The United Nations Secretary-General's proposal for a New Agenda for Peace (NAP) is a timely call to address the critical gaps in global multilateralism. This report provides African perspectives on selected aspects of the NAP. It argues that existing prevention and peacebuilding frameworks must be revitalised. Global, regional and sub-regional decision-making processes should be aligned and existing partnerships must be revisited, enhanced and deepened as required. Adequate resourcing is also needed for African peace support operations and peacebuilding endeavours.
Key findings

- Clarifying and aligning the roles of the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and African sub-regional organisations would improve global-regional peace and security relations in Africa. Effective cooperation between the UN, AU and regional economic communities (RECs)/regional mechanisms (RMs) is vital.

- Africa’s under-representation in global decision making requires urgent attention if the AU and its sub-regional blocs are to play a meaningful role in a new global peace and security paradigm.

- Prevention remains the weakest link in the current global peace architecture. The New Agenda for Peace (NAP) is an opportunity to re-emphasise and consolidate prevention and peacebuilding through collaboration among global, regional and national actors in Africa.

- Although the AU and the RECs/RMs have played important roles as norm entrepreneurs on peace and security policies and strategies, putting these into practice has been hamstrung by inadequate financing and national ownership.

- Bridging the divide between norm development and implementation and fulfilling the NAP’s aspiration of delivering global peace requires revitalising existing prevention, peacebuilding and response frameworks.

Recommendations

- The NAP must recognise and promote African agency and leadership in regional responses to crises in Africa. This requires a better alignment of the strategic and operational roles of the UN, regional and sub-regional institutions. A practical interpretation of the complementarity and subsidiarity principles is also needed.

- African interests and perspectives must be mainstreamed in key global platforms and UN-led peace processes. The NAP should support a practical approach to enhancing African representation, especially on the UN Security Council.

- A culture shift is needed to ensure Africa’s conflict prevention agenda is prioritised. The NAP must reiterate the imperative for multi-track preventive diplomacy and peacemaking. It should help foster linkages between political and security initiatives, and integrate prevention and peacebuilding efforts in line with member states’ interests.

- The NAP offers the opportunity for states to renew their commitment to existing regional crisis response and peacebuilding mechanisms. The UN can support these endeavours by enhancing the capacity of regional and sub-regional actors, calling for more political support for such processes, and strengthening institutional coordination among the AU, RECs and RMs.

- The NAP should support proposals that UN-assessed contributions help fund AU peace support operations. It should also reiterate calls in UN Security Council Resolution 76/305 for predictable and sustained funding for peacebuilding in Africa.
Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General’s report on the future of multilateralism and his vision for global cooperation, Our Common Agenda, succinctly captures the predicament confronting the global order.

The current international order, with the UN at the centre, is under strain to deliver public goods to an increasing world population. Our Common Agenda affirms that global collective peace and security is ‘increasingly under threat’ from ‘emerging risks and dangerous trends.’ Traditional solutions have been woefully inadequate and, at best, not well suited to project and sustain the relevance of existing multilateral institutions. This is particularly the case in preventing and managing threats.

Our Common Agenda thus makes the case for a New Agenda for Peace (NAP) hinged primarily on recognising the failure of existing mechanisms to deliver global peace and the need to construct preventive, response and management mechanisms that fit the complexity of threats and their associated evolving dynamics.

Increased African capacity to manage insecurity will have a multiplier effect and help attain global peace

Central to these are the elements of anticipatory action and response effectiveness – the cornerstone of a NAP. The call for this new agenda makes a case for a new peace continuum to ‘protect and manage the global public good of peace’ through several approaches, including investing in prevention and peacebuilding and supporting regional responses.

With the latter as its point of departure, this report highlights the critical role of enhanced regional involvement in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis response in fulfilling the aspirations of the NAP from an African perspective. It argues that since Africa is ‘the source of some of the UN’s most devastating experiences’ as well as its ‘most precious triumphs,’ increased African capacity to manage insecurity will have a multiplier effect on response effectiveness and attaining a global net peace dividend.

