



Security Council

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Letter dated 24 December 2020 from the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa on the Working Group's activities in 2020.

I should be grateful if the present letter and the report were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(Signed) Jerry Matthews **Matjila**
Chair

Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa



Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa for 2020

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted to inform the Security Council of the activities of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa in 2020.

II. Organizational matters

2. The Working Group is a subsidiary organ of the Security Council, established pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 31 January 2002 ([S/PRST/2002/2](#)), in which the Council recognized the need for adequate measures to prevent and resolve conflicts in Africa and indicated its intention to consider the establishment of an ad hoc working group to monitor the recommendations contained in the presidential statement and to enhance coordination with the Economic and Social Council.

3. The Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Jerry Matthews Matjila, served as Chair of the Working Group from 1 January to 31 December 2020. The representative of the Niger served as Vice-Chair throughout the reporting period.

4. The Working Group's programme of work during the period under review was disrupted by the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. However, the Working Group held two meetings to discuss issues pertinent to its mandate.

III. Summary of the activities of the Working Group in 2020

5. On 13 August, the Working Group met via videoconference to discuss preparations for the 14th joint consultative meeting and the 5th informal joint seminar for members of the Security Council and members of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

6. On 18 September, the Working Group met again to finalize the agenda items and modalities for the joint consultative meeting and informal joint seminar, which were held on 29 and 30 September. The consultative meeting covered Somalia and Mali and the Sahel, and the seminar discussed: (a) strengthening cooperation between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council; and (b) silencing the guns in Africa.

7. The meetings were co-chaired by the President of the Security Council for the month of October (Niger) and the Chair of the Peace and Security Council for the same month (Djibouti).

8. The members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council recognized the importance of closer coordination between the two Councils and noted the substantive improvements over the past few years. They also appreciated joint visits conducted by senior officials of the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission. In the same vein, most agreed on the need to improve working relations between the two Councils, including aligning their monthly programmes of work; enhancing regular interaction at various levels; agreeing on the modalities for

joint visits of the Councils; and ensuring that joint communiqués of consultative meetings are adopted in a timely manner.

9. The African members of the Security Council – namely the Niger, South Africa and Tunisia – and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1), as well as China, the Peace and Security Council and the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Smaïl Chergui, took the opportunity to raise issues that they had identified as major challenges to the partnership: (a) the “lack of readiness” by the Security Council to take the views of the Peace and Security Council into account; (b) recent developments in which the Security Council failed to reach a consensus on the appointment of African candidates, including those recommended by the Peace and Security Council for the positions of special representatives and special envoys of the Secretary-General for United Nations peace missions based in Africa; (c) the non-inclusion of the A3 as penholders or co-penholders; (d) the lack of extensive consultations prior to decision-making on peace and security issues in Africa; and (e) the conduct of Council-to-Council joint field missions. Most members of the Security Council expressed a readiness to work on the modalities for joint visits on a case-by-case basis; encouraged the holding of regular joint visits by representatives of both organizations to hotspots in Africa and joint briefings to both Councils; called for support for efforts to increase African Union participation in resolving crises on the continent, while noting steps taken by the African Union to operationalize the peace fund, establish the African Union standby force and develop financing modalities for African peacekeeping missions; and suggested regular interaction throughout the year at the level of experts and political coordinators.

10. The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, and Mr. Chergui delivered opening remarks at the 14th joint consultative meeting, in which they both highlighted the enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union. They encouraged the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council to ensure better coordination in their efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts in Africa. Mr. Chergui pointed to three issues that in his view posed major challenges to the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union: (a) the return of a “might is right” approach whereby the views of the Peace and Security Council, duly conveyed to the Security Council through various communiqués, were disregarded (in Libya, Mali and Somalia); (b) recent developments in which the Security Council failed to reach a consensus on the appointment of African candidates for the positions of special representatives of the Secretary-General for United Nations peace missions based in Africa; and (c) the non-inclusion of the A3 as penholders or co-penholders.

11. On Mali and the Sahel, the members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council expressed their concern about the security, economic and humanitarian challenges in the Sahel region – as well as the potential of the COVID-19 pandemic to exacerbate existing fragility. The members of both Councils recognized that the major conflict drivers in the region (poverty, climate change, extremism, poor governance, corruption and exclusion) needed to be addressed in an integrated fashion.

12. With regard to Mali, the members called for the full establishment of a civilian-led transition, the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, the unconditional release of civilian and military detainees, respect for the transition timetable, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. They urged all stakeholders in Mali to engage in peaceful dialogue to accommodate the aspirations of various segments of Malian society and ensure the speedy implementation of reforms in the electoral system, judicial institutions and the security sector. The members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council also commended the Economic Community of West African States for the key role that it had played,

expressing their continued support for its mediation efforts, as well as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the Group of Five for the Sahel.

13. On Somalia, the members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council welcomed the agreement reached between the Federal Government of Somalia and the presidents of the federal member states regarding the electoral process in 2020 and 2021. However, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America stated that they regretted that the agreement fell short of the long-standing Somali goal of a direct vote in the electoral cycle. The members of the Peace and Security Council noted that such an electoral model, though not ideal, was the outcome of an inter-Somali dialogue between the Federal Government and leaders of the federal member states, and underscored the need to fully support it. Both Councils stressed that the electoral process in 2020 and 2021 should be free, fair, transparent and inclusive. They also emphasized the need for meaningful progress to establish other Somali institutions, including the judicial services commission and the human rights commission, along with efforts to finalize the review of the Provisional Federal Constitution.

14. The members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council expressed their concern over the worrying upsurge in Al-Shabaab attacks, including the recent bombings in Mogadishu and Kismaayo. They stated that 2021 would be a critical transition year in which Somalia should take the lead on its security matters. However, they noted the limited progress in the strengthening of the Somali National Army in such a way that it could take over from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). They welcomed the recent progress in updating the Somalia transition plan.

15. The Peace and Security Council underscored the need to align the decisions of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council to conduct an independent comprehensive assessment of the situation in Somalia in order to chart the way forward. The United Kingdom, noting the appointment of General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, expressed support for the voice of the African Union to be heard in the review process and encouraged the African Union to cooperate with the review team. The Peace and Security Council also stressed the need for sustainable and predictable financing for AMISOM and the urgency of replenishing the AMISOM Trust Fund.

16. At the end of the consultative meeting, the members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council adopted a joint communiqué.

IV. Conclusion

17. Despite the extraordinary challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chair focused on ensuring that the 14th joint consultative meeting and the 5th informal joint seminar between the members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council were held on 29 and 30 September. In that context, it is the Chair's assessment that the meetings provided an opportunity for rich and constructive discussions, in particular on the country-specific and thematic issues critical to peace, stability and development in Africa, as well as mechanisms to further strengthen interactions between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council in a regular and predictable fashion. The Chair recommends that opportunities to hold such exchanges should continue to be utilized in 2021.

18. The Working Group continues to play an essential role in facilitating preparations for and exchanges on the joint consultative meetings and other joint activities of the members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council,

as demonstrated by the Working Group discussions held on 13 August and 18 September. In that regard, the Chair recommends that the Working Group should continue to exercise that mandate.

19. To conclude, the Chair extends his appreciation to all Working Group members for their commitment and constructive participation in 2020 and for their efforts in promoting peace and stability in Africa.
