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for International Organization Affairs  
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House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights and  
International Organizations  
and  
Subcommittee on Africa  
*“The Future of Peacekeeping and the Increasing Role of Private  
Military Companies in Africa”  
January 31, 2024***

Chairman James, Chairman Smith;  
Ranking Member Jacobs, Ranking Member Wild;  
Members of the Subcommittees:

Thank you for inviting me to discuss how the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, IO, is defending American interests and working with our multilateral partners to tackle the global challenges of conflict, insecurity, human rights violations and abuses, and more. It’s good to be with you to discuss the future of peacekeeping in Africa.

The United States is not only the largest financial contributor to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping – we are also the largest bilateral capacity-building partner to nearly 50 Troop Contributing Countries. But we recognize that UN peace operations face unprecedented challenges today, including faltering host nation cooperation and consent and the presence of actors like the Wagner Group in conflict zones.

It is clear that we need to expand our multilateral toolkit for responding to security crises in Africa, while simultaneously working to improve UN peacekeeping.

The adoption last month of UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 2719 provides a framework for the partial funding of African-led peace support operations with UN assessed contributions.

We were very active in the negotiation of this resolution. We insisted that future African Union (AU)-led peace operations supported by UN assessed contributions comply with the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, are mandated to protect civilians, and be authorized by, and accountable to, the UN Security Council.

Mindful of our responsibility to be careful stewards of U.S. taxpayer dollars, we also focused on burden-sharing: we successfully tabled an amendment specifying that UN contributions to AU peace support operations be capped at 75%.

We recognize the potential that future AU peace support operations offer to enhance peace and security in Africa.

Given the knowledge African stakeholders have of security challenges across the continent, AU-led peace support operations may be better-suited to tackle certain challenges.

However, the lack of predictable and sustainable financing for these missions has hindered their ability to implement their mandates.

We saw in the introduction, and ultimate adoption, of UNSCR 2719 an opportunity to memorialize the principles upon which this new mechanism should operate.

As the AU Peace Support Operation Doctrine states, and as UNSCR 2719 reinforces, these operations must be underpinned by mandates to protect civilians from violence and must be linked to a political process to resolve the conflict.

The complex crises across Africa demand these new tools, in addition to traditional UN peacekeeping operations -- tools that allow the international community to respond rapidly to threats to civilians, prevent mass atrocities, counter violent extremists or terrorist groups, and stabilize the security situation to allow space for a political solution. AU peace support operations may also serve as a counter to malign actors exploiting security vacuums, an issue critically important to U.S. national security.

With the adoption of UNSCR 2719, we now have a complement to UN peacekeeping in situations in which traditional peacekeeping missions may not be the most effective or appropriate tool.

In December, I joined the U.S. delegation to the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial in Accra, Ghana. The Ministerial provided an opportunity to explore the issues impacting UN peacekeeping, bringing in peacekeeping leaders from the field and African stakeholders.

And earlier this month, I joined the National Defense University's Africa Center for Strategic Studies' Force Commanders' Roundtable, which benefitted from the expertise of former leaders of UN and AU missions in examining the challenges of advancing Africa's peace and security architecture to meet rising threats and foster effective, African-owned peacekeeping capacity.

At both events, it was clear that there are still many questions to work through; further consultations will be needed before consensus is reached on the first AU peace support operation to benefit from UN assessed contributions.

For the AU, its Member States and partners need to determine how to contribute or raise the remaining 25 %.

This is a key issue and will be subject to discussion with the AU. Per UNSCR 2719, the 25% may include AU contributions, in-kind contributions, and voluntary contributions from others. We are encouraged by the fact that the AU has already established several important policies to align its peace support activities with relevant international human rights law and international humanitarian law considerations and UN conduct and discipline frameworks.

For the U.S. government, these discussions underscore the need for internal clarity on the criteria or conditions for considering the deployment of AU peace support operations under UNSCR 2719. This will include practical matters of capacity -- such as willing and capable troop and police contributing countries able to meet human rights standards -- as well as policy issues, such as the need for clear, time-bound objectives.

I welcome today's hearing in order to benefit from your insights.

But before closing, let me take this opportunity to underscore the importance of passing the National Security Supplemental Appropriations request as soon as possible so we have the resources needed to advance our national interests.

We will continue to consult with you on these important issues, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.