The report outlines four major priorities the NAP must consider in centering regional involvement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Africa to revitalise global multilateralism. These include:

- Better alignment of roles within the global-regional security governance architecture
- Deepening existing partnerships between the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the regional economic communities (RECs)/regional mechanisms (RMs), including improving political decision-making processes
- Prioritising prevention, anticipatory action and political solutions
- Effective implementation of existing norms and institutions for prevention, peacebuilding and responses

Global-regional role alignments, comparative advantages and subsidiarity

Delivering global peace depends largely on whether security challenges can be managed at various levels, particularly the regional level. This is due to the interconnected nature of threats and conflict drivers worldwide, and the centrality of regional vulnerabilities.

The ability to manage threats in Africa is important in realising the goals of the NAP, as the continent is particularly vulnerable. There are currently various collective regional security arrangements in Africa aimed at addressing the continent’s complex security threats. Despite the multiple challenges associated with their management, their existence has shaped the thinking and practice around the global-regional security architectures. They have given practical expression to Chapter VIII of the UN Charter and provided options for the UN Security Council’s (UNSC) response to crises on the continent.

The AU and RECs/RMs, within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) framework, serve as first responders to conflicts. Their roles have significantly changed the narrative from the 1990s, when most responses were expected to originate from the UN and external powers. This has reduced the burden on both the UN and the international community.

Developing robust pathways to accentuate these roles and practices would improve the global-regional
nexus in the search for peace, and position regional engagements as an anchor for achieving global peace and stability. However, for the NAP to succeed, it will need to effectively frame and address numerous issues to enhance the global-regional security architectures.

The first is the need to recognise Africa’s demonstrated commitment to managing regional insecurity. This recognition should lead to extending support towards achieving a more refined, coordinated and structured regional approach to addressing crises. Such recognition aligns with the UN Secretary-General’s affirmation of the critical role of regional actors as gap fillers or first responders in the global peace and security architecture. It offers the opportunity to harness existing regional mechanisms in Africa as foundation blocks for an interlocking global collective security system for conflict management.

The second is that against the backdrop of Africa’s evolving security environment, the continent has seen a significant rise in the number of actors involved in pursuing peace and security. This proliferation of actors, plus the ensuing need to clarify their roles, reveals policy gaps in structuring engagements and involvement, such as in the effective and full use of the African Standby Force (ASF) and challenges associated with the overall architecture for pursuing peace.

The NAP offers the opportunity to contribute to efforts to refine the security responses, outline roles and harness the full benefits of the comparative advantages of various players. This is especially crucial in contexts of intense response interests and multi-stakeholder deployments. Supporting efforts to untangle and systematise divergent interests and approaches would help enhance the effectiveness of the overall response space, with implications for global peace and security.

A good starting point is to clearly outline the comparative advantages of the global, continental and regional actors involved in pursuing peace in Africa, and shape current thinking around their different roles. For example, lessons from two decades of African-led peace support operations (PSOs) show that the various levels of multilateral decision making and implementation structures – the UN, AU and RECs/RMs – have varied comparative advantages to offer towards enhanced operational effectiveness and impact. This includes delivering on shorter sustainable conflict-to-peace transitions.

The UN is uniquely placed to legitimise regional initiatives and play a crucial political role in bringing together international, national and regional actors, including international donors, to forge political consensus on the appropriate response in a given context. However, the AU brings a unique brand of legitimacy and credibility in mobilising local acceptance and resources, and channelling international political and diplomatic support towards sustaining difficult missions.

NAP could harness the comparative advantages of players at global, regional and sub-regional levels

The AU can also undertake a range of operations that others cannot in conflicts that transcend regional boundaries. The RECs/RMs have critical roles in force generation and leading operations.

The NAP should advocate for identifying and formalising these diverse complementary roles to foster African regional responses. Narrowing the relationship gaps between continental policy actors and the RECs/RMs and between continental and global actors can help foster a more functional relationship and consolidate efforts in managing threats. Key to aligning roles is reaching a shared understanding of the practical application of the concepts of sovereignty and subsidiarity and their operational confines in UN, AU and RECs/RMs relations.

