role in peace and security. This relationship has been marked by "tension and competition" over which organisation should take the lead – disagreement between the AU and the East African Community on Burundi is a clear example of this.<sup>61</sup> Rivalry arises, in large part, from competition over the substantial financial resources available in crisis situations – funding for mediators, observers, equipment, training and lucrative peace support operations. "Peace and security is a money spinner for the regional organisations", said one senior UN Department of Political Affairs official.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Crisis Group interviews, African diplomats, Addis Ababa, 27 April, 16 June 2017. UN Secretary-General-elect, António Guterres, stated that his top priority was "prevention, prevention, prevention". "UN Security Council backs former Portuguese leader for Secretary General", NPR, 5 October 2016. The EU wants to move funding from peace support operations to conflict prevention, see "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy", European Union, June 2016.

<sup>59</sup> Crisis Group interviews, AU and REC officials and African diplomats, Brussels, May 2017; Addis Ababa, April, June 2017.

<sup>60</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials and European and Western diplomats, Addis Ababa, 12-16 June 2017. "It's not clear that the AU has added value in development and infrastructure. It should design the global vision but not implement", said one European diplomat.

<sup>61</sup> "APSA 2014 Assessment Study: Final Report", op. cit., p. 9. The AU initially took the lead on the Burundi crisis, sparked by President Pierre Nkurunziza's 2015 decision to run for a third term in office, but was side-lined following the December 2015 failed attempt to deploy a peace support operation. See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°122, *The African Union and the Burundi Crisis: Ambition Versus Reality*, 28 September 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior UN official, Addis Ababa, 16 June 2017.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

The memorandum of understanding that governs their relationship is not clear on who takes precedence.<sup>63</sup> Article IV, which lays out the relationship's guiding principles, acknowledges that primary responsibility for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security lies with the AU but goes on to say there must be "adherence to principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantage". The absence of a clear definition of these principles results in friction. This is compounded by member states' lack of faith in their own continental body – European diplomats more readily extol the AU's merits than their African counterparts. Leaders often prefer to address crises at the regional level where they have greater political influence and can better defend their national and regional interests which, unsurprisingly, they tend to place above the need for speedy conflict resolution in other African countries.

The EU would like to see regional economic communities play a larger role, in part because they have better knowledge of local conditions and dynamics, but also because they believe the AU is not delivering, though the capacity and readiness of these regional bodies varies considerably.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, the EU's pivot to the regions fosters competition. It is also resented by the AU, which feels the EU devolves to the RECs when it cannot reach agreement at the continental level, ignoring the AU's important coordinating role. "Things will collapse in the short term if the EU keeps its preference for the regions", said one REC official concerned about the capacity of his organisation.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the area of peace and security between the AU, RECs and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern Africa and Northern Africa, AU, 2008.

<sup>64</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials and European diplomats, Brussels and Berlin, May 2017.

<sup>65</sup> Crisis Group interviews, African diplomats and a REC official, Addis Ababa, April, June 2017.

Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017

## IV. Points of Divergence

The AU-EU relationship is dysfunctional. Both institutions complain vociferously about the other's deficiencies and limitations and yet they ascribe great value to the partnership. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Frederica Mogherini made a point of being the first to meet the new AU Commission chairperson, Moussa Faki, after he took office in March, while Faki, in his inaugural speech to the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, identified the EU as the AU's major strategic partner.<sup>66</sup> Both institutions ostensibly would like to improve ties but must address their deep-seated frustrations if they want to move forward.<sup>67</sup>

### A. *Resentment and Mistrust: The "Equal Partnership" and the Colonial Trap*

Europe's colonisation of Africa is the proverbial "elephant in the room" of AU-EU relations.<sup>68</sup> Subconsciously – and at times consciously – its legacy negatively affects mutual trust and confidence. The AU's anti-colonial rhetoric intensified greatly during Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's chairmanship (October 2012 to March 2017), and tensions around the issue ratcheted up significantly.

The EU affirms it has an "equal partnership" with the AU to distance itself from the colonial past and disguise the inherent imbalance of power between the two institutions. Some in the EU feel that progress is being made toward equality, others that the economic gulf between the two continents makes this impossible, at least in the short term. For many in both unions, equality is an aspiration, but most agree that calling the current partnership equal is a fallacy.<sup>69</sup>

Beyond this, the myth of equality translates into an assumption that the two institutions are the same. They are not. The EU's 28 member states have a population of 508 million and a collective GDP of \$17.6 trillion, while the AU's 55 members are home to 1.1 billion people and their economies are worth \$2.39 trillion. The EU has a staff of 32,546 and an annual budget of \$189 billion. In contrast, the AU employs around 1,600 people and its projected expenditure for 2018 is \$769.4 million.<sup>70</sup> African member states have ceded no sovereignty to the AU, in fact they typically use the

<sup>66</sup> "Discours du Président de la Commission de l'Union Africaine S.E. M. Moussa Faki Mahamat à la 29ème Session Ordinaire de la Conférence de l'Union Africaine", African Union, 3 July 2017. "EU reinforces cooperation with the African Union and announces new peace building support of €120 million", European Commission, 17 March 2017.

<sup>67</sup> In his speech, Faki said, "Notre vœu le plus cher est que ce sommet consacre une ère nouvelle d'un partenariat dynamique" ["Our greatest wish is that this summit mark the beginning of a new era of dynamic partnership"]. "Joint communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership", op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> Crisis Group interview, African diplomat, Brussels, 23 May 2017.

