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Hearing on “United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Africa”
U.S. House of Representatives
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations

April 30, 2019

Chair Bass, Ranking Member Smith and other distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing on “United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Africa.” I am an academic who has studied the politics and effectiveness of peace operations in Africa and elsewhere for over two decades. Since my fellow panelists have already addressed trends in United Nations (UN) operations, and because “partnership peacekeeping” between different international actors has become the norm on the African continent, my testimony focuses on two central questions:

1. What roles has the African Union (AU) played in peace operations in Africa?
2. Should the U.S. Government support the use of UN assessed peacekeeping contributions to finance AU peace support operations authorized by the Security Council?

Summary

For over fifteen years, the AU has proved that its peace operations provide a global public good by helping to keep the peace in Africa. A strong and effective African Union is therefore good for Africa, but it is also good for the world. However, the AU continues to suffer from a range of capability gaps that have been only partially filled by its international partners. The United States should therefore empower the AU by supporting its access to predictable, sustainable and flexible finance. Instead of supporting AU peace operations with an ad hoc mixture of programs and trust funds, the United States Government should open the way to a more predictable framework of support by agreeing to the principle of using UN assessed contributions to finance AU peace support operations authorized by the Security Council.

The African Union’s Roles in Peace Operations in Africa

Since 2003, the AU has mandated or authorized sixteen peace support operations, ranging from small observer missions to large forces engaged in stabilization, counter-insurgency and even counter-terrorism activities (see table 1). Of the operations under AU command and control, the largest have been in Central African Republic, Sudan, Mali, and Somalia. The AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has been—by a considerable margin—the AU’s longest, largest and most

costly operation.¹ The AU has also authorized six missions not under the Union’s command and control: a special task force of South African soldiers who provided VIP protection for actors engaged in peace talks in Burundi, a Southern African Development Community mission to stabilize the Kingdom of Lesotho after the country’s army commander was assassinated, as well as four ad hoc coalitions to undertake peace enforcement activities. Those coalitions were Operation Democracy in the Comoros, to oust an illegitimate government; the Regional Coalition Initiative against the Lord’s Resistance Army in Central Africa; the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa in the Lake Chad Basin; and the G5 Sahel Joint Force to combat various non-state armed actors across the Sahel.

Table 1: Peace Support Operations Authorized or Mandated by the African Union

<i>Mission</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Years Active</i>
African Union-Mandated Missions		
AU Mission in Burundi	Burundi	2003-04
AU Mission in Sudan	Sudan	2004-07
AU Observer Mission in the Comoros	Comoros	2004
AU Mission for Support to the Elections in the Comoros	Comoros	2006
AU Mission in Somalia	Somalia	2007-present
AU Electoral and Security Assistance Mission in the Comoros	Comoros	2007-08
AU-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur	Sudan	2008-present
African-led International Support Mission in Mali	Mali	2012-13
African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic	Central African Republic	2013-14
African Prevention and Protection Mission* * This mission was mandated but did not deploy.	Burundi	2015-present
African Union-Authorized Missions		
AU Special Task Force	Burundi	2006-09
Operation Democracy in the Comoros	Comoros	2008
Regional Coordination Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord’s Resistance Army	Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Uganda	2011-18
Multinational Joint Task Force	Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria	2015-present
G5 Sahel Joint Force	Burkina-Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger	2017-present
SADC Prevention Mission to Lesotho	Lesotho	2018-present

Several trends are evident from the conduct of these operations since 2003. First, AU member states have dramatically increased the numbers of peacekeepers they can deploy, thanks in part to assistance from external training programs, including the U.S. Global Peace Operations

¹ For details see Paul D. Williams, *Fighting for Peace in Somalia: A history and analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM), 2007-2017* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

Initiative. By 2015, African states were deploying nearly 70,000 uniformed peacekeepers across Africa—nearly 50,000 in UN peacekeeping operations and roughly 22,000 in AMISOM. Second, because the AU suffered from major gaps in its financial, logistical and mission support capabilities, most of its missions required considerable external assistance from partners, notably the UN, European Union and bilateral assistance programs. This assistance usually came in the form of financial, technical, training & equipment, and logistical support.² Third, as a result of these capability gaps, AU forces have played an important early-responder role but often subsequently been re-hatted into larger UN forces, as in Burundi, Darfur, Mali, and Central African Republic. Such re-hatting processes have not always gone smoothly but important lessons have now been learned.³ Finally, AU peace support operations have suffered significant deficits regarding transparency, accountability, and conduct and discipline issues, and developing an agreed reporting framework as called for in UN Security Council resolution 2378 (2017). It was only very recently, for instance, that the AU finalized policies and procedures on financial systems, combating sexual exploitation and abuse, and conduct and discipline for its peace support operations.