The complexity of managing Libya’s current political and security crises remains a poignant case that illustrates the comparative advantage of various actors. The AU’s claim to subsidiarity in the conflict management and resolution continuum was undermined at the start. The fallout from the Libyan responses highlights the need for the NAP to urge better African representation on the UNSC, and to mainstream African interests in the council’s deliberations on UN-led peace processes in Africa. The NAP could stress the imperative for African permanent seats on the council to enhance African representation, and offer its support for African advocacy around this complex issue.
The same efforts should extend to the relationship between the AU and its RECs/RMs. Currently, AU decision-making processes at PSC level are yet to adequately make room for sufficient sub-regional input, involvement and ownership, even though RECs/RMs are expected to be frontline implementers of the council’s decisions. Effective decision making plays an essential role in leveraging sub-regional capacity to enhance global peace and security. It’s therefore vital to ensure inclusivity in decision making at sub-regional, regional and global levels.

The third important issue relates to the question of subsidiarity at sub-regional and regional levels. The existing APSA framework emphasises collaboration between continental and sub-regional levels and elevates subsidiarity and comparative advantage without sufficient and explicit definition of roles. In practice, the AU and RECs/RMs lay similar claims to primacy in managing crises, with some sub-regional groupings pursuing and using greater response autonomy and relegating the AU to coordination and resource mobilisation roles. The 2012 Mali conflict highlights how the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and AU were at odds on who would take the lead role in the deployment of the peace support mission.

Clarifying continental and global actors’ roles shouldn’t produce a rigid arrangement that jeopardises the primary consideration of saving lives

Regardless, sub-regional organisations often seek AU authorisation before and after deploying a mission, similar to how the AU seeks UN authorisation as a flexible but consistent requirement before AU-led deployments. It’s been observed that even in situations of contested role allocation between the AU and a REC/RM, the resource mobilisation role is still respected. There’s growing concern regarding the question of subsidiarity between such RECs/RMs and the AU in cases where the AU’s resource mobilisation capacity is absent, and whether such sub-regions will subject themselves to an AU coordination process.

Ambiguities in the APSA motivated recent attempts by the AU and RECs/RMs to clarify a division of labour between the AU and sub-regional organisations in the context of ongoing AU reform to manage expectations and coordinate Africa’s response. These dimensions of the challenges associated with achieving a strong region-to-sub-region response infrastructure are important considerations for the NAP.

The quest for clearer roles however shouldn’t produce a rigid arrangement that jeopardises the primary consideration of saving lives and addressing humanitarian consequences. Flexibility, rapidity and the ability to provide
localised responses are vital in leveraging comparative advantages in any changing conflict setting. Efforts to clarify roles should serve as a guide for improved coordination, response sequencing and collaboration in enhancing capacity for collective action for managing conflicts at the regional and sub-regional levels. This while providing pathways to escalate issues to a higher level of policy response, if subsidiary entities are ineffective.

Subsidiarity and the escalatory process is relevant in the APSA and for partnership with the UN, and should be affirmed through the NAP. UN, AU and REC/RM cooperation has evolved over the years to reflect a burden-sharing format. Crisis response is either escalated across the different levels or shared according to prevailing comparative advantage. Sub-regional actors are taking more political and security roles, including deploying missions with the AU’s support. The AU sometimes deploys stabilisation missions while the UN takes on more comprehensive peace operation roles. Responses to conflicts in South Sudan, Sudan and Somalia have in many ways reflected this relationship and escalation framework.

These dynamics show that key response mechanisms such as PSOs and stabilisation aren’t reserved at any particular level. However, they require a working model that fosters greater cooperation, support and complementary relations, and sees the need for escalation of roles when necessary. Establishing modes of escalation will lessen competition and minimise uncertainty among peace responders. The imperative for subsidiarity should permeate strategic, political and operational level efforts.

**Deepening cooperation between UN, AU and RECs/RMs**

Effective and mutually reinforcing cooperation between the UN, AU and RECs/RMs is key to forging a peace continuum that leverages the dynamic roles and capacities from international to sub-regional levels. The essence of such synergies has been encapsulated within the broader idea of the UN-AU partnership. The NAP should affirm the imperative for deepening the UN-AU partnership through efforts around three major dimensions.

**Deepening representation in decision making**

Cooperation between the UN, AU and RECs/RMs has evolved over the years, reflecting a burden-sharing format where responses to crises are escalated or shared across the different levels depending on the nature of the crisis, geography and comparative advantages. The responsibility for peacemaking and peacekeeping in Africa is thus shared and fluid, and not the preserve of a single entity at any level of decision making.