<sup>69</sup> Crisis Group interviews, AU and EU officials, African and European diplomats, Addis Ababa April, June 2017; Brussels, May 2017. Even EU member states are not convinced by the sincerity of its declaration of equality. "We have to ask ourselves what we mean by equal partnership. We mean that we would like them to want what we want so that we can proceed with a clean conscience", said one European diplomat.

<sup>70</sup> "The European Union and the African Union: A Statistical Portrait", Eurostat, 2016. "HR Key Figures: Staff Members", European Commission, 2017. "How is the EU budget spent?", EU (www.europa.eu). "African Union Handbook", (Addis Ababa, Wellington, 2017), p. 17.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

continental body as a means of entrenching national sovereignty. EU member states, on the other hand, have turned over some or all control in a range of areas, including foreign, security and defence policy, trade, justice and development cooperation. The decision-making procedures and the validity of pronouncements made by the EU and AU are not comparable; when the two commissions speak to each other, they do not do so with the same authority. The presumption that the AU and the EU are equivalent creates false expectations of the AU's capabilities and unhelpfully obscures the two institutions' many differences.

The EU and its member states are often accused of paternalism by both the AU and some of the EU's own staff<sup>71</sup> – a hangover from colonial times, according to some. This is said to manifest itself in a variety of ways: the language EU officials use, the statements it issues, its choice of representatives, the behaviour of heads of delegations and the development of programs intended to benefit the continent but which, like the recently announced German Marshall Plan *with* Africa, are often designed without consulting African interlocutors.<sup>72</sup>

Particularly annoying for the AU is the asymmetry of their discussions. The two bodies only talk about African countries and continental issues, never European problems such as Brexit or the treatment of African migrants in EU member states. The AU is not invited to meetings of the Africa Working Party (COAFR) or the Political and Security Committee in Brussels, but the EU is invited, on occasion, to the AU PSC in Addis Ababa. The EU and its member states push hard to attend AU summits but do not reciprocate when EU leaders meet.<sup>73</sup> The assertion of “equality” serves only to aggravate the tensions here.

The AU is also frustrated that the EU does not always follow its lead. “When we are dealing with a crisis they should first listen to us”, said one AU official, by which he means adopt AU positions.<sup>74</sup> This tension is most obvious in the Great Lakes, specifically around the application of sanctions in DRC, the suspension of aid to Burundi and the direct payment of Burundian troops in AMISOM.<sup>75</sup> It's unrealistic for the AU to expect the EU to blindly support its approach; like the AU, the EU and its member states have their own (sometimes conflicting) interests and constituencies. Also, European officials may simply disagree with their African counterparts on the main drivers of crises, particularly regarding the role of incumbents, and how the EU should

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<sup>71</sup> This view is especially held by EU officials in Addis Ababa who, working closely with their AU counterparts, are perhaps more attune to African sensitivities. They are often accused by their Brussels colleagues of suffering from “Stockholm syndrome”. Crisis Group interview, EU official, Nairobi, 17 August 2017.

<sup>72</sup> “Heads of EU delegation in our member states, they act like viceroys, they lecture presidents”, said an AU official. “The whole agenda of the EU is embedded in their psyche. They slip back into looking at the relationship through that prism”, said an African diplomat. Crisis Group interviews, EU and AU officials, African diplomats, Addis Ababa, April, June 2017; Brussels, May 2017.

<sup>73</sup> “The EU assumes that it would be unheard of to discuss EU issues with Africa”, said an African diplomat. See also Crisis Group interviews AU officials, and African and European diplomats, Addis Ababa April, June 2017; Brussels, May 2017.

<sup>74</sup> Crisis Group interview, AU official, Addis Ababa, 15 June 2017.

<sup>75</sup> The AU was opposed to the direct payment of Burundian troops in AMISOM on the grounds that it turned the soldiers into mercenaries. It is also against the application of sanctions and aid suspension because of their negative impact on ordinary civilians.



**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

respond. However, the two institutions could work more cooperatively, whether regarding substantive issues or the timing of public statements and events.<sup>76</sup>

African officials also sense that the EU imposes its own programs and priorities on the AU and does not respect its decisions. This is perhaps most stark with regards to the migration crisis: in its scramble to stem the flow of people crossing the Mediterranean, the EU has given the impression of relentlessly pushing forward its own agenda. For their part, EU officials often feel that the AU moves too slowly or leaves things too late and worry that if they do not take the initiative – for example on the agenda for the AU-EU summit – things won't progress.<sup>77</sup> This area of dispute is symptomatic of the wildly different timescales on which the two institutions operate.

The EU is beginning to align its priorities with those of the AU in some areas. A recent Brussels communication on the Africa-EU partnership deliberately referenced Agenda 2063 (the AU's long-term framework for social and economic development), incorporating elements from it and other AU instruments into action points.<sup>78</sup> But changing attitudes among EU member states may be more difficult. At a meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council one minister reportedly said: "The joint communication is good, now we have to get the Africans to agree to it so that they can take ownership".<sup>79</sup>

More difficult to address are African complaints that the EU leverages its bilateral relations with smaller African countries to push positions unpopular at the continental level. For example, the EU is seen as relentlessly promoting the African maritime security framework, encouraging smaller states to support it despite significant opposition from several key countries.<sup>80</sup> These divide-and-rule tactics, while not unusual in diplomatic practice, assume a more negative aspect when viewed through the prism of colonial history and the supposedly equal partnership.