Despite the capability gaps identified above, over the last fifteen years, AU-mandated missions perform critical tasks related to international peace and security that are not performed by UN peacekeeping operations. Not only have they deployed to areas where the UN Security Council was not explicitly engaged (e.g. the Comoros and Darfur), the AU has sometimes been able to generate more local legitimacy with host governments than UN operations (e.g. in Darfur). Crucially, AU peace support operations have also undertaken peace enforcement, counter-insurgency, and counter-terrorism tasks that fall outside the usual bounds of UN peacekeeping operations (e.g. in Somalia and Mali). This is likely to become more important in the context of increased levels of violence generated by jihadist fighters moving from the Middle East into North Africa, the Sahel and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. The contributing countries of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in particular have displayed enormous levels of sacrifice while combating al-Shabaab in the deadliest peace operation in modern history.⁴ But the AU has also shown itself willing to engage in similar activities elsewhere, notably in Mali. Finally, AU-authorized missions have generally been used to conduct enforcement tasks against designated “spoiler” groups, notably with four cases that have an area of operations straddling multiple countries in line with rebel group activity.

² See UN doc. A/71/410-S/2016/809, 28 September 2016, <https://undocs.org/S/2016/809>; Katharina P. Coleman & Paul D. Williams, *Logistics Partnerships in Peace Operations* (International Peace Institute report, June 2017), <https://www.ipinst.org/2017/06/logistics-partnerships-in-peace-operations>

³ See *Evaluation of re-hatting in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)* (UN OIOS Evaluation Report no. IED-18-002, 12 February 2018).

⁴ See Williams, *Fighting for Peace in Somalia*, pp.356-358.

More broadly, the international political dynamics related to mandating missions means that, in the future, new peace operations in Africa are likely to be either AU-mandated or AU-authorized, with the only new United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa being re-hatted AU missions, as was the case in Mali and Central African Republic. In both of these situations, however, the UN was forced to take on missions in which there was no peace to keep and the conditions required for successful UN peacekeeping did not exist in large part because the AU was not able to finance these missions. For this reason, finding a long-term solution for financing is necessary both to ensure the viability of AU peace support operations and to ensure that UN peacekeeping is not being set up to fail when it is forced to take on mandates and tasks that run counter to the principles of impartiality, consent and minimum use of force.

Financing African Union Peace Operations

AU peace operations have clearly helped promote peace and security in Africa in several ways. But questions persist about how to generate adequate, sustainable and flexible financing for them. This has been a source of political controversy for well over a decade with various expert bodies making recommendations to resolve it.⁵ Thus far, however, the UN Security Council has not reached a principled consensus on this issue. In December 2018, for example, the Security Council failed to adopt a resolution on the topic—a resolution that the United States threatened to veto. Failure to agree on language about financing African peace support operations was also the main reason why a substantive report could not be adopted by the 2019 session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the UN General Assembly last month.

There are two options for financing AU peace support operations: either (1) the AU self-finances its missions; or (2) the Union continues to rely on some level of multilateral or bilateral external financial assistance. The first option is unrealistic, but the UN Security Council cannot agree on how to implement the second.

After struggling with this issue for many years, the AU has recently made major progress on raising funds to pay for its peace and security activities. In 2015, the AU Assembly set itself the target of financing 25% of its peace and security activities, 75% of its program budget, and 100% of its operational budget by 2020. To do so, it established a new AU Peace Fund which has generated revenues via a 0.2% levy that the AU has imposed on eligible goods imported into the

⁵ See, for example, *Report of the African Union-United Nations panel on modalities for support to African Union peacekeeping operations* (the Prodi Report) UN doc. A/63/666-S/2008/813, 31 December 2008, <https://undocs.org/S/2008/813>; *Report of the joint African Union-United Nations review of available mechanisms to finance and support African Union peace support operations authorized by the United Nations Security Council*, UN doc. A/71/410-S/2016/809, 28 September 2016, <https://undocs.org/S/2016/809>; and *Securing Predictable and Sustainable Financing for Peace in Africa* (the Kaberuka Report), AU doc. August 2016, <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/report-on-predictable-and-sustainable-financing-for-peace-in-africa>

African continent. This is an AU directive that is binding on all AU members, but it permits flexibility on how each state delivers on its commitment. As of April 2019, fifty-one of the AU's fifty-five members had contributed a total of \$105.2 million to the Peace Fund. The Peace Fund also comes equipped with a new set of enhanced governance, financial and administrative oversight mechanisms.