This necessitates the need for collective involvement in decision making, since decisions made by one actor have repercussions on harnessing the contribution of other stakeholders and role players in the search for peace during implementation. Within the UNSC, challenges exist concerning the dominance of the Council’s five permanent members (P5), dynamics between its three African members (A3), and power imbalances between the PSC and the UNSC.

The NAP should reaffirm the need to deepen the UN-AU partnership to forge an effective peace continuum.

These challenges together affect the extent of Africa’s representation in decision making at the global level, and require urgent management if the AU and its sub-regional blocs are to serve as key actors in a new global security paradigm.

Similar challenges exist at the level of the AU and RECs/RMs. Although the PSC often invites leaders of particular RECs/RMs to brief it during deliberations on crises in their regions, the extent of the integration of the inputs of such regional briefers is not always commensurate to the extent that can be considered integral to the overall outcome. Some RECs therefore at times don’t consider themselves to be involved in crisis decision making at the continental level and consequently don’t feel obliged to implement such decisions.

In the PSC’s response to the threat of the Lord’s Resistance Army, the inadequate involvement of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in making decisions affected the uptake of the
PSC’s authorisation for deployment against the group. In many African situations, such lack of involvement has affected crisis management and created issues regarding mandate implementation and decision-making oversight.

At the same time, even in the context of the UN’s increasing lack of appetite for more kinetic military interventions in Africa, the AU’s willingness to take on such missions is clear, including deploying where there is no peace to keep. These dynamics highlight the need for decision-making modes that foster greater cooperation, support and complementary relations. These must recognise the roles of all levels – global, regional and sub-regional – in identifying appropriate options and effective implementation, since each will play different roles at different times in managing crises.

The NAP should therefore open up new discussions on coordinating and synergising involvement at these various levels of decision-making for crisis responses. Enhancing AU involvement in UNSC decision-making on African issues and the involvement of RECs/RMs in AU decision-making will together deepen cooperation and improve decision implementation.

Deepening UN-AU partnership in peacebuilding and PSOs

The UN-AU partnership has deepened significantly in recent years, particularly since the signing of the 2017 Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. Consequently, inter-institutional interface mechanisms between the two organisations have become much more regularised and formalised.

There is now a standing annual calendar of engagements between UN and AU officials spanning the technical, operational and strategic levels of engagement. These include yearly desk-to-desk meetings, the UN-AU Joint Task Force for Peace and Security in Africa, and the annual UN-AU senior-level conference involving the UN Secretary-General and Chairperson of the AU Commission. There’s also the longstanding annual meeting between the UNSC and members of the AU PSC, and the UN Peacebuilding Commission meetings.

Despite these avenues for engagement, strengthening integrated implementation of efforts, particularly the peacebuilding agenda as part of the NAP, is needed. Among others, it will foster greater alignment2 between different UN and AU peacebuilding structures, and with African member states, particularly those occupying positions on the UNSC and UN Peacebuilding Commission. This agenda should further feature as a cross-cutting engagement throughout the UN and AU’s standing annual calendar of engagements across all the above partnership mechanisms.

NAP should open new discussions on coordinating decision making around crisis responses and peacebuilding

The NAP should promote closer collaboration between member states and UN and AU systems to foster agreement on peacebuilding goals to capitalise on the unique strengths of both organisations. The NAP should call for reinforcement of coordination mechanisms, such as an inter-departmental task force on post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) at the AUC, to facilitate improved working relationships within the AU itself and with the UN’s regional peace and development infrastructure. This will facilitate the exchange of cross-institutional analyses and facilitate exploration of collaborative programming. It must also aim to address three critical areas regarding the UN’s involvement in African PSOs:

- The interpretation of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter by the UN and the AU has diverged in some conflict situations. This particularly pertains to how the two organisations view the legality of regional peacekeeping initiatives in situations with no authorisation from the UNSC. This in turn affects political and operational orientation and collaboration, including resource sharing.

- Political differences and competing interests affect partnerships among the P5 and A3, especially when it comes to responding to specific country crises.