The EU, while it understands the African position, is losing patience with the AU's anti-colonial rhetoric. The EU should not lightly dismiss this sentiment, however, which is often heartfelt, especially in Southern Africa where liberation was hard-fought.<sup>81</sup> But the AU and its member states also must not overplay their hand. Most African authoritarian regimes, and some more democratic ones, respond to European criticism by invoking the colonial past. In October 2015, Burundi invoked colonialism when the EU and Belgium imposed targeted sanctions on individuals linked to the government who were accused of undermining democracy and serious violations of human rights. South Africa's ruling ANC did the same when it recently made claims of "regime change" to deflect attention away from alleged corruption scandals involving

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<sup>76</sup> The EU issued a statement sanctioning nine people in DRC on the day that Peace and Security Commissioner Smail Chergui arrived in Kinshasa for talks with President Kabila, despite being asked to delay it by the AU.

<sup>77</sup> Crisis Group interview, EU officials and European diplomats, Brussels, May 2017; Addis Ababa, June 2017.

<sup>78</sup> "Joint communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership", op. cit., issued jointly by the European Commission and the European External Action Service.

<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Brussels, 22 May 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Crisis Group interviews, AU official, African diplomats, Brussels, May 2017; Addis Ababa, June 2017.

<sup>81</sup> Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe's speech at the opening of the AU Assembly in January 2016 is a case in point. The loudest cheers from the mostly African audience were reserved for his references to colonial and neo-colonial oppression.



Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017

President Jacob Zuma.<sup>82</sup> Arguably this is part of the game, but it is important to note that African leaders rarely censure their peers for doing so.

### B. *Funding: The Donor-recipient Dilemma*

The AU-EU relationship, especially in the area of peace and security, is first and foremost a financial one – since 2004, the EU has provided more than €2 billion (\$2.39 billion) in support through the African Peace Facility. Given the limited amounts AU member states contribute to peace and security operations, it is essentially one of recipient to donor. The AU tries to disguise its overreliance on the EU by asserting its independence, stressing the need for African ownership and calling for the EU to follow its lead, all the while bristling at the idea it should be accountable for the funding it receives.<sup>83</sup> This dynamic is a source of great tension, but both sides actively, if inadvertently, perpetuate it.

The near-constant lament of EU officials and member states' representatives is that the AU sees the EU as a "patronising cash machine" that delivers a ten-minute sermon before dispensing money.<sup>84</sup> But the EU is often too eager to dispense funds in response to AU requests without sufficiently thinking about results. Some EU officials worry that pressure to deliver quickly to allow member state governments – constantly under public scrutiny and concerned about re-election – to demonstrate impact, has led to a situation in which disbursement alone is used as the chief indicator of EU success. Officials also complain that their AU counterparts, even very senior ones, only want to discuss funding, further entrenching their status as grantees.<sup>85</sup>

Relations were tested in 2016 over EU funding for AMISOM, the AU mission in Somalia. Since it began to support the mission in 2007, the EU had always given the impression that its payment of troop stipends was open-ended. The AU, unsurprisingly, was shocked and lambasted the EU for decreasing stipends when the Europeans finally followed through on their long-threatened decision to reduce support by 20 per cent.<sup>86</sup> Tensions grew when the EU requested the AU find a direct way of paying Burundi's AMISOM contingent in order to prevent the government from appropriating the stipends following the EU's suspension of all budget support as a result of the country's political crisis.<sup>87</sup> This was compounded by the temporary suspension of all

<sup>82</sup> "Burundi criticizes European Union sanctions", Voice of America, 6 October 2015. "Talk of regime change is not a scare tactic: Mahlobo", *Mail & Guardian*, 5 July 2017.

<sup>83</sup> "Toward the 5th Africa-EU summit: Peace and Security", EU Commission, Factsheet N°1, 4 May 2017. Crisis Group interviews, AU and EU officials, African and European diplomats, Addis Ababa, April, June 2017; Brussels, May 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, and European and Western diplomats, Addis Ababa, April, June 2017; Brussels, May 2017.

<sup>85</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials and European diplomats, Addis Ababa, April, June 2017; Brussels, May 2017.

<sup>86</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU and AU officials in Addis Ababa April, November 2016, April, June 2017. PSC/PR/COMM.1 (DLXII), AU Peace and Security Council, 10 December 2015. PSC/PR/BR. (DLXXXVI), AU Peace and Security Council, 31 March 2016.

<sup>87</sup> In December 2016, Burundi threatened to withdraw its troops from AMISOM if payment was not resumed. Following closely the Ethiopian withdrawal of some of its non-AMISOM troops from Somalia, Burundi's ultimatum was a cause of serious concern for the AU and the rest of the troop

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

payments to AMISOM troops after the AU failed the EU's Pillar Assessment, a routine evaluation of its management of EU funding.<sup>88</sup>

EU officials complained they were "held hostage" by their AU counterparts, who applied enormous pressure to get the decision reversed. Outside observers marvelled at the EU's tolerance of its treatment: "The Europeans are showing incredible patience", remarked one Western diplomat. Even some AU member states were dismayed by the AU commission's behaviour, with one diplomat denouncing the commission for criticising the EU while rushing to take its money.<sup>89</sup>

There is disappointment (and increasingly resentment) within the EU that it does not receive enough public recognition for the contribution it makes to African peace and security, especially compared to other partners, like China, whose support is dwarfed by comparison. The EU is particularly sensitive about (perhaps even jealous of) the AU's relationship with Beijing, believing it receives preferential treatment. "The Chinese give \$1 million and get an AU press release", complained a senior EU official. "We give over €20 million per month and we get criticised when we reduce our commitment".<sup>90</sup>

The AU readily admits that it tends to view the relationship through a financial lens. By doing so it is missing out on opportunities to influence the EU's policy and strategic priorities. In Brussels and Addis Ababa there are concerns that the upcoming AU-EU summit will focus on programming and funding rather than tackling big picture political issues, such as migration.<sup>91</sup> A more clear-eyed assessment of the two institutions' mutual interests would put the relationship on a much stronger footing.