It is hoped that the Peace Fund can generate approximately \$400 million for the AU by 2020. Given that AMISOM costs approximately \$1 billion per year, this sum might be enough to cover 25% of the bill for AU-mandated peace support operations, assuming no new operations are required. But where will the rest of the money come from? In addition, and in comparison, the much smaller AU-authorized missions in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin cost about \$500 million and \$700 million per year, respectively.

For the last decade, the Security Council has debated whether to pay the rest through the UN's assessed peacekeeping contributions. So far, this mechanism has been used to provide modest support to the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS, 2004-07) but most significantly with the creation of the UN Support Office to Somalia (UNSOS), which delivers logistical and other forms of support to AMISOM and some elements of the Somali National Army.⁶ In 2018/19, UNSOS had a budget of approximately \$550 million.

The AU has tried to lock in the principle of using UN assessed contributions to finance its missions because it would move beyond ad hoc support mechanisms and provide a more predictable framework, which could be the basis for long-term capacity building and institutional development. Operational decisions will still be made on a case-by-case basis and it would apply only to future not current peace operations. Crucially, it would facilitate the building of more effective and efficient systems for conflict management over the long-term.

United States Policy on Financing African Union Peace Operations

Current U.S. policy on using UN assessed peacekeeping contributions to finance AU peace support operations authorized by the Security Council appears to be based on several interrelated preferences, most of which have been shared across the Obama and Trump administrations.

These bipartisan concerns are, first, ensuring the UN Security Council remains the primary multilateral decision-making body on matters of international peace and security. Second, ensuring that UN funds are used in an accountable and transparent manner. Third, decisions on how to respond to crises must be decided on a case-by-case basis. And, fourth, the AU should pay some if not all of the bill for its peace operations. However, the U.S. has stressed that the

⁶ Paul D. Williams, *UN Support to Regional Peace Operations: The Case of UNSOA* (International Peace Institute, February 2017), <https://www.ipinst.org/2017/02/un-support-regional-peace-ops-unsoa>

AU's revenue should not be generated by using tariffs on goods imported into Africa, which is the case for the 0.2% levy instituted by the new AU Peace Fund. The U.S. position is that this is not in line with World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations because it discriminates against non-AU members. The AU disputes this, arguing that none of the African WTO members have been asked to break their WTO obligations in order to make financial contributions to the AU via the levy, nor have any of them done so in practice. It has also pointed to the ongoing use of tariffs by the current U.S. Government.

As noted above, these concerns created an impasse in the 2019 session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations⁷ and led the Trump Administration to threaten to veto a Security Council resolution that sought to endorse the principle of using UN assessed peacekeeping contributions to finance AU peace support operations authorized by the Security Council, albeit it on a case-by-case basis.

What policy should the United States adopt on this issue? The United States and other donors must recognize that AU peace support operations are not going away, and that these—rather than UN peacekeeping operations—have become the preferred tool for addressing at least some of the key peace and security challenges in the African continent. To date, the preferred approach of the U.S. Government has been to provide bilateral support to individual troop- and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) for respective AU-mandated and/or AU-authorized peace operations. However, this fragmented, ad hoc approach to support has meant that AU missions have varied considerably in terms of the capabilities of their troops, the strength of their command and control systems, the level of oversight exercised by the AU Commission, and the uneven application of international norms and standards across missions and across T/PCCs.

If the U.S. Government believes AU peace operations can play useful roles in securing the continent, then it should empower the organization to that end. A more strategic approach would be to support and empower the African Union Commission to better administer and oversee African peace support operations, as this will not only allow the United States and other donors to hold a single entity—the AU—accountable for the performance and effectiveness of operations, but it will also improve capabilities and adherence to international human rights and humanitarian law for AU T/PCCs across the board. This, however, may require use of the UN's assessed peacekeeping contributions to cover part of the costs of AU-mandated peace support operations—and perhaps some AU-authorized missions—that are authorized by the Security Council.

These two options are not mutually exclusive. Option 1 has benefits inasmuch as providing bilateral support to individual African T/PCCs allows the U.S. to be more selective about how its

⁷ While the African Group insisted on including language about the AU Peace Fund, the U.S. would only accept such language if it reflected U.S. concerns that the AU's 0.2% levy caused problems for WTO compliance.

funds are used and might produce greater leverage to meet broader foreign and security policy objectives.