- While operationally the partnership is active at several levels, from joint mission-specific planning to desk-to-desk meetings, joint visits by the UNSC and PSC as councils within specific mission contexts are less frequent. Deepening the UN-AU partnership in peace operations requires rectifying these challenges.
The NAP must initiate conversations about a collective understanding and operationalisation of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. This must be coupled with frequent, candid and continued discourse and high-level diplomacy to reconcile conflicting viewpoints and reduce the negative impact of political differences and competing interests. The NAP must emphasise the normalisation of joint visits by both councils before crucial decisions on missions are made to establish a mutual understanding of specific crises and their resolutions.

**Predictable funding for African PSOs and peacebuilding initiatives**

Difficulty in securing predictable, sustainable, flexible funding to sustain PSOs, political missions and peacebuilding initiatives at the AU and REC/RM levels is one of the biggest impediments to regional action. There have been resounding calls for addressing this practical lacuna, especially financing AU-led PSOs through UN-assessed contributions, since it has major implications on the pursuit of peace and human security in Africa.

Nevertheless, efforts to secure UN resources for AU PSOs have been adversely affected by demands to meet the fiduciary and accountability standards of the UN and P5, and the need to establish compliance frameworks for international humanitarian law and financial burden sharing.

**Securing predictable funding for PSOs, political missions and peacebuilding at the AU and RECs levels is one of the biggest challenges facing regional action**

Progress has been made in tackling the various aspects of the financing debate. The AU has been operationalising its peace fund, which stood at US$322 million in February 2023 and is projected to reach its US$400 million commitment in the course of 2023. It’s also finalising its strategic framework for compliance and accountability to meet international humanitarian law compliance requirements.

The AU has started implementing a trilateral project on the AU compliance and accountability framework involving the UN and European Union. On the UN side, the Secretary-General developed a report on securing predictable, sustainable, and flexible funding for AU-led PSOs. The report follows the Security Council’s request on 31 August 2022, in line with UN Resolution PRST/2022/6 on capacity building in Africa.

The NAP needs to underscore its support to financing AU-led PSOs through UN-assessed contributions. Such political support is critical to ensure AU-led PSOs are provided with adequate, predictable, sustainable financing for effective mandate implementation. Besides bridging the gap between African aspiration to deploy and the capacity to do so, UN funding to AU PSOs will refashion the relationship between the AU and RECs/RMs. However, there

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**AU Peace Fund is Projected to Reach**

US$400 million

**During 2023**
is recognition that not all African regional interventions and security responses will receive funding through UN-assessed contributions.

A similar solution is needed to address the AU's funding challenge for peacebuilding initiatives. The NAP must reaffirm and support the concerted approach taken by UN and AU officials for a new peacebuilding funding strategy driven primarily by member states. The strategy should seek to renew the international community’s commitment to peacebuilding while illustrating the value and utility of long-term peacebuilding work. An annual inter-institutional process aimed at securing member state pledges towards peacebuilding work in Africa should be established. This strategy should further aim to leverage the skills and capacities of grassroots civil society organisations whose peacebuilding efforts often remain frustrated by a lack of funding from channels in the AU and UN institutional systems.

**Prioritising prevention, anticipatory action and political solutions**

Prevention remains the weakest link in the current global peace architecture. The NAP’s aspiration to refocus on prevention and peacebuilding reaffirms that reactive and securitised responses are insufficient for addressing complex global security challenges. From a regional and cross-border perspective, the primary role of the AU with a triangular partnership with the UN and RECs/RMs remains key to strengthening prevention and peacebuilding.

The NAP is an opportunity to re-emphasise and consolidate prevention and peacebuilding interventions through collaboration among global, regional and national actors. This includes civil society, which plays a critical role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In addition, strengthening the continental governance agenda is a critical lynchpin to prioritising prevention efforts.

**Enhancing multi-track preventive diplomacy and peacemaking initiatives**

The evolving trend in diplomacy and peacemaking initiatives in Africa reveals the key role of regional and sub-regional institutions. In West Africa, for instance, ECOWAS is trying to manage the fallout from the unconstitutional changes in governments in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. The AU has also partnered with other RECs, such as ECCAS, to mediate a peace agreement in the Central African Republic with UN support. Social organisations such as churches, traditional rulers, women’s and youth groups and business communities also play key roles, especially in furthering inclusion in the prevention agenda in peace processes.