Relations have improved since their 2016 nadir, following an agreement on the payment of Burundian troops and the appointment of Faki as AU Commission chairperson.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, both parties agree that the current situation is not sustainable: the EU's resources are diminishing (this will only worsen when the UK leaves) and its member states are suffering from donor fatigue. There are concerns in Brussels that the upcoming African Peace Facility replenishment will be more difficult than the last – it took six months to approve the previous €500 million (\$597 million) tranche of support. The EU wants to be more than just a donor. It wants a greater say in when, where and how its money is spent, at least partly because it has less to spend and wants its contributions to be utilised more effectively. Europe also wants Africa

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contributing countries who feared it would seriously weaken AMISOM's ability to combat Al-Shabaab. "Burundi orders start of troops withdrawal from Somalia", *The East African*, 16 January 2017.

<sup>88</sup> Crisis Group interviews, European diplomats, Addis Ababa, 6 October 2017.

<sup>89</sup> Crisis Group interviews, AU and EU officials, African, European and Western diplomats, Addis Ababa, April, June 2017; Brussels, May 2017.

<sup>90</sup> Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, May 2017. See also Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, European and Western diplomats, Addis Ababa, April, June 2017; Brussels, May 2017. It is difficult to find comprehensive figures for Chinese support to the AU, but in 2015, China pledged \$100 million over five years to support the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis. "Chinese President Xi Jinping pledges 8,000 UN peacekeeping troops, US\$1 billion to peace fund", *South China Morning Post*, 29 September 2015. Since 2004, the EU has provided more than €2 billion support to the AU peace and security through the APF. China benefits from not having had a colonial past in Africa.

<sup>91</sup> Crisis Group interviews, African diplomats, EU, AU and regional economic community officials, Brussels, May 2017; Addis Ababa, June 2017.

<sup>92</sup> Crisis Group interviews, AU and EU officials, African, European and Western diplomats, Addis Ababa, April, and June 2017; Brussels, May 2017.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

to pay its “fair share”.<sup>93</sup> AU member states have committed to this, on paper at least, through the 0.2 per cent levy on imports, but so far there has been little follow through.

### C. *Institutional Irritants: Bureaucratic Burden and Capacity Deficit*

“The EU complains that the AU cannot deliver. The AU complains that the EU overcomplicates things”, is how one EU official describes the dynamics between the two institutions.<sup>94</sup> Both viewpoints have some validity.

The AU acknowledges it has a capacity deficit, due in part to a lack of resources but also to poor recruitment procedures.<sup>95</sup> Member states have committed to improvements on both these fronts. In July 2015, African leaders undertook to finance 100 per cent of the operations budget, 75 per cent of programs and 25 per cent of peace support operations. Kagame’s proposed reforms envisage a more rigorous, merit-based recruitment process.

The Kagame plans to streamline activities should help sharpen the AU’s focus. It tries to do too much with limited resources. A case in point is the fourteen liaison offices established in post-conflict countries to support ongoing peace processes, peacebuilding and reconstruction activities. Not only are the offices understaffed and under-financed, but the Peace and Security Department is not able to deal effectively with the reports and assessments they generate.<sup>96</sup> The AU also sets itself up to fail by imposing impossible targets, such as ending conflict in the continent by 2020. All of which is compounded by a lack of political will at the very highest levels and second-guessing of leaders’ wishes by the commission.<sup>97</sup>

On occasion, the EU feeds into the cycle of underachievement by providing funding for projects it knows the AU is unable to complete; pressure to deliver from EU member states means bureaucratic incentives sometimes favour disbursement over impact.<sup>98</sup> For example, the EU approved a €50 million support package for the multinational force combatting Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin (MNJTF) on 1 August 2016 through the AU, but to date none of the equipment promised has been delivered to the field. The EU blames the AU’s lack of procurement capacity for the delay, while the AU squarely points the finger at Brussels’ bureaucracy.<sup>99</sup>

As a result, the EU is searching for more reliable partners either in the regional economic communities or through coalitions of member states. The EU’s support for the G5 force combatting jihadist groups and organised crime in the Sahel is one outcome of its dissatisfaction with the AU. It has – with Chairperson Faki’s consent – cut

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<sup>93</sup> “How long do we have to bring the money before we see the change”, said one European diplomat about the EU’s support to AMISOM. Crisis Group interviews, EU officials and European diplomats, Brussels, The Hague, May 2017; Addis Ababa, June 2017.

<sup>94</sup> Crisis Group interview, EU official, Addis Ababa, 25 April 2017.

<sup>95</sup> Crisis Group interview, African diplomat, Addis Ababa, 16 June 2017.

<sup>96</sup> There will soon be only thirteen liaison offices as the AU is in the process of closing its office in Comoros. Crisis Group interviews, regional economic community official and European diplomats, Addis Ababa, June 2017.

<sup>97</sup> “Leaders are dragging their feet .... The commission vacillates and thinks for our leaders and in terms of the status quo”, said one AU official. Crisis Group interview, Addis Ababa, 12 June 2017.