Nevertheless, Option 2 makes sense for several reasons. First, the overall cost to the U.S. would be less than if Washington provided the same capabilities on a bilateral basis to the respective T/PCCs. This is because using UN assessed peacekeeping contributions shares the burden across the UN's membership—the United States pays approximately 28% of the total bill for UN peacekeeping and the U.S. assessed rate has been gradually shrinking. Second, it provides a more predictable framework for support that would facilitate long-term capacity-building and institutional development at the AU. Third, because the U.S. pays such a large proportion of the UN's peacekeeping bill, it can wield significant influence over how and where those funds are used. Finally, the United Nations has taken important steps to improve the performance and efficiency of its peacekeeping operations.⁸

If, however, the United States is not comfortable with having the AU Commission manage funds provided through assessed contributions, it could have the UN continue to manage these funds, as there are ways to ensure that it is applied directly to meet specific types of costs in individual country contexts. The UN support office model, as represented by UNSOS in Somalia, would be the key case in point.⁹ While this model does have the drawback of not empowering the African Union or supporting the strengthening of its mission management apparatus, it provides a way to sidestep any U.S. concerns about WTO compliance.

Recommendations for United States Policy

Recommendation 1: Support the principle of using UN assessed contributions to finance AU peace support operations authorized by the Security Council

If the AU can prove it has the capacity to use financial, technical and logistical assistance in a transparent and accountable manner then the United States should support the principle of using UN assessed peacekeeping contributions to finance AU peace support operations authorized by the Security Council.

Recommendation 2: Consider a peace and security exemption for the AU Peace Fund

If the United States continues to believe the AU levy is not in line with WTO obligations it should show clearly where this has been the case. In addition, the U.S. should consider allowing

⁸ The UN's new approach to improve mission performance is set out in Security Council resolution 2436 (2018). On efficiency, the UN has reduced the average per capita cost of deploying its military peacekeepers by 23% from 2008/09 to 2017/18 (from roughly \$90,000 to roughly \$70,000). This is in spite of the fact that the monthly base reimbursement rate for uniformed peacekeepers increased over the same period from approximately \$1,028 per person to \$1,428.

⁹ See Williams, *UN Support to Regional Peace Operations*.

a peace and security exemption to allay its concerns about WTO compliance.¹⁰ In sum, what the U.S. perceives as the discriminatory effects of the AU levy is a price worth paying for enhancing peace and security in Africa.

Recommendation 3: Pay UN assessed peacekeeping contributions in full and on time

Refusing to pay its full assessed rate of UN peacekeeping contributions has undermined the credibility of the U.S. government and contributed to the reduction of its influence at the United Nations. It also sets a bad example that undermines the principle of international negotiations and the idea that member states should meet their financial obligations. Not paying the full rate of assessed contributions also hurts the UN's major T/PCCs and acts as a disincentive to making such contributions, especially for poorer countries.¹¹ Arrears and late payments are also having detrimental effects on contemporary UN peacekeeping operations in the field.¹²

Recommendation 4: Kick-start a debate about changing the formulas by which the assessed rates for UN peacekeeping are negotiated

The United States should pay its full assessed rate of UN peacekeeping contributions but there is a good case for reducing the U.S. share of the UN's peacekeeping bill on the grounds that it is politically unwise to have the entire system rely so heavily on a single member state. In other words, the UN should negotiate and adopt a maximum level of assessment payable by a single member state. Since the AU wants the U.S. and UN to pay a large part of the bill for its peace support operations, and the United States wants to pay less for peacekeeping, a sensible approach might be for the U.S. to increase its diplomatic efforts to find African support for lowering its portion of the overall peacekeeping bill and developing alternative options for negotiating the assessed rates of contributions in the General Assembly.

¹⁰ One argument along these lines is using the security exception under Article XXI(c) of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade as justification for applying the 0.2% import levy because it is done in pursuit of what the UN Charter refers to as the maintenance of international peace and security. Philomena Apiko and Faten Aggad, *Can the 0.2% levy fund peace and security in Africa?* (ECDPM Briefing Note No.103, April 2018), <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/BN-103-Financing-the-African-Union.pdf>

¹¹ The details of the UN's current arrears are set out in Report of the Secretary-General, *Improving the financial situation of the United Nations*, UN doc. A/73/809, 26 March 2019, <https://undocs.org/a/73/809>

¹² Ibid and Wasim Mir, *Financing UN Peacekeeping: Avoiding Another Crisis* (International Peace Institute, April 2019), <https://www.ipinst.org/2019/04/financing-un-peacekeeping-avoiding-another-crisis>