**Prevention remains the weakest link in the global peace architecture and the NAP should aim to change that**

But African regional and sub-regional actors need support to take more prominent roles in preventive diplomacy and peacemaking initiatives. An important starting point for the NAP will be to reaffirm the imperative for a shift in culture towards prioritising conflict prevention within the global-regional-sub-regional security governance arrangements. An all-of-society approach to define and pursue peace should therefore be a major consideration for the NAP that affirms the need for an inclusive and holistic interpretation of the fundamental issues driving insecurity and the approaches required to address them.

To drive effective conflict prevention efforts, the UN must provide support to enhance African regional and sub-regional early warning capabilities and preparedness. This requires a reaffirmation of commitments to conflict prevention, and a review of existing operational approaches and working methods of these institutions. It’s also important to consolidate institutional competencies and improve both inter- and intra-organisational interactions.

**A leap from militarised to political solutions-driven peace support operations**

Responses to crises in Africa often rely excessively on military-heavy PSO deployments and other security arrangements. Although these measures have many advantages in promoting stability, they often lack a strong connection to political solutions, if any. As a result, their efficacy is often limited to putting out ‘immediate fires’ without addressing the underlying causes that started them. In searching for solutions to contemporary conflicts, especially violent extremism, such responses...
Creating better linkages between political and security initiatives in Africa should therefore be a major consideration in the NAP. Achieving that requires buttressing the capacity of African regional actors in governance, conflict prevention, and PCRD. The NAP should prioritise strengthening broader efforts to address the structural root causes of conflicts and to promote the primacy of political interventions. This will help ensure that securing political solutions guide all peace efforts.

**Integrated implementation of peacebuilding interventions**

The diverse roles of the AU and sub-regional actors in peacebuilding and PCRD highlight the need to consolidate existing approaches, institutions and norms. Institutional structures for advancing peacebuilding are yet to fully realise their potential to support the integrated implementation of peacebuilding interventions. These include the PSC Sub-committee on PCRD, AU PCRD Centre, Inter-Departmental Taskforce for PCRD, AU Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUDA-NEPAD), AU Liaison Offices in conflict-affected countries, and their sub-regional counterparts.

Limitations also exist in strengthening the integrated implementation of various peacebuilding processes such as the rule of law, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, and transitional justice within conflict, transitional and post-conflict contexts. A holistic approach to peacebuilding not only enhances effective crisis management, but also provides a pathway to the deployment of development-centred interventions. Greater UN support is needed to strengthen existing peacebuilding infrastructures in Africa, especially their ability for integrated implementation of peacebuilding interventions and to bridge the gap between AU and UN peacebuilding processes.

**Investing in local ownership and building inclusive institutions**

The implementation of Africa’s prevention and peacebuilding agenda must be anchored in the national visions of member states, through investing in inclusion and local ownership. The AU PCRD policy acknowledges the importance of local ownership to sustain peacebuilding interventions. However, fostering locally and nationally owned peacebuilding processes to address the root causes of conflicts and promote lasting peace that bolsters national resilience remains limited in practice.

**Implementing norms and institutions for prevention and peacebuilding**

The AU and the RECs/RMs have played key roles as norm entrepreneurs, with considerable progress in establishing peace, security and governance strategies and policies. These encouraging norm development processes have been accompanied by modest efforts to further institutionalise conflict prevention, management and resolution policies and strategies through the APSA and African Governance Architecture (AGA) frameworks.

However, operationalising these norms and institutions is hamstrung by limited political will to advance norms, inadequate financing and insufficient national ownership of policies and processes. Revitalising existing
prevention, peacebuilding and response frameworks are useful entry points for bridging the divide between norm development and implementation, which will contribute to fulfilling the quest for global peace.

**Domesticating strategies and policies that buttress prevention and peacebuilding**

The success of the AU and sub-regional actors’ prevention and peacebuilding policies relies on their effective domestication and popularisation by member states. Successful implementation of peacebuilding-related policies, such as the AU Transitional Justice Policy and AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform, is hampered by limited national and local level support for initiatives meant to build resilient societies. Building resilient communities requires consolidation of various governance, rule of law and human rights norms at national levels.

There’s also a need to strengthen the early warning and early response systems embedded in national, sub-regional and regional organisations and enhance the level of coordination between them. The NAP must further recognise and support ongoing regional and sub-regional efforts around these imperatives. This will enable critical African actors such as the AU and the RECs/RMs to prevent conflicts and respond proactively in managing crises.