<sup>98</sup> Crisis Group interview, EU official, Addis Ababa, 12 June 2017.

<sup>99</sup> Crisis Group interviews, AU and EU officials, Addis Ababa, April, June 2017; Brussels, May 2017.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

the AU out from the G5 procurement process. The experience with the MNJTF has also undermined AU member states' confidence in the abilities of their own institution.<sup>100</sup>

The EU and its member states, as well as other partners, have long focused on building the AU's capacity. However, their support typically pays for staff salaries or workshops and travel, rather than developing much needed technical expertise, such as logistics, management skills, and support in the preparation of concept notes, workplans and strategic plans. Some partners, such as the German development agency, GIZ, provide such practical assistance. But even when the EU offers meaningful training, the AU does not always make the best use of it. Training, and the concomitant travel and per diems, are seen more as a reward than an opportunity for personal development.<sup>101</sup>

Problems exist on the EU side as well. EU officials are the first to admit the organisation's bureaucratic processes are complex, cumbersome and time consuming. "We would do anything to run away from our own procedures", a senior EU official told Crisis Group.<sup>102</sup> The AU's limited administrative capacity means that it struggles to comply fully with EU rules and regulations and has consistently failed monitoring and evaluation assessments.

The bureaucratic burden also reduces opportunities for meaningful political and strategic discussions because AU and EU officials are forced to spend much of their time discussing administration.<sup>103</sup> The African Peace Facility's Early Response Mechanism, which allows for quick reaction to emerging situations, is generally seen as one of the most effective parts of EU support. The AU particularly appreciates its speed and flexibility. It works well because the administrative burden is reduced – funds can be available in just ten days with only written EU commission approval.<sup>104</sup>

#### D. *"Whatever Works!"*

In its haste to respond to public concerns, the EU is taking a "whatever works" approach to stemming the flow of migrants from Africa and curbing the terrorist threat.<sup>105</sup> The

<sup>100</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, Brussels, 12 May 2017; Addis Ababa, 12 June 2017.

<sup>101</sup> Spending on travel and workshops diminishes employee effectiveness further by reducing the amount of time spent in the office. Crisis Group interviews, European diplomats and government officials, Addis Ababa, June 2017. According to one interviewee, none of the 250 people who have attended senior leadership courses has been appointed as the head of an AU mission in Africa. Crisis Group interviews, EU officials and European diplomats and government officials, Addis Ababa, 12-13 May 2017.

<sup>102</sup> The process of securing EU financing for AMISOM takes around seven months per contract (fourteen of which were concluded between 2007 and the end of 2015) and requires sign off from all 28 EU member states as well as the production of narrative reports, accounting details and an independent external audit. For a more detailed description see: Paul D. Williams, "Paying for AMISOM: Are Politics and Bureaucracy Undermining the AU's Largest Peace Operations?", International Peace Institute ([www.theglobalobservatory.org](http://www.theglobalobservatory.org)), 11 January 2017. Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, Addis Ababa, 13 and 16 June 2017.

<sup>103</sup> Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, Addis Ababa, 13 and 16 June.

<sup>104</sup> "African Peace Facility Evaluation – Part 2", Analysis for Economic Decision, November 2013.

<sup>105</sup> "If we talk about migration, anything is possible. Whatever works, we'll pay. Even the financial issues are out of the window", said one EU member state official. Crisis Group interview, EU member state official, 15 June 2017.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

most recent example is its support to the G5 force, a coalition of states – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – directly affected by the activities of violent non-state actors in Mali and in their own territories. Pushed hard by France, which under Operation Barkhane has 4,000 troops stationed across the G5 states, the EU agreed to a €50 million support package for the G5 in June. The decision seems to have been hurriedly concluded, taking some member states with reservations about the force by surprise.<sup>106</sup>

The EU favours ad-hoc initiatives like the G5 because AU member states commit their own resources – national armies bear much of the costs – and consequently local ownership is stronger. They also allow the EU to donate discrete packages of assistance rather than getting embroiled in long-term commitments that are difficult to end like the AU mission in Somalia.<sup>107</sup> However, these ad-hoc forces raise serious questions that are being brushed aside in the EU's rush to appease domestic public opinion and the AU and African government's desperate scramble for funding. Among these: will the G5 secretariat, established only in 2014, be more efficient or have better financial management than the AU? How will unity of purpose be maintained among a group of states with very different interests and no clear consensus on the forces' objectives or enemies?<sup>108</sup> Will the proliferation of such groups increase competition for resources among member states, RECs and the AU?

Furthermore, circumventing the AU's traditional oversight of EU funding to African peace support operations has the potential to reduce the AU's legitimacy, which could have long-term consequences. It also effectively marks open season on the African Peace Facility; instead of having one interlocutor (the AU) to deal with on peace and security the EU will now have a multiplicity, in effect as many countries as want to join forces to combat a perceived common threat.<sup>109</sup>

Europe's panic over migration and terrorism represents a danger, but also offers the AU and its member states an opportunity. The EU and its member states have money to spend provided they can be assured of quick wins that will assuage the concerns of beleaguered citizens. If the AU and African governments really want to address the root causes of migration, as they profess, they should leverage continued support for border control and fighting jihadists or terrorists against increased EU investment in education, job creation, better governance and more even economic

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<sup>106</sup> Crisis Group interviews, European diplomats, Addis Ababa, 12 and 15 June 2017. "EUR 50 million for new Joint Force of the Sahel countries: EU steps up its support for security in the region", press release, European Commission, 5 June 2017. "Dossier de Presse: Operation Barkhane", French ministry of defence, July 2017.