**Revitalising existing peacebuilding norms**

Consolidating continental peacebuilding institutions and norms in accordance with the APSA and AGA has been a continental effort that resulted in the ongoing review of the PCRD policy. The review aims to ensure African institutions effectively respond to current and emerging conflict and security issues, while addressing new imperatives such as financing, smarter partnerships, and more effective peacebuilding programming by AU member states in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The NAP can leverage these ongoing efforts to revitalise the AU’s existing peacebuilding norms and PCRD norms and institutions and the involvement of multilateral actors are critical to ensuring the success of a revised AU PCRD framework. It’s crucial to consider how the UN can support these endeavours through a renewed commitment within the global peace agenda towards enhancing institutional coordination of peacebuilding efforts among the AU, RECs and RMs.

**Revitalising AU institutions for peacebuilding**

The AU’s strategic partners need to support the revitalisation of the AU’s peacebuilding architecture. This architecture loosely comprises the institutions and mechanisms previously set up to plan and implement PCRD interventions across Africa. The PSC Protocol, the major legal and normative base of AU peace and security endeavours, identified different peacebuilding and post-conflict-related roles for various AU organs, notably the PSC and AU Commission chairperson.

NAP can leverage ongoing efforts to revitalise the AU’s existing peacebuilding and PCRD norms and institutions

The AU’s roles in peacebuilding are also to be realised through other structures such as the PSC’s Sub-committee on PCRD and the AU Commission’s Inter-Departmental Task Force on PCRD. However, these institutions remain underfunded and haven’t received the necessary political support from member states to function effectively. A November 2022 PSC communiqué (stemming from its 1 122nd meeting) highlights these and other shortcomings. It focuses on:

- The need for an additional PCRD working group within the ambit of the AU Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)
- A continental network of development agencies to support the working group
- The development of common action plans with the UN Peacebuilding Fund – through collaboration with the continent’s various RECs and RMs.

The AU is also in the process of fully operationalising the AU Centre for PCRD, headquartered in Cairo. This centre is expected to provide direct support to
the AU Commission in reinvigorating the continent’s overarching PCRD policy framework.

In light of these imperatives, the NAP should encourage calls for the urgent revitalisation of these structures and reaffirm the UN’s commitment and support for improving coordination, monitoring and programming mechanisms.

Supporting ASF reconfiguration

A substantial investment has gone into establishing and developing the ASF. The AU established the ASF to support the PSC’s work for rapid action to conflict and crisis.\(^6\) The ASF relied on pledged capacities in the eight RECs and RMs, which can be deployed for the six ASF scenarios ranging from political missions to intervention. The ASF has proven to be an important political project, helping to mobilise continental efforts to manage insecurity.

However, the past two decades have shown that the ASF hasn’t been deployed in its original conception. Instead, ad hoc security arrangements and bilateral deployments have become the preferred modus operandi. This underlines the imperative for strengthening ongoing efforts to revisit the ASF framework. The NAP should recognise and support these efforts, given their drive for rationalising Africa’s PSO landscape.

Forging a global peace continuum through the NAP benefits from enhancing the ASF framework as a tool for rapid response to crises in Africa

Revisiting the ASF concept, which reiterates the importance of regional standby forces/capacities for rapid response, must be informed by various key considerations. These include recognising the vital role of the REC/RMs in initiating missions, the central role of the AU in coordinating relevant processes and in deploying its own missions, especially those transcending sub-regions, and the dynamic evolution of threats in Africa.\(^7\)

Conclusion and recommendations

For over two decades, the AU and its sub-regional actors have demonstrated their commitment to helping attain global peace and security in the context of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The engagement of these institutions under the APSA umbrella provides the UN with key partners to anchor its peace initiatives on the continent. Harnessing this commitment is a vital step in managing insecurity in Africa as part of the broader drive for global peace and security.

The NAP offers the opportunity to effectively harness the AU and RECs/RMs as infrastructures for fulfilling global peace. Realising the Agenda’s aspirations, however, requires providing practical and political support to
ongoing continental efforts to refine roles, address normative and institutional gaps and enhance effective policy implementation along the major lines discussed in this report. These are summarised below.