<sup>107</sup> Crisis Group interviews, European and African diplomats, EU and AU officials, Brussels, May 2017; Addis Ababa, June 2017.

<sup>108</sup> For instance, the Force Intervention Brigade, a military formation within the UN's peacekeeping operation in DRC that was made up of a coalition of the willing, initially coalesced around the elimination of the M23 rebel group. However, the force cannot decide on its next target and is now stymied. "Is the Force Intervention Brigade still justifying its existence", Institute for Security Studies, 22 June 2017.

<sup>109</sup> "The worst thing you want is for each one to go their own way. The risk is that you will get some form of flexibility ... and then you will see a cacophony of approaches to peace and security", said one EU official. Crisis Group interview, EU official, Addis Ababa, 16 June 2017.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

growth across Africa, in countries of origin – not just transit.<sup>110</sup> They should also collectively press for increased legal routes of migration for their citizens. However, this requires coordination. Unfortunately, competing national and regional interests have overridden a more unified strategic approach that could bring continent-wide dividends.

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<sup>110</sup> The new European Fund for Sustainable Development, part of the European External Investment Plan, has an initial budget of €3.35 billion (\$4 billion) for addressing root causes of migration in African and neighbourhood countries. The fund is designed to trigger up to €44 billion (\$52.6 billion) euro of investments. “European fund for sustainable development: Council confirms final deal with the EP”, press release, Council of the EU, 28 June 2017.



Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017

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## V. The Search for Common Ground

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The relationship between the AU and the EU has reached a potential turning point: “It’s now or never”, a senior EU official told Crisis Group.<sup>111</sup> Reforms at the AU coupled with renegotiation of the Cotonou Agreement mean that existing arrangements inevitably will change. There is political will in both commissions to work together and cooperation and coordination has improved in recent months following a low point in relations during 2016. The Africa-EU summit represents an opportunity to bridge some differences. If seized, a stronger and more mature partnership, based on mutual interests could emerge.

### A. *A Rational, Interests-based Partnership*

The levels of disappointment and distrust that have built up around the idea of an “equal partnership” suggest the time has come for this notion to be de-emphasised. The relationship should be more pragmatic, with mutual interests rather than assertions of equality privileged. Both parties insist they want to work toward this but it will require the two institutions and their member states to be more explicit about what they want and need from each other. This is much easier said than done, particularly given the tensions and suspicions arising from the colonial past.

The relationship as it stands is far too emotional; interviewees sounded more like disgruntled family members than dispassionate officials. This is hardly surprising given the two continents’ shared history, but it prevents frank and honest discussion. Increased transparency will be important for building trust. The AU should recognise that the EU is a union of 28 (soon to be 27) countries, few of which ever had colonies. For its part, the EU should be more conscious of how its actions are perceived and aim to be less paternalistic in dealings with Africa.

To ensure that the partnership is more firmly grounded in interests, the AU and EU need to focus their discussions less on financial and administrative concerns and more on political and strategic matters, especially at senior levels. Where possible, technical discussions should be delegated to department or section heads. Exchanges on politics – not money – must have primacy when the AU Peace and Security Council and the EU Political and Security Committee meet at the annual college-to-college meetings and at summits. A start could be made by including migration and mobility on the agenda of the AU-EU summit, a subject which both institutions have been reluctant to discuss openly.

### B. *Splitting the Bill More Equitably*

The EU and its member states have made it clear that the current system of funding is not sustainable. It is unlikely to commit again to open-ended financing, as it did with troop stipends for the AU mission in Somalia.<sup>112</sup> The future of the African Peace Facility is also uncertain, as is the EU’s post-2020 budget and the financial instruments it supports.

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<sup>111</sup> Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, 10 July 2017.

<sup>112</sup> Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Addis Ababa, 13 June 2017.



**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

Africa's peace and security architecture, developed with significant assistance from the EU, is unique and requires specially tailored support to respond to emerging challenges. Ideally, any new funding stream would be predictable – to enable the AU to do more medium-term planning – but flexible – to allow for new initiatives and to adapt the security architecture to emerging threats. It also should have a rapid reaction capacity like that of the Early Response Mechanism. Support should focus on four key areas: early warning; preventative diplomacy and mediation; peace support operations; and capacity-building and non-lethal equipment for military and security forces.

The AU's early-warning system is well established but needs strengthening. Many of the continent's crises are predictable, especially those linked to poor governance and disputed political transitions. Funding should be directed toward identifying dangerous political dynamics, which is central to conflict prevention.<sup>113</sup> Additional support for the AU's Department of Political Affairs is therefore essential, including for more effective integration of the African Governance Architecture<sup>114</sup> with the peace and security architecture. Translating early-warning data and analysis into early action has been hampered, in part, by poor information flows within the AU Commission and between it and the regional economic communities. EU financing should be used creatively to break down barriers between the Departments of Peace and Security and Political Affairs, and the commission and regional organisations.

Mediation and preventative diplomacy are key priorities for the AU, and the EU should significantly increase its funding in this area. While continuing support for high-profile envoys – leader-to-leader contacts are often the best entry-point for dealing with a crisis<sup>115</sup> – more should be given for middle- and lower-level officials working on the details of peace processes. The AU's mediation mechanisms are fragmented, with little oversight and political direction from the top. The recently created mediation support unit is a good first step, but it will need considerable financial support to attract skilled, experienced specialists.