Global-regional role alignments, comparative advantages and subsidiarity

- The NAP must promote African agency and leadership in regional responses to crises. To do this it must reaffirm the imperative for a better understanding of the strategic and operational roles and responsibilities of the UN and African regional and sub-regional institutions in line with the principles of complementarity and subsidiarity.

- Given the interconnectedness of threats, the NAP should explicitly acknowledge and promote ways to clarify the roles between the UN, AU and RECs/RMs. A subsidiary and escalatory process is relevant within the APSA and for the AU’s partnership with the UN to improve the AU, RECs/RMs and UN’s response capabilities.

Deepening cooperation between the UN, AU and RECs/RMs

- The NAP should support a more effective approach to peace and security that requires enhanced African representation on the UNSC. This could mainstream African interests and perspectives in UN-led peace processes.

- Better alignment of the UN and AU conflict prevention and peacebuilding structures is critical for enhancing the contribution of African efforts to the search for global peace. The NAP should promote closer collaboration among member states and between the UN and AU structures to foster the commonality of peacebuilding goals and support the reinforcement of coordination mechanisms.

- Predictable, adequate and sustainable funding for AU PSOs enhances regional responses to conflicts, reinvigorates global multilateralism, and ultimately helps the UN deliver peace as a global public good. The NAP should offer its political support to ongoing calls for providing UN-assessed contributions to AU PSOs.

- The NAP should similarly reiterate the calls in UNSC Resolution 76/305, representing a shared commitment to peacebuilding and providing predictable and sustained funding, including voluntary, innovative and assessed funding.

Prevention, anticipatory action and political solutions

- There’s an existing imperative to prioritise comprehensive approaches to defining and pursuing peace in Africa. This requires holistic interpretations and interventions that include governance and socio-economic issues, climate-sensitive development and approaches that address political, social and economic drivers of violence. The NAP should emphasise the need to invest more in the AU and sub-regional entities’ organisational capabilities to address these issues through provision of expertise and resources and experience sharing to support Africa’s conflict prevention agenda.

- African regional organisations have been making strides in developing early warning systems and building institutions that foster societal resilience in conflict-affected countries, which aligns with the UN’s agenda for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The NAP should call for more commitment to effectively use early detection mechanisms and responses. This will expedite the identification of potential conflicts and allow for prompt, synchronised, evidence-based interventions to avert escalation and reinforce peacebuilding efforts.

NAP should support enhanced African representation on the UNSC to mainstream African interests globally

- Closing the gap between early warning and action requires sustained political solutions, including enhancing multi-track preventive diplomacy and peacemaking initiatives. The NAP must reaffirm the imperative of prioritising dialogue and mediation as the immediate response to violence at all levels (sub-national, national, regional, international) and unified, international political support to locally led processes.

- Investing in local ownership and building sustainable institutions is key to prioritising prevention, anticipatory
action and politically driven solutions. The NAP should reaffirm its support for ongoing regional and sub-regional efforts around domesticating strategies and policies and building capacities that buttress prevention and peacebuilding and support these policies’ integrated implementation.

**Effective implementation of existing norms and operationalising institutions**

- The NAP offers the opportunity to renew commitment towards revitalising existing regional crises response and peacebuilding norms and institutions. The UN can support these endeavours by enhancing the institutional capacity of regional and sub-regional actors, calling for more political support for such processes, and enhancing institutional coordination of crises response and peacebuilding efforts among the AU, RECs and RMs.

- Deploying peace support operations remains a critical instrument for responding to crises in Africa. However, the existing PSO instruments and frameworks need revisiting to ensure they’re fit for purpose in the current conflict context. The NAP should recognise and support these efforts, especially in revisiting the ASF, given its contribution to rationalising Africa’s PSO landscape and enhancing the effectiveness of responses.

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**Notes**

2. Ibid, 59.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. African PSOs and other security arrangements, for instance, have led to demands for the redefinition of models and norms underpinning the UN’s spectrum of peace operations. Diverse collaboration arrangements that buttressed the growing engagement of African peace and security actors have necessitated rethinking around strategic partnerships such as UN-AU or EU-AU relations.
9. UN, Our Common Agenda, 61.
17. The ASF framework should be revisited also to create the capacity to counter currently prevailing and emerging threats, notably terrorism, radicalism, extremism, cyber-attacks, pandemics, etc.
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