EU funding traditionally has been heavily skewed toward peace support operations. This needs to be rebalanced, especially given the AU and UN commitment to fund 100 per cent of UN-approved missions between themselves. Any EU support to peace operations must be considered on a case-by-case basis, especially for AU member state-led ad-hoc initiatives, like the MNJTF and G5 force. Such support should have a definitive timeframe or clearly articulated and verifiable end goals – once begun, even limited operations develop their own logic and can breed resistance in local communities. Financing therefore needs to be accompanied by a clear political plan, ideally enjoying consensus among troop contributors, the AU and Europeans; peacekeeping is a tool, not a strategy.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Crisis Group Special Report N°2, *Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action*, 22 June 2016.

<sup>114</sup> The African Governance Architecture seeks to strengthen coordination among AU organs and institutions with a formal mandate in governance, democracy and human rights. It is intended to complement the work of the African Peace and Security Architecture by promoting structural conflict prevention.

<sup>115</sup> Crisis Group Special Report N°2, *Seizing the Moment*, op. cit.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

As for the final pillar, the military can play a significant role in preventing conflict as well as in maintaining and sustaining peace. In Somalia, for example, a sustainable national force that can take over responsibility for security is vital for the AU mission's drawdown. The EU therefore should provide training, advice, non-lethal equipment and other resources to select African militaries but it must be aware of the political dynamics of national security forces in each context. It should first evaluate security forces' ability to threaten governments, especially weak and discredited administrations; whether divisions among security forces could lead to infighting or security vacuums; and, where states face external threats or internal disorder, if security forces have the potential to provide an adequate defence and the discipline to maintain public trust. Control mechanisms and risk assessments are needed to ensure that training and equipment are not used by unaccountable or abusive security and military actors.<sup>117</sup>

Both institutions have expressed a desire for the AU to become more financially self-sufficient. AU member states must stick to their commitment to fund 25 per cent of the AU's peace and security activities by 2020. If the suggested 0.2 per cent levy on imports is not workable for some or all member states, alternative solutions quickly should be found. Some of the proposals recommended in 2012 by a high-level panel headed by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo should be reconsidered – for example a \$5 levy on flights to Africa originating from outside the continent and a \$2 tax on hotel stays.<sup>118</sup>

To encourage AU member states to increase their financial support to the AU, any future EU mechanism should be based on a matched funding system in which the EU's contribution is proportionately linked to those made by African governments. Something similar to the cost-sharing ratio of 1 to 3 (AU to UN) used for UN-authorized, AU-led peace support operations could be adopted.

EU funding also could be used to promote better coordination and cooperation between the AU and the regional economic communities, rather than fomenting competition over resources. The EU could use some of its support specifically for joint AU-regional body projects. The AU also should consider allocating a percentage of the Peace Fund's assets to regional blocs that are delivering on the continental peace and security agenda.

### C. *Greater Cooperation and Working-level Linkages*

Increasing cooperation at all levels would be a good way to build trust between the AU and EU. More regular dialogue would increase mutual knowledge of the two institutions and their internal dynamics. It also would help foster a shared understanding of conflicts on the continent, or at the very least a greater appreciation of the other's point of view, which also could reduce tensions and misunderstandings. Recent collaboration and coordination between AU and EU election monitors during Kenya's August elections, provides a good example of the benefits of close cooperation in a potentially volatile situation.

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<sup>117</sup> Crisis Group EU Watch List N°6, 24 February 2017. Crisis Group Special Report N°2, *Seizing the Moment*, op. cit.

<sup>118</sup> Progress Report of the High-Level Panel on Alternative Sources of Financing the African Union, Assembly/AU/18 (VIV), AU, 15-16 July 2012.

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

More frequent interaction between the AU Peace and Security Council and the EU Political and Security Committee – they currently meet just once a year – would be beneficial and could be supplemented by video conferences between their chairpersons. Where appropriate, as has happened in the past, they could undertake joint field visits. Additional consultations between EU and AU commissioners, outside the annual college-to-college meetings, would be valuable.

Closer linkages between equivalent commission departments should be encouraged, as envisaged in the memorandum of understanding on staff exchanges, and resources made available to facilitate this.<sup>119</sup> Sharing lessons learned and best practices would be valuable, as would regular exchanges of information, whenever possible. The AU's liaison offices could also benefit greatly from closer working relations and information sharing with in-country EU delegations.

Aside from increased engagement between the two commissions, some AU member states have expressed an interest in having more contact with their EU counterparts.<sup>120</sup> Regular formal and informal meetings between AU and EU diplomats could be easily scheduled in both Brussels and Addis. In addition, foreign ministers could convene in between the triennial Africa-EU summits.

The EU should review the possibility of opening up some sessions of its PSC and the Africa Working Group under the same terms that the EU is allowed to attend AU PSC deliberations. If the EU wishes to maintain its privileged access to AU summits it should be open to reciprocating.

#### D. *A Realistic Assessment of Constraints*

The EU and AU have invested heavily in their relationship and have high expectations of what it can achieve. They also need to understand their own – and each other's – constraints and capacities and to adjust their ambitions and demands accordingly. Both sides should look for ways to mitigate their limitations.

##### 1. Reorient capacity building and reduce the bureaucratic burden

The recent Brussels communication on the Africa-EU partnership stressed the need for increased capacity building and training to improve the AU's operational capabilities.<sup>121</sup> This is essential, but must shift away from paying for travel costs and organising workshops. More technical assistance is required. The two institutions should undertake a joint assessment of the AU's training needs and work out an improvement program. As mentioned above, they should implement existing agreements on staff exchanges. This would have the added benefit of strengthening understanding between the two organisations.

The EU must look for ways to ease the bureaucratic burden. This should include expanding the scope and duration of support given under the African Peace Facility's Early Response Mechanism, which allows for the disbursement of funds in as little

<sup>119</sup> "European Commission and African Union agree deal to further administrative cooperation, staff exchanges", press release, European Commission, 1 February 2016.

<sup>120</sup> Crisis Group interviews, African diplomats, Brussels, May 2017; Addis Ababa, June 2017.

<sup>121</sup> The European Council highlighted the need for capacity building for security and development in its 19 June "Council conclusions on a renewed impetus for the Africa-EU Partnership".

**Draft Pre-release. Embargoed until 01:00 GMT, Tuesday 17 October 2017**

as ten days. Increased technical support could be tailored to improve the AU's ability to administer projects and meet EU compliance standards.

Increased coordination between the EU and its member states in Addis would help reduce the burden on key AU staff who have to fend off partners' almost constant demand for bilateral meetings. The EU and other partners could also better coordinate their support to the AU. This would avoid duplication and overloading the AU Commission which has a finite ability to absorb training and other support. The proposal of a partners' platform, contained in the communication on the Africa-EU partnership, should be implemented.<sup>122</sup>

## 2. Limitations and consequences

Neither the AU nor the EU is monolithic. Both include many actors – the commissions, the member states and, for the EU, the parliament and the External Action Service with its in-country delegations – each with distinct priorities and interests. This hinders coherent action and makes it more difficult to anticipate the institution's response in any given situation. At the EU, foreign policy is an intergovernmental rather than a multilateral issue, meaning that national interests are likely to be at their strongest when it comes to questions of peace and security. For the AU, these questions usually touch on member states' own national and regional interests, and continental priorities sometimes get left by the wayside.

Member states' lack of confidence in the AU seriously constrains its ability to act effectively and in a timely manner. The AU Commission does not successfully communicate its achievements to member states. It must do better. The EU could provide support for this and use its in-country delegations to advocate for the AU on the continent.

The changing nature of conflict means that the AU needs to seriously consider whether the African Peace and Security Architecture is still fit for purpose. An audit should be undertaken as part of Kagame's reform process. The current assessment of African Standby Force doctrine could be rolled into the wider audit. Among other things, it should examine whether and how to fully incorporate ad-hoc military initiatives like the G5 and the MNJTF into a revamped architecture.

The AU needs to reflect on its role in peace and security. Its resource limitations mean it has to decide whether to focus, on the one hand, on developing and harmonising policy and maintaining political oversight or, on the other, increasing its operational role in peace support operations and becoming an implementer of projects on the ground. Its current strengths lie in the former – it does not have the requisite staff, financial resources or expertise and is too far removed from member states for the latter. However, regional economic communities (RECs) can and ought to step up their implementing role.

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<sup>122</sup> The proposed partners' platform aims to bring together European, African and other international partners with the UN. It will allow for more regular strategic discussions with a view to taking concrete joint actions. It is intended to build new multilateral partnerships that would lead to greater international support and stability for AU's peace and security activities.

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Crisis Group believes the AU should play to its strengths and concentrate on building its leadership on issues of peace and security to reinforce its role as *the* authoriser and supervisor of peace operations in Africa.

The EU too, must be clear on what role it envisages for the AU – political lead and authorising body or something more operational. It also should decide whether it will continue to give the bulk of its support to the AU or concentrate its resources on the RECs and the new ad-hoc groups. It should be conscious that not all the regional bodies and member states are equally capable, and it needs to be aware of the impact its decisions could have on the legitimacy of the AU and continental conflict dynamics.

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## **VI. Conclusion**

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Ten years after signing the Joint Africa-EU Strategy that established the parameters of their partnership, the AU and EU have reached a turning point. Relations have recovered in recent months after falling to a nadir in 2016 over disagreements about EU payments to AMISOM troops, and cooperation has increased. Now the two institutions should harness current high levels of political will – on both sides – to reinvigorate and strengthen their alliance. To capitalise on this fully, they must confront key areas of disagreement and frustration – however difficult that process may be – and pursue a partnership based on mutual interests and strategic priorities. In this context, the AU-EU summit comes at a particularly opportune moment.

**Addis Ababa/Brussels/Nairobi, 17 October 2017**



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Appendix A: Map of TK

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## Appendix B: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org). Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord Mark Malloch-Brown. Its Vice Chair is Ayo Obe, a Legal Practitioner, Columnist and TV Presenter in Nigeria.

Crisis Group's President & CEO, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, served as the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations from 2000-2008, and in 2012, as Deputy Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria. He left his post as Deputy Joint Special Envoy to chair the commission that prepared the white paper on French defence and national security in 2013.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in ten other locations: Bishkek, Bogota, Dakar, Kabul, Islamabad, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington, DC. It has presences in the following locations: Abuja, Algiers, Bangkok, Beirut, Caracas, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Juba, Mexico City, New Delhi, Rabat, Sanaa, Tblisi, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, and Yangon.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, foundations, and private sources. Currently Crisis Group holds relationships with the following governmental departments and agencies: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrian Development Agency, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, French Development Agency, French Ministry of Defence, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, German Federal Foreign Office, Global Affairs Canada, Irish Aid, Principality of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

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## Appendix C: Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2014

### Special Reports

*Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State*, Special Report N°1, 14 March 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

*Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action*, Special Report N°2, 22 June 2016.

*Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid*, Special Report N°3, 22 March 2017